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COURT-INVOLVED AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL WITHIN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Dissertation in Education

with a concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

Troy D. Harden

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

June 2010

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores how eleven court-involved African American males in Chicago Public Schools gain entry and access into mainstream society via schooling, exploring their choices, interactions and networks in the context of schooling, and how they develop trust or the lack thereof in the educational process. Five themes emerged from interviews of the eleven young men, including school engagement, neighborhood bonds, school exclusion, purgatory and social capital reconceptualized. The young men in this study reported their trajectories associated with schooling, including how they were often "pushed out", in part by their own behavior and attitude towards schools, and school attitudes towards them. An alienation process occurred within the educational context for them, and they relied on community supports to reinforce their sense of self and belonging. Findings suggest that any analysis of social capital for these youth should include their social networks and the structural factors that influence their educational histories and choices, including neighborhood influences, as well educational policies and procedures that limit connection for them. This study informs urban researchers and practitioners on challenges that these youth encounter, and methods and ways to engage them in public education and beyond.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

We scream, rock, blows, weed, park so now we smart
We ain't retards the way teachers thought
Hold up hold fast we make mo' cash
Now tell my momma I belong in the slow class
It's bad enough we on welfare
You trying to put me on the school bus with the space for the wheel chair?

Kanye West (2004)

Institutionalized I lived my life a product made to crumble
But too hardened for a smile, we're too crazy to be humble, we ballin'
Catch me father please, cause I'm fallin', in the liquor store
That's the Hennessee I hear ya callin', can I get some more?
Hail' til I reach Hell, I ain't scared
Mama checkin' in my bedroom; I ain't there
I got a head with no screws in it, what can I do
One life to live but I got nuttin to lose, just me and you
on a one way trip to prison, sellin' drugs
We all wrapped up in this livin', life as Thugs

Makavelli/Tupac Shakur (1996)

The above quotes reflect current challenges that persist within urban education and the complex relationship between schooling and the criminal justice system for many urban youth. West (2004), interpreting these youth as "entrepreneurs", refers to the special education status often placed on African American youth, particularly males, and how the youth's business savvy goes unseen inside of the classroom. Tupac Shakur (1996), using his pseudonym Makavelli, refers to the institutionalization of these same youth, often after they have been engaged in the institution of schooling. Eluding even a concerned mother, these youth's focus on the streets become a "one way trip to prison", powerless, tragic and seemingly inevitable. These issues become particularly disturbing

as African American youth in urban centers continue to under- perform on standardized tests concerning national standards, and lag behind whites and suburban students in terms of test scores, graduation rates, and accessing college opportunities (Wald & Losen, 2003). Many scholars and practitioners argue that a level of educational disparity exists that reflects a form of apartheid and modern day segregation for African American and Latino youth (Hallinan, 2001; Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2002; Reed, 1988; Rumberger, R.W., 2004; Taylor, 1995). This complexity is particularly evident in the public educational system within the city of Chicago (Kelleher, 2003). Although the city of Chicago has a tremendous level of diversity, schools that have predominately students of color have the lowest performance rates, and schools with large numbers of white students have higher graduation rates, test scores, and attendance in college (Brown, 2003; Grossman & Golan, 2007; Kelleher, 2003). Males, particularly African American males, face severe challenges within this educational system. These particular youth often disappear from the educational system and constitute a part of the highest drop-out group in the city (Kelleher, 2003; Orfield, 2004). Many African American males become a part of the vicious pipeline from schools into the juvenile justice system, and once involved within the juvenile court system, face challenges re-connecting as a traditional Chicago Public School student.

It is often difficult for court-involved African American males to re-integrate into traditional societal settings after incarceration (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Mayer, 2005; Mears & Travis, 2004; Steinberg, Chung & Little, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). The term "court-involved" refers to those youth on probation, under court supervision, or on parole following release from a juvenile corrections facility (Mayer, 2005). Upon re-entering

society, these youth face extremes that range from returning to unstable housing situations, daunting peer relationships, and under resourced schools (Mayer, 2005; Mears & Travis, 2004). Methods to engage them often fail, increasing the likelihood of return to the penal system as adults, particularly when there are few employment opportunities available to them (Pager, 2003). Often, based on stereotypes and public perceptions, they are feared, vilified and demonized in the media and mainstream America (Giroux, 2003: Glasser, 1999; Hall, 2006; Majors, 2001). Their safe haven, the neighborhoods that they live in, are often spaces where they maintain some semblance of control and dignity, yet they maintain adversarial relationships with the institutions designed to protect them, the police department and criminal justice system (Casella, 2001; Fine, et al., 2003).

Few programs are engaging enough both within and outside of schools to hold their interest, and few meaningful educational relationships with school personnel develop as well. Ultimately, they maintain close ties and relationships with those that they trust the most: family members and their social networks, including friends and street organization members. These youth maintain strong ties with informal social networks that have shared values and norms (Moore, 1996). Their networks are often de-valued and perceived as contributing to the decline in urban neighborhoods where poverty and high crime may exist (Coleman, 1994; Putnam, 2000). The norms and values of African American males in the urban context may contradict and compete with societal norms and values, possibly creating a gap that forces a significant mistrust of a collective network of educational and social resources that might support educational advancement within the school system. The educational system, however, may not be designed to facilitate this trust and may dismiss the social and cultural capital that may

exist among these youth, as well as the strengths and barriers inherent within it. In education, the relationship between teacher, student, and society is the critical apex of learning, but without the mutual trust, the relationship may exist, but not with the quality and information exchange that may be needed in an educational relationship. The stated reasons for the lack of success many of these youth have in public schools have ranged from poor communities, uninvolved parents, underperforming schools, poor teachers and poor teacher training, negative media, violent communities, and overall disinterest in their well-being (Kunjufu, 1995; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2003). Although the literature supports some of these reasons as being important for consideration, little has been done to elicit the voices of these young males in order to discover their opinions about how they feel about themselves and their social relationships, their engagement in school, and why they are succeeding and/or failing (Dance, 2002; Duncan, 2002).

This study proposes to address concerns about court-involved African American males, social capital and schooling within the United States of America's educational system. This research will explore how court-involved African American males gain entry and access into and/or reject mainstream society via schooling, exploring their choices, interactions and networks in the context of schooling. The research questions for this study ask:

What are the barriers and enablers that court-involved African American males encounter that influence access to social capital within public schools?

(a) What kind of social networks do court-involved African American males develop to enhance social capital within schooling?

(b) How do court-involved African American males develop trusting relationships within schooling?

This research will offer a framework for conceptualizing the social networks of these youth and the structural factors that influence their educational histories and choices, including educational policies and procedures. It will also inform urban education researchers and practitioners on challenges that these youth encounter, and methods and ways to engage them in public education and beyond.

CHAPTER II.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following is a review of the literature concerning court-involved African American males, social capital and schooling within the United States of America's educational system. This review will explore (1) the literature associated with African American male's identity and the educational system, (2) African American males and the criminal and juvenile justice system, and (3) social capital and education.

African American Males and Identity

> *I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids-and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me, they only see my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination-*

indeed, everything and anything except me. – Ralph Ellison, from Invisible Man (1947)

Nameless, faceless, endangered, obsolete, and invisible are terms writers have used to describe the identity of the African American male (Ellison, 1947; Gibbs, 1988; Madhubuti, 1991). For Ellison, and many other writers, these terms underscore the need to claim an identity that transcends these terms, when the rest of society would have them faceless and "not seen". By identity, I refer to the original conceptualization by Horowitz (1939), in which individuals' self-concept consists of a general personality or individual domain (PI) and a group identity domain (GI) (Cross, 1991). Personal identity (PI) refers to constructs or traits that exist in all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, gender etc. and is conceptualized as self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, and various other personality traits (Cross, 1987; 1991). Group Identity (GI; also referred to as Reference Group Orientation) reflects group differences in variables such as values, perspective taking, lifestyles, and worldviews, and in African American identity research, group identity is generally conceptualized as racial identity, race awareness, race esteem, race preference, etc (Cross, 1987; 1991). Thus, in comparison to measures of personal identity, measures of group identity are usually specific to the particular group of interest (Cross, 1991).

A critical developmental task of adolescence is the formation of a cohesive sense of self or healthy identity formation (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Perhaps the most well recognized theory of identity development is Erickson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development, which describes identity formation as a dynamic process that begins in infancy and continues throughout adulthood. According to Erickson's theory, identity

becomes most salient during adolescence when individuals must face the formidable tasks of resolving conflicts and integrating identity elements of previous developmental stages and exploring new roles. Although the significance of individual identity formation is widely accepted, it has also been posited that adolescent research has overemphasized the importance of individual identity, to the neglect of the importance of group identity (Newman & Newman, 1975; 2001). The predominant interest in individual identity may reflect the cultural context of U.S. mythology, which highlights the importance of individualism and enthusiasm for personal freedom (Newman & Newman, 2001). However, research and theory point to the social and communalistic belief system of African American individuals, which stresses *"I* am because *We* are" (Akbar, 1985; Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Boykin, Tyler & Miller, 2005; Nobles, 1980), and may clash with the cultural importance of "rugged individualism" in the United States. This communalistic belief system is reflected in the predominance of writings and research on group identity in African American adolescents, particularly racial or ethnic group identity. Indeed, one striking difference in mainstream adolescent identity research and identity research on African American adolescents is the emphasis on group identity for African Americans, where researchers have noted that ethnic group identity has been found to be more salient for African American adolescents than for White adolescents (Phinney, 1992; Roberts, et al., 1999).

This desire to reclaim a "surrendered identity", as Erikson (1968) calls it in reference to African Americans and development, seeks to name, recover and identify the Self that is often mis-read and unseen in modern America. The development of identity for youth in today's society is already complex, and it even becomes more complicated

for African American males (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 2006; Majors & Billson, 1992; Tatum, 1997). The interactions of these youth with the larger structures in society are often hostile in worst case scenarios, and they are often treated with indifference in some of the best cases. It becomes critical to understand what African American males in general experience, in order to develop an awareness and understanding of the actions of court-involved African American males that will support their reintegration into society, particularly in reference to their identity as African American and male. Cross (2003) shares the following:

> According to literature reviews by Taylor (1995) and Payne (2001), empirical research often views African American males as originating from broken and unstable families, and exhibiting certain negative psychological traits: low achievement motivation, an estrangement from schooling and formal learning activities, negative self-concept and self-esteem, and a propensity toward delinquency and crime. (p. 68)

African American males, regardless of life position, are far more complex than the negative media portrayals, the stereotypical images, and the varied and under-theorized amount of studies that seek to understand their response to the negative stressors around them. To address the social and psychological development for African American males, this section will discuss different aspects of their identity, including the intersection of adolescence, gender, race, and culture, and how they relate to the development of the court-involved African American adolescent male.

Adolescence. Adolescent development is a multifaceted process, filled with many

opportunities and contradictions. One of the adolescent's main tasks is to establish his own identity and to avoid confusion about his role (Erikson, 1968). Their ability to negotiate developmental tasks during childhood plays a key role in determining how they negotiate the tasks of adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Paster, 1994). Adolescents are often preoccupied with how they appear to others versus who they really are on the inside, and are filled with the questioning of how to fit their knowledge and skills of what they have learned earlier in life through family, community and education with the spirit of today's times (Erikson, 1968). They look for people and ideas that they can have faith in, yet, fear an all consuming trust of society and institutions. They would rather act shamelessly in front of an elder, than be forced into activities that would be shameful in front of their peers (Erikson, 1968). In a defense against identity loss, they often engage in "cliquish" behavior that excludes outsiders, at times in harsh ways (Erikson, 1968). In a time period where they go through some of the most drastic physical changes in their lives, including physical and sexual development, becoming a part of groups with their peers help them negotiate life's tasks. However, whatever definition one can use to describe adolescence, it can be said that our culture's hidden expectations concerning how an adolescent should act, behave, and even think, interact significantly within the development of his/her identity (Kegan, 1994).

Lesko (1996), in writing about past, present and future conceptions of adolescence, describes four professionalized definitions of youth. First, conventional social science and medicine tend to view youth as "hormone-raging, identity-seeking, and peer-conforming" (Lesko, 1996. p. 453). Youth as a social problem is the second category, where youth are pathologized as teen-parents, drop-outs and juvenile

delinquents. Third, within the human service arena, youth are viewed as victims/patients based on a number of social problems that they encounter through society or familial concerns (Lesko, 1996). A fourth view, according to Lesko (1996), is written in rights language, as opponents view the "youth-as-property-of parents" as a problematic construction that contains youth as constructed within families. These views of adolescence and youth development can alter and shape policy and practice issues, as professionals who work with youth both adjust and adapt based on personal bias and institutional policies.

Calling for a reconceptualization of adolescence, Lesko (1996) offers that it would be better to meet youth with, borrowing from Silin (1995), a "lived time" curriculum that would move away from essentialist notions of youth, and towards work in which "personally meaningful issues and questions become central to teaching and learning" (p. 470). Age markers like "16" become a defining way of viewing young people, and moving towards a lived time cautions against essentialist notions of youth (Lesko, 1996). The lived time approach can also hold true for other types of practitioners and researchers as well, as meeting youth "where they are" concerning lived experience becomes an important way of framing both experiences and who they are, as well as approaches to their development. Given how different views of adolescence can affect adolescent development, how these processes happen across gender becomes relevant as well. When gender is brought into the equation, it often brings in another layer of complexity concerning adolescence.

Gender. A large part of understanding gender and males revolves around assessing the role that masculinity plays in the shaping of adolescent male identity.

Masculinity, in this sense, refers to how male's attitudes and behaviors are shaped by the interaction of biology and social factors in relation to the larger society (Kilmartin, 2000; Connell, 1995). African American males may develop and seek to maintain a sense of gender identity in this context by adopting masculine characteristics that help them survive and thrive in their environment, albeit not necessarily in ways deemed acceptable in mainstream society (toughness, risk-taking, athleticism, violence, and exploitation of women) (Franklin, 1984). Although it is generally seen that men benefit from a patriarchal society, for African American males, the privileging associated with patriarchy is countered with historical discrimination based on race and class, and the African American males social response to this.

bell hooks (2004), writing about the image of Black males and how society constricts them, shares:

> …whether it is an actual prison or not, practically every black male in the United States has been forced at some point in his life to hold back the self he wants to express, to repress and contain for fear of being attacked, slaughtered, and destroyed. Black males often exist in a prison of the mind unable to find their way out. In patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity (p. xii.).

The restricting and confining of self, to stereotypical images of masculinity that affect many men in the U.S., and the contradictory and psychological processing of what it means to be a Black man in America, create a development of a way of being that is unique and reflective of a group identity. For low-income males, this presents severe

challenges in accessing mainstream resources and often "negative masculinity" occurs that results in the acting out in violent ways in interpersonal relationships (Kilmartin, 2000; Connell, 1995).

For the purpose of this study, the term African American *male* versus African American *men* will be used. In past history of the United States and African American masculinity, and as a part of the legacy of white supremacy and slavery, white men often referred to adult African American men as "boys" (Franklin, 1984). This emasculation technique, and similar other ones, created tensions between African American men and Euro-American men that in many ways continue to exist today. Payne (2005) suggests that many African Americans who we considered to be adolescents have often had experiences that would qualify them as "men", with many of these youth caring for themselves and possessing knowledge that could demonstrate a level of maturity reflective of adults. However, it is this writer's experience that many of these youth, in intimate settings, acknowledge an identification with their youth, and given the criminal justice system's attempts at charging adolescents as adults for crimes committed while youth, it is important that we make this distinction here, giving these young males an opportunity to embrace their societal place as adolescents, who are not generally referred to as men or women until the age of 18, while emerging towards adulthood. Thus, this writer will refer to African American adolescents as "males" or "young men" throughout this paper.

The developmental stage of the individual *and* the period of time in history become relevant for any individual, but for adolescents, the period of history becomes particularly significant (Erikson, 1968). As during the 1960's, the civil rights movement,

Motown, and the Vietnam War were significant for the youth of that time period, human rights and the criminal justice system, Hip Hop culture, and the war in Iraq are significant in the life of today's youth. Connected to the spirit of the times, culture, oppression and gender become significant variables here for understanding identity development for African American males as well (Watts & Jagers, 1997). For African American males, the process of development can be complex, given the historical situation of being Black in the United States of America, the current societal disparities between African American males and other groups, and the parallel process of vilification and idealization of African American culture (Duncan, 2005).

Race and culture. With a history that dates back to the continent of Africa, the journey across the Middle Passage, or the great Maafa, into slavery within the U.S., and subsequently, a mixed history of oppression, resiliency and liberation, it is important that the history and present day circumstances of African American males be considered in discussing identity. For a group of people that have been studied, processed, and interpreted at times without voice, it is important to guard against essentialist notions of African American males, resisting identifying them as a homogenous group without understanding the diversity within this population. However, it is important to note that many culturally-relevant researchers have identified cultural aspects of both African Americans and African American males and how they relate to development (Murray, Smith & West, 1989). I will briefly discuss psychological and socio-environmental factors that can assist in understanding the life trajectory of these youth.

Race and ethnicity are different constructs, and have produced different bodies of literature, with race focusing more on the social and political impact of visible group

membership on psychological functioning, and ethnicity referring to the shared worldview, language, and set of behaviors that is associated with cultural heritage (McMahon & Watts, 2002). Stevenson (1997) describes the concept of race in association with African Americans as a "socially constructed idea that has reference to a biological classification system and one's African physical presentation" (p. 36), resulting in either "socially oppressive or culturally empowering encounters" (p. 36). The socialization process concerning race can involve verbal and nonverbal messages and behaviors that can shape identity across the lifespan. Race here, can be viewed in a positive or negative light. In the U.S. and abroad, African physical features, including skin color, hair styles, and facial features, are often social markers for oppression (Watts & Jagers, 1997), and African Americans have developed several ways of negotiating the social world around them that balance their sense of identity and humanity with the contradictory interactions that they often have with the larger society. Cross (1991), in researching how African Americans develop racial identity, offers five stages of "becoming Black", called nigrescence: (1) Pre-encounter, where being Black is not important in a persons life, (2) encounter, where a powerful event starts the transformation process, (3) immersion/emersion, where a person attempts to cast off their old identity and search for an "authentic" Blackness, (4) internalization, where the dissonance becomes resolved, and (5) internalization-commitment, where the person has settled into who he is and what he believes concerning a Black identity. Plummer (1995), studying how the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale applied to adolescent African American males, asserts that African Americans males reach the immersion and internalization stages concerning identity development, where they become comfortable

concerning identification with Black culture and identify themselves readily as “African American” or “Black”.

In research concerning African American male adolescents and racial socialization, Stevenson (1997) offers three distinct manifestations of racial identity development for African American males: (1) Protective Racial Socialization Identity Orientation, where these males show lower-levels of religiosity, a tendency to fear calamity, higher scores on measures of pessimism and learned helplessness, lower levels of kinship social support, more situational anger experience, less anger control, less conversation about race matters, and a greater number of persons living in their households; (2) Proactive Racial Socialization Identity Orientation, where African American males tend to view the world through a spiritual orientation and may problem solve according to this orientation. These youth are often raised to appreciate family and community and disdain outward aggression or disagreement, and they also have some tendency towards social introversion and low self-esteem, and; (3) Adaptive Racial Socialization Orientation, where African American males tend to hold strong feelings about the world and can process both empowerment and oppression, hope and despair, victory and defeat, seeing both hypocrisy and possibility in the world. Because of this type of vision, they cannot help but develop a long-term type of anger that is very aware of social injustices, social inconsistencies, and denied personal efficacies that are symptomatic of these experiences (Stevenson, 1997). Stevenson found in testing his scale that many adolescent African American males tend to fall into the Proactive Racial Socialization category, although the more psychologically healthy orientation appears to be Adaptive Racial Socialization (Stevenson, 1997).

The term culture, often used in connection with race or ethnicity, for Stevenson (1997) refer to "values, practices and learned behaviors that are shared commonly among persons within an existing group that are transmitted across generation" (p. 37). Culture plays a significant role here in the development of identity, allowing for a set of default options that guide in decision making and processing, particularly concerning race and gender, where many things are transferred from generation to generation in unconscious ways. Boykin & Ellison (1995) propose nine dimensions of African American cultural expressiveness that are unique as compared to other cultures. They are:

> *Spirituality* – an approach to life as being essentially vitalistic rather than mechanistic, with the conviction that nonmaterial forces influence people's everyday lives;
>
> *Harmony*- the notion that one's fate is interrelated with other elements in the scheme of things so humankind and nature are harmonically conjoined;
>
> *Movement*- an emphasis on the interweaving of movement, rhythm, percussiveness, music, and dance, all of which are taken as central to psychological health;
>
> *Verve* – a propensity for relatively high levels of stimulation and for action that is energetic and lively;
>
> *Affect* – an emphasis on emotions and feelings, together with a special sensitivity to emotional cues and a tendency to be emotionally expressive;
>
> *Communalism* – a commitment to social connectedness, which includes an awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privilege;
>
> *Expressive individualism* – the cultivation of a distinctive personality and proclivity for spontaneous, genuine personal expression;
>
> *Oral tradition* – a preference for oral/aural modes of communication, in which both speaking and listening are treated as performances, and cultivation of oral virtuosity – the ability to use alliterative, metaphorically colorful, graphic forms of spoken language;

> *Social time perspective* – an orientation in which time is treated as passing through a social space rather than a material one, and in which time can be recurring, personal, and phenomenological (p. 99-100).

These nine cultural expressions influence everything from social interactions to lifestyle choices for many African Americans. Social psychologist James Jones, in defining five dimensions of human experience that include *time, rhythm, improvisation, oral expression*, and *spirituality*, or TRIOS, noted that African American males, in comparison to Euro-American males, are more spiritual, emotionally expressive, gregarious, flexible, and present-oriented (Jones, 1991).

White & Cones (1999), in describing African American male identity, offer three major categories that can assist in understanding the impact of culture and identity for African American males: African American male psychology, major social institutions and their influence on African American male identity, and the Black aesthetic. Although these categories can be identified in other cultures or ethnicities, they carry a significant cause for consideration in understanding African American males.

Often, there is a "both-and" quality about African American males, as they present as both "risky" and "resilient" in behavior (Stevenson, 1997). Often vilified, African American males' ways of adapting and coping in stressful situations are often viewed as pathological, and they are seen in this regard as "at-risk". However, these youth often show that they identify many life circumstances as high stressors and have developed both internal and external ways of coping that may be different from the mainstream. They demonstrate resilience in how they cope with life circumstances, but in ways sometimes not easily identifiable by mainstream society. Payne (2001) offers that many researchers use traditional approaches in understanding resiliency and African

American males that overlook aspects of how more street-oriented males adapt and cope to stressful life situations, including urban violence and institutional racism. Traditional literatures often utilize research grounded in (1) upper- and middle-class orientations, (2) ahistorical stances, (3) an individualized perspective that holds the person as solely responsible for his resiliency, and (4) a refusal to consider the overall social structural impact of economic conditions (Payne, 2005).

In describing several ways that what he calls "street-life" oriented African American males cope with stress, Payne (2005) offers that there are at least one of four ways that non-traditional researchers can address an understanding of resilience for this population, including (a) understanding the impact of race and racism, (b) awareness of socio-historical patterns or trends, (c) addressing the intersection of capitalism and resiliency (e.g. unemployment rates, poverty rates, etc.), and (d) incorporating the use of phenomenologically-based analyses. Here, resilience becomes more than an individual characteristic, and becomes a *site* in regards to African American males, including how the hopes, friendships, violence, risk and struggles for survival on the street corners, basketball courts, and other places serve as protective mechanisms in everyday experiences (Payne, 2005). Similarly, Franklin (2004) describes resilience for African American males as "the individuals' effective management of the hassles of daily life, cumulating over one's life history, which enhances one's adaptive repertoire and efficacy in coping strategies" (p. 781). As Payne (2005) described, this adaptive repertoire and efficacy can include both factors within the individual and his environment.

Majors and Billson (1992) identified a particular way that African American males cope with life stressors, calling this phenomena "cool pose". Cool pose, or acting

cool, is both structurally and functionally dynamic, offering how African American males use, create and manage their presentation of self to others, and includes "roles, values, presentation of self, and situationally constructed and performance-orientated behaviors, scripts, and physical posturing" (p. 246). Cool pose also includes demeanor, mannerisms, gestures, clothing, stance, hairstyles, and even walking styles, where African American males show that they are strong, proud and capable of survival despite society's negative views associated with them. In this regard, it becomes a masculine alternative built out of necessity to defend one's manhood in historically hostile situations that eventually could result in oppositional stances to mainstream culture in social, sexual and educational settings (Majors & Billson, 1992). Negative aspects of cool pose include violent behavior and sexual promiscuity as ways of coping with stress.

The expressive creative component of the African American way of being, including the arts and athletics in relationship to African American males is important to consider as well (White & Cones, 1999). No form of expression is particularly more prevalent with this present day African American male than hip hop culture (White & Cones, 1999; Kitwana, 2002). Hip hop serves as an important sub-culture within the larger national identity of African American culture. Although hip hop originated through diverse ethnic groups, in many ways, African Americans' are often seen as the founders and main contributors to present day hip hop culture. Many of today's youth utilize one or more of the dimensions of hip hop, which include rap or spoken word, dee-jaying, dancing or tagging, but also consists of verbal and body language, style, attitude, and fashion (Kitwana, 2002). Often used to demonize African American males in the media, hip hop's genesis, world popularity, and its use by African Americans and by the

larger public is far more complex and multi-layered than the dominant culture's perception of it. Kitwana (2002) offers that six major phenomena have influenced the worldview of young African Americans, including (1) popular culture and the visibility of African American youth within it, (2) globalization and the mass commodification of hip hop culture worldwide, (3) continued segregation based on race and class that persist in spite of the public proclamations of U.S. inclusiveness, (4) public policy regarding criminal justice, particularly those that have racial implications, (5) the media representation of young African American males in popular culture, and (6) the shift in the quality of life for young African Americans (Kitwana, 2002). Although all six of these phenomena continue to be discussed and researched among cultural scholars, it is fairly easy to hear reflections concerning them in the music of many African American males. (Perry, 2004). Some research has also suggested that the popular culture images influence African American males as well, including the image of the African American athlete as entertainment (Kitwana, 2002; Ogden & Hilt, 2003).

Almost daily, if one is exposed to any form of media, an individual is likely to see some image of an African American athlete advertising a product or service. African American males tend to view these images with admiration, and see athletics and the entertainment world as a powerful alternative to street life, and in some cases, the mundane professional world, viewing the opportunity to become a professional athlete or an entertainer as an opportunity for financial rewards, fame and admiration (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Ogden & Hilt, 2003;. For many African American males, this leads to conflict with pursuing academic achievement to enter careers in such professions as law, the sciences or medicine. Education and the enrollment within school become a means to

an end for access to media outlets and professional opportunities via high school and collegiate athletics. Race and body politics are important to consider under this realm as well. Jackson (2006) refers to the practice of viewing African American or Black bodies as "scripting". Scripting refers to a "spectorial gaze" and "social prescriptions" that disprivilege racialized, politicized, and commodified Black bodies" (p. 11). Scripting is not only about stereotypes and negative images, but how Black bodies have been commodities for hundreds of years. In this regard, African American male bodies are viewed as commodities in our society. For Jackson (2006) several racialized projections concerning the African American male body are important for consideration, viewing the Black male body as: (1) exotic and strange, (2) violent, (3) incompetent and uneducated, (4) hyper-sexual, (5) exploitable, and (6) innately incapacitated. This scripting influences racial profiling, stereotypes, and other processes of oppression that affect African American males.

African American males often show a strong degree of importance concerning relationships with family and peers. This sense of connectedness to others, often referring to non-familial relationships as "brother" or "cousin", reflects the connectedness that they have with each other (Mandara, 2006; Richardson, 2005; White & Cones, 1999). This connectedness also is reflected in their relationship to the African American community as a whole. Spirituality also plays a significant role in development, with African American males often citing having important reliance upon a power greater than them (White & Cones, 1999).

Major social institutions. Major social institutions that affect African American males' identity development include the African American family, African American

religious institutions, including the African American church and mosque, educational institutions, and street organizations (White & Cones, 1999). The first of these mentioned, the African American family structure, plays a critical role in the development of African American youth, serving as the primary source of socialization for children and adolescents (Majors & Billson, 1992). However, the African American family is heterogeneous, and not homogenous, in reference to structure, and can consist of two parent households, single parent households, and extended family which reflect different aspects of diversity, including socioeconomic status and inter-racial households (Lovett-Tisdale & Parnell, 1996). Parenting style diversity also plays a role in African American family life and identity development. Of the three major parenting styles, authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive, African American parents tend to demonstrate authoritative parenting styles, but in different ways than other ethnic groups (Mandara & Murray, 2002). For example, African American parents tend to be more demanding and less acquiescent to children's demands than European American parents, which could be considered more authoritarian in nature. The extended family also plays a significant role in family development, for even when the father might be absent, uncles, cousins, grandfathers, and even ministers play a role in the development of the youth (Lovett-Tisdale, et.al, 1996; Richardson, 2003).

Although it has been found that single family homes do not necessarily contribute to the delinquency of young males, research has shown a strong link between juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and mental health problems and being raised in single-parent, female headed households (Caldwell, Sturges & Silver, 2007). African American males' home life and relationships within the home may affect choices and decisions

concerning negative behavior, along with school problems (Caldwell, et. al., 2007). However, the current literature concerning the exact influences of family functioning on African American male development, particularly associated with academic achievement, has been inconsistent, showing at times family influence being a major contributor to social behavior, and other studies showing communal influences being demonstrating a greater impact (Mandara, 2006). However, parenting styles, physical discipline, racial socialization, father absence, and parents' direct academic involvement in the child's education all play a significant role and are all interrelated in the process of developing African American males (Mandara, 2006).

It is also worth noting the importance of 'fictive kinship' in family relationships within the African American community. Fictive kinship describes strong relationships that exist between members of a given community where blood or marriage ties may not exist. Persons who are designated as fictive may relate to each other in kinship terms ("cousin", "brother", auntie") and at times attribute the rights and statuses of those titles to these relations (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994). Friendships that are related in kinship terms are intensified and move beyond generalized relationships, and an individual has a certain respect and responsibility as a member of the extended family (Chatters, et al, 1994). African American males often have "cousins", "play-mom's", and "brothers" that they interact with on a regular basis, and have served in various capacities in their lives, including in surrogate parenting roles (Zimmerman, Salem & Maton, 1995). In this regard, the extended family can play an important role in the development of African American, and at times, even counter the stereotypical portrayal of the single-parent raised child as lacking in "normal" family resources (Zimmerman, et al, 1995).

These types of relationships are particularly evident in street-life culture, as many youth develop intense relationships with surrogate parents and brothers (Anderson, 1999).

Street-life. Special consideration here will also be given to the African American male who may be more prone to court-involvement within the urban context, the "street-life" African American male. The circumstances that have developed by poverty and life circumstance have resulted in what Elijah Anderson (1999) calls an "oppositional culture", where the interaction of "decent" and "street" orientations merge within the African American community. Others have identified this oppositional culture, and have written extensively about it as a barrier to education and development (Ogbu, 2003). Anderson (1999) calls it a "code of the street" that develops within the community. For many African American males, this code is mixed with the day to day interactions of the larger institutions, and often conflicts with the values of mainstream society. Anderson (1999) writes:

> What has formed is a kind of institutionalized oppositional culture, a reaction to a history of prejudice and discrimination that now finds its way into schools and other institutions; it makes meaningful participation in institutions dominated by those closely associated with the wider society problematic, if not impossible, for many. The most public manifestation of this alienation is the code of the street, a kind of adaptation to a lost sense of security of the local inner-city neighborhood and, by extension, a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system. (p. 323)

Respect becomes a huge part of the code. Many elements of the code can be traced back to the origins of the U.S., but also reflect values associated with different cultures,

religion, including the Bible and Christianity, and the community response to trust of the legal system (Butterfield, 1996). The code of the street is actually a manifestation of mistrust of the criminal justice system, and other dominant systems, including public schooling, that African Americans have learned to develop within their community. The reality of street culture develops from the profound sense of alienation that many urban African American youth have in our society (Anderson, 1999). Safety and security develop out of understanding ways of operating within the community, and both street and decent youth have negotiated this terrain. An individual can be both "street" and "decent" and often code-switches between the two. By using the term "decent youth", Anderson (1999) refers to community members who live in urban, low-income neighborhoods, but do not connect to the "code of the streets", refraining from more street-life oriented activities. As schools are the central place for interaction with peers, and also the instructor of larger societal values, the relationship between street and decent becomes particularly relevant here. Street youth become more involved in street life as they grow older, and decent youth learn to code-switch (Anderson, 1999).

School becomes the place where the dynamics of the street get played out. To know and understand how to operate within the context of the street becomes valuable knowledge, and this at times competes with the school's mission. In order to survive within the school, one must be adept in street knowledge and how to negotiate this within different institutions (Anderson, 1999). Anderson (1999) writes:

> With each passing year, the school loses ground as more and more students adopt a street orientation, if only for self-defense in the neighborhood. But often what is out on the streets is brought into the classrooms. The most troublesome students

> are then encouraged by peers to act out, to get over on the teacher, to test authority by probing for weaknesses. (p. 94)

Signifying or put-downs, verbal teasing between peers, become an important part of the subculture here within schooling. Physical violence can easily erupt, and often a part of the negotiation of respect involves levels of violence that can range in extreme from verbal assaults to physical fights or "jumping on" an individual by a group, to actual gun violence resulting in death. Another aspect of this physical representation of respect is appearance. Both decent youth and street youth look at clothes and appearance as a way of negotiating esteem, and the material aspects of dress become a way to garner respect or to get "dissed". Many young people adopt ways of dressing that mimic street life, thus it becomes difficult for many outsiders to gauge the difference between street-life and decent youth, classifying the majority of youth as "street". Their presentation of self becomes wrapped in the playing out of the street terrain within the school.

Anderson (1999) goes on to ask the questions of "how do the roles of decent and street play in their search for identity, and what parts do others play? What stages do the young people go through? What is the "career" of identity as this career takes shape?" (p. 96) The teacher lumps the students together, the students in response develop estranged relationships with the school authorities, and the students merge African American identity with the oppositional culture. The students who exhibit this become models for many disaffected students, and as result, many young people who may be seen as decent, take on street codes to handle conflicting situations and ordeals. Whereas many youth would take a non-violent approach to many situations, often street-life youth end up adopting violence and "cool pose" as a way to negotiate the terrain.

Another way youth negotiate street life is through their affiliation with street organizations. Street organizations also referred to as "gangs", often serve as a harbor for young African American males in low-income environments. They become both a terror and a safety net for many males, who opt to join street organizations for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, protection, identity, camaraderie, power, financial rewards, or social isolation (Spergel, 1995). Because of the sheer numbers associated with street organizations in Chicago and nationwide, it would be remiss not to address African American males' participation in such organizations. Many youth who end up involved within the juvenile court system are members of street organizations. Often, street organizations make a complex sub-culture that are filled with levels of hierarchy, support and intricate organization, with youth involved on different levels (Spergel, 1995). As mentioned above, the reasons for involvement vary for youth, and it often becomes difficult for many males to resist involvement, even if they come from stable family systems. The urban existence brings many challenges as well as sites of resilience, and youth find ways to cope and organize community life in intricate ways.

Summary. Any combination of these aspects of African American identity have to be taken into account when addressing circumstances concerning the African American male, particularly court-involved African American males. The youth highlighted in this study live in an urban context, and these dynamics tend to play a significant role in how they develop, or at a minimum, how our larger society views them. Whether their identity is shaped by the larger perceptions of the world towards them, or by innate qualities that exist within the African American community and themselves, is still left up to be seen. In truth, it is probably some combination of

circumstances: the cultural manifestations of an African people influenced by slavery and the history of oppression within the U.S., developing as a resilient, dynamic sub-culture within the global context, and a gendered representation of masculinity that negotiates the patriarchy of today's society with a struggle for dignity and respect. As noted earlier, within the institutional dynamics associated with the U.S. prison industrial complex that has grown out of the complex relationship between economics and human resources, the African American male has become a significant player (or pawn) within this system. Thus, although there has to be caution taken concerning any essentialist notions concerning race, class or gender or the like, those who are identified as African American male still are held in large numbers within criminal justice systems, and struggle in disproportion in several major life areas. So with the so-called normal trials and tribulations of adolescence, these other identity related circumstances must be factored in to address any issues with the African American male, including within the context of public school education. Following is a brief review of factors to consider for this population concerning public education.

African Americans and Education

The history of education for African Americans in the United States is filled with many stories of promise and hope, as well as tragedy and challenges. Understanding this history and the complexity surrounding it would be an extensive project in and of itself. However, a brief introduction of this history can serve as a context in understanding present day educational practices for African Americans. Some scholars, when describing African Americans and education, point to slavery's tragic beginnings and this country's history of oppression, and a collective and cultural frame of reference that

developed out of slavery that is oppositional to positive approaches to education (Ogbu, 2003; 2004). Although there can be little question that slavery had a significant impact on African Americans and their descendants, this view is simplistic when compared to understanding how African Americans themselves viewed education. Many African Americans viewed education as a key to liberation and access to opportunities within the context of the American system, and there are several accounts that lend credence to this investment in the educational process (DuBois, 1935; Watkins, 1993; 2001; Webber, 1981; Woodson, 1933/1998). However, this desire for education often could not compete with the white supremacist policies and practices, such as the "slave codes" and later the "black codes" that prevented an active engagement within the educational system (Cross, 2003; Watkins, 2001; Woodson, 1993/1998). This history of educational disenfranchisement occurred throughout the nation, including within the city of Chicago.

An example of this occurred during the 1930's and 40's. In an attempt to curb juvenile delinquency due to tremendously overcrowded schools, African American youth were crowded into schools, and double shift programs were developed that allowed students to attend either an early or late session of schooling, cutting down on hours that would include a full day in school (Cross, 2003; Homel, 1984). Cross (2003) shares:

> To maintain school segregation, officials provided dismal, damp, and unhealthy temporary structures called portables, *but more important to our discussion of Black juvenile delinquency rates was the double shift remedy.* School schedules were altered and one school might serve two or *more* shifts of students every school day! (p. 78)

This type of process led to a disinterest in the schooling process, and forced a "push out" of schools for African American youth, setting up a "trap" of delinquency and street involvement (Homel, 1984).

Later in the century, Brown vs. the Board of Education in 1954 would lead to a new sense of participatory education that no longer would legally exclude African Americans and other marginalized groups from mainstream education. Although *Brown* showed promise concerning the transformation of the educational system, in looking at modern day schools, society we still see similar problems and many challenges persisting today. In a recent scholarly journal article penned as a letter to author and scholar Zora Neale Hurston in response to her comments concerning the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision, Fine, et al. (2005) write:

> [W]e have written on the "six degrees of segregation" that undermine the spirit of *Brown*: finance inequity, tracking, racialized suspension practices, high-stakes testing with disproportionate impact on students of color and students in poverty, distinct experiences of respect and recognition in school based on race/ethnicity, and a national retreat from desegregation (p. 508).

Although legal segregation no longer exists, the schools in Chicago continue to be segregated based on race and class (Kozol, 2005; Kelleher, 2004), and many of the inequities that persisted fifty years ago present themselves in the forms listed above (Hallinan, 2001). The group that is most likely to suffer from the continued impact of these practices is the African American males.

African American males tend to struggle significantly within public school systems in urban areas, and many scholars have written detailed descriptions of problems

inherent within public schools among educators, administrators and policy makers concerning schooling and this population (Davis, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Duncan, 2002; Gibbs, 1988; Hale, 1986; 2001; Ferguson, 2000; Hall, 2006; Kozol, 1991; 2005; Kunjufu, 1995; Lipman, 2003; 2004; Noguera, 2003; Reed, 1988). These scholars often agree concerning the reality of disparity concerning education, and that these issues are cause for major concern. These problems occur within and outside of the classroom, and include issues of curriculum and instruction, and community problems and concerns. However, in viewing the African American male's relationship to public schooling, it cannot be fully understood without exploring the structural context of schooling and our society (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001). Part of the structural impact for youth is how the process of schooling works to marginalize the voices of those who may not have traditionally been heard (Dauite & Fine, 2003).

African American males, a group that historically has both success stories concerning education and severe challenges, become a part of the marginalized voices that exist within this system, and they often struggle to gain access to resources that may be associated to positive achievement. The voices of African American male students, particularly within urban environments, may go through a silencing process where they have little input into their academic worlds. Although males in general are often seen as a dominant group within U.S. society, African American males have a different relationship to the larger society than males of other racial and ethnic groups, based on historical and present day factors (Duncan, 2002; Schiele, 1998; White & Cones, 1999). Their race *and* sex become significant variables in their interactions with others, including teachers and administrators. Ferguson (2000) writes:

> Sex is a powerful marker of difference as well as race. While the concept of intersecting social categories is a useful analytical device for formulating this convergence, in reality we presume to know each other instantly in a coherent, apparently seamless way. We do not experience individuals as bearers of separate identities, as gendered and then as raced or vice versa, but as both at once. The two are inextricably intertwined and circulate together in the representations of subjects and the experience of subjectivity……I explore the specific way that black boys are constituted as different from boys-in-general by virtue of the sexing of racial meaning.(p. 23)

This differencing based on race and gender continues to be a ready-made filter for interpreting events, informing social interactions, and grounding identities and identification in public schooling. This becomes significant in addressing gaps between educational attainment and achievement of African American males, as school performance related factors including ability group placement, tracking, attitudes and expectations of school officials and student discipline play a crucial role (Gregory & Mosley, 2004; Reed, 1988). As opposed to being a supportive environment that enhances their development and learning, schools become a difficult system to flourish and function within. The community outside of schools, the environment within the school hallways and classrooms, and what is being taught all play a significant role within schooling for African American males. For the purpose of this study, three major areas within the context of schooling - school climate, pedagogy and curriculum, and school discipline - will be reviewed in order to illustrate factors that can contribute to disengagement in schooling for African American males.

School climate. When students enter into schools, they enter not only into classrooms where learning takes place, but also into institutions that have a culture influenced by the community surrounding the school, policies and practices that emanate from a local, national, and sometimes global level, administrators' and teachers' backgrounds and ideologies and attitudes, as well as the backgrounds of peer groups. This atmosphere produces what can be classified as *school climate.* School climate can be described as the feel of the school as perceived by students, teachers, and other key constituents of the school, including parents, and it affects quality of communication, as well as norms of the school and rewards and sanctions (Lawrence, 2007). School climate affects students' self-esteem and self-concept via how students perceive how they are valued in an environment (Cohen, 2006), and can be viewed as a concept that captures the atmosphere of the school (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002/2003).

There is currently a minimal amount of literature available concerning African American males and school climate. However, many studies related to African American males and the environment within and surrounding schools support that multiple elements of school being important for consideration in addressing their education, including climate (Davis, 2001; Duncan, 2002; Ferguson, 2000; Fine, et al., 2003; Hall, 2006; Harry & Anderson, 1994; Hopkins, 1997; Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Sewell, 1997). The school climate becomes a key ingredient in determining whether or not there are trusting relationships within the school that support learning for students (Hoy, Smith & Sweetland, 2002/2003). These trusting relationships within the school can help facilitate the academic engagement within a school (Way & Greene, 2006). In many urban environments where African American males attend schools that are predominately

African American, where many of the students come from low-income families, the policies and practices at the institutional level often create questionable environments that are not necessarily supportive to their educational achievement. Many of the communities surrounding the schools are spaces that include high levels of unemployment, neighborhood violence, and economic challenges (Kozol, 2005; Wilson, 1996). The students negotiate this terrain, and attend schools that have fragile histories with the community. Parents struggle with engagement within these schools, and administrators and teachers struggle to invest with relationship building in the surrounding community (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). This produces institutional vulnerabilities that can affect the climate of the school, including teachers and administrators implementing policy from the school board without community input, or misunderstood efforts to improve school performance impacting children and families in negative ways. Administration and teachers attempt to work within the structures of many of these policies, but often have to deal with outside policy influences as well, such as the No Child Left Behind Act and zero tolerance (discussed in detail later in this document). The school climate for African American males, then, becomes a space to negotiate different levels of meaning making around school policy and their existence within the school.

Pedagogy and curriculum. Some attention has to be paid to what happens within the classroom for African American males. For African Americans, this question takes on a special relevance due to historical slights concerning historical and curricular perspectives from an African American and non-dominant cultural worldview. When the educational system first developed within this country, items that were deemed relevant

in curriculum included items that taught *men* to be well-rounded in the humanities in preparation for careers in various disciplines, including law, education, and medicine. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a formal knowledge of the classic historical texts as a well as a firm embrace of Latin were viewed as important applications in education (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004). As time went on, curriculum intentions became more practical in seeking to develop social engineering as opposed to spiritual enlightment (Pinar, et al., 2004). However, African Americans were not a part of the dialogue concerning education, primarily due to the institution of slavery. Slave codes, and the like existed to impose restrictions among African Americans concerning literacy and schooling (Watkins, 1993; 2001; Webber, 1981).

While these restrictions changed after the abolition of slavery, the social implication of the importance of education for African Americans took on new meaning. African Americans were committed to education, but *what knowledge mattered most* became a subject of debate, and conflicts such as educating Black people to become skilled workers versus education that also focused on higher pursuits were often debated (Anderson, 1995; Ratteray, 1994; Watkins, 1993; 2001). African Americans such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington contributed to this debate, and different Black curriculum orientations developed, including religious-based content knowledge, industrial-centered education, and Black Nationalist perspectives, which also included an integration of African and African-American history into curriculum (Anderson, 1995; Ratteray, 1994; Watkins, 1993). With *Brown vs. the Board of Education,* the challenge of creating and maintaining relevant curriculum would take on new meaning as schools became integrated, and as for those schools that remained predominately Black, the

curriculum would be encouraged to match the predominately Euro-American schools. Thus, an already low-emphasis on history and educational practices relevant to African Americans would potentially be further marginalized. Even now, the use of curriculum that reflects more multicultural and critical perspectives continues to be debated (Banks & Banks, 2004; Grant & Sleeter, 2003). Given the need to concentrate on standards and accountability, it is difficult for teachers, particularly at low-income neighborhood schools, to engage in curriculum deliberation that is inclusive of diverse historical perspectives. Even when there can be use of curriculum that is reflective of African American culture and experience, the way a teacher approaches the educational process can become a factor as well.

Curriculum, pedagogy and African American males. With the educational disparities that exist in this country, every aspect of the educational process has to be reviewed in both understanding and addressing effective educational practices when it comes to African American males. One of the most important areas to review is the work of teachers, particularly in low-income African American communities. The African American community has a rich history of teachers who demonstrate care and concern for the educational achievement of African Americans (Foster, 2000). These teachers have often taught against the odds, overcoming obstacles themselves in order to provide education throughout the years in the United States. In many predominately African American schools, many excellent teachers are of races and ethnicities different from African Americans as well. However, it is often difficult for teachers to practice effectively when there are institutional and inter- and intrapersonal challenges concerning teaching students of color, and in particular, African American males. Pedagogical

practices that offer little reflection concerning institutional dictates and personal bias can significantly influence the educational process for African American males (Boykin, Tyler & Miller, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Duncan, 2000; Hall, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Ellison, Boykin, Towns & Stokes (2000) identified five major categories of classroom functioning concerning pedagogical practices and low-income African Americans. These include (1) social/psychological, (2) the technical core of instruction, (3) the structure of the learning environment, (4) discipline and classroom management, and (5) students' and teachers' perceptions of classroom life. Social/psychological dynamics are concerned with interpersonal and intrapersonal factors of the teachers and students and their interactions with each other in the non-instructional contexts' (Ellison, et al., 2000). Boykin, Tyler & Miller (2005) share:

> [C]ultural themes such as communalism, movement expressiveness, verve, and the co-importance of cognition and affect, would not find constructive outlets in school and, in fact, may be dismissed as contextually inappropriate despite their demonstrated link to cognition and positive academic performance. (p. 525)

The technical core of instruction addresses such issues as instruction-based feedback, activities, strategies, interactions and evaluation (Ellison, et al., 2000). Duncan (2000) describes several teacher practices that can disrupt the teaching of African American males, including, but not limited to, criticizing African American males more frequently than other students for failure to respond to questions correctly, providing African American males with less accurate and detailed feedback on assignments, demanding less of a work effort, and interpreting the narrative styles of African American males as inarticulate or incoherent. The structure of the learning environment is concerned with

the physical ecology of the classroom and school, including organizational structure of the environment (Duncan, 2000; Ellison, et al., 2000). Discipline practices and classroom management refer to those policies, procedures and strategies deemed necessary to ensure an environment for learning. Lastly, the category of students' and teachers' perceptions of classroom life is concerned with the attitudes, aspirations, and expectations of both students and teachers (Ellison, et al., 2000). Teachers and attitudes within classrooms become a significant factor in how African American males relate within the classroom environment. The dynamics between curricular representation and classroom engagement become a critical part of the engagement of African American males within the context of the classroom. This helps create what can be called the "hidden curriculum", or practices that are not a formal part of curriculum and instructional practices, and help form a relevant part of the educational process with African American males (Apple, 1990; Boykin, et al., 2005; Delpit, 1995; Duncan, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001). This hidden curriculum often reflects the values of the dominant society, and without critical reflection, can often influence such choices as curriculum selection and teaching strategy.

Polite (1994) suggests four types of African American males that respond to schooling: active conformists, passive conformists, nonconformists, and overt resistors. The active conformists engage in dominant culture actively. The passive conformists engage in dominant culture, but put little insight and awareness into what they do and their roles within the process of schooling. The nonconformists tend to resist dominant culture, but only marginally. The overt resistors have little desire for school, and often are seen as delinquent and defiant.

A vicious cycle develops that supports hopelessness, and largely as a result of endemic joblessness and alienation, fuels the volatile behavior that overt resistors often engage in. This violence then serves to confirm the negative feelings many whites and some middle class-blacks harbor toward the ghetto poor, further legitimating the oppositional culture and the code of the street for many alienated youth (Anderson, 1999). These youth are labeled "troublemakers", and the relationship that starts with being labeled in a hostile climate often forms a direct relationship between dropping out of school and prison (Ferguson, 2000).

Discipline and punishment. Many teachers and administrators get caught in the larger society's social control practices, and in an effort to engage students in the educational process as influenced by the state, practices such as disciplinary procedures become a central aspect of an attempt to control and contain the interruption of behavior that they deem as not appropriate in the educational environment. The challenge for African American males in receiving an education within the environment mentioned above is referenced in Ann Arnett Ferguson's work *bad boys* (2000). Ferguson (2000) based her text upon ethnographic research within a public elementary school, and observed several challenges with the schooling of African American males. Ferguson (2000) writes:

> In public, school people seemed to subscribe to explanations that the "at-riskness" of children was a consequence of apathetic or dysfunctional families; but in private conversations and interviews, black teachers and staff hinted that race, gender, and class made a significant difference in a child's experience of school. They suggested that certain boys got picked on because they were black and came

> from the neighborhood; that white teachers were "intimidated" by black boys; that some African American teachers had problems working with neighborhood children, almost all of whom were black and poor (p 18).

In circumstances such as this, the African American male can become stigmatized for reasons based on class, race and gender, regardless of whether the teachers and administrators are African American or of a different racial group. When children are stigmatized in this way, it is easy to begin to correlate the relationship between discipline practices with the school and teacher/administrator bias. Ferguson goes on to say about the school administration that "punishment practices are mapped on assumptions about "essential" differences" (p. 19, Ferguson, 2000). The racialized and gendered meanings in social relations become a lens to unpack the questionable disciplinary practices within public schools.

Discipline policies and practices are used to maintain some locus of control and focus for school personnel and students (Casella, 2005; Gregory & Mosley, 2004). Discipline, in the truest sense of the word, is important within the educational environment. It can be relevant for students to understand how a positive self-discipline can support long-term objectives, help with study habits and social skills, and help students achieve goals and objectives. However, this is not the common use of the word in today's schools. Disciplinary practices are largely seen as punitive practices in order to maintain some level of control within the classroom and within the school. In a study assessing teacher's views on the over-representation of African American students in the discipline system, Gregory & Mosley (2004) cited that many teachers attempted to view disciplinary policies as race-neutral; however, their findings include that there was little

recognition of racial bias' and how policies work to discriminate against African Americans, in spite of the disparity. The standards and policies of discipline rarely reflect visible values, and more so focus on unwritten and unspoken values that reflect a society that cares more about incarceration than education. One such policy, zero tolerance, has come under much scrutiny concerning its discriminatory properties concerning African American and Latino males.

Zero tolerance. Zero tolerance policies that criminalize youth have become prevalent throughout the country (The Advancement Project, 2005; Brown, 2003; Casella, 2001; 2005). Zero tolerance refers to policies that are created to minimize delinquent behavior (e.g., controlled substance use within schools, physical violence, etc.) and give little flexibility for offenses by youth. Since 1974, the number of school-based suspensions nationally has doubled (Wald & Losen, 2003). In 2000, African American students represented seventeen percent of the student population but thirty-four percent of those suspended (Wald & Losen, 2003). Criminalizing trivial offenses pushes children out of the school system and into the juvenile justice system. Brown (2003) cites three factors that are problematic with zero tolerance programs:

> (1) Even in cases where punishments are mild, students are less likely to graduate and more likely to end up back in the court system than their peers, and they are saddled with a juvenile or criminal record; (2) Turning schools into "secure environments", replete with drug-sniffing dogs, metal detectors, and uniformed law enforcement personnel, lowers morale and makes learning more difficult; (3) The negative effects of zero tolerance fall disproportionately on children of color and children with special needs" (p. 6).

Schools have become more prison like, and serve as fortresses, closed to the public and secured by cameras, metal detectors, dog sweeps, and armed and unarmed police officers. In 1999 in Chicago alone there were more than 600 police officers assigned to schools from the Chicago Police Departments School Patrol Unit and two officer's full time in each school (Brown, 2003). Although attempts are often made to justify the need for this type of surveillance and monitoring, there has been little documentation that this has actually improved safety within schools. The results of such tactics are that African American and Latino youth are more likely to be arrested than their White peers, regardless of the demographics (The Advancement Project, 2005). Although it could be argued that an increased presence of security personnel and procedures would lead to a drop in school based incidents, there is little evidence to suggest that increasing disciplinary policies like zero tolerance have led to any major positive changes in school culture. In a report focusing upon the "schoolhouse to jailhouse track", The Advancement Project (2005) write:

> In an attempt to improve safety, schools have beefed up security measures to include: cameras, metal detectors, tasers, canine units, and biometric hand readers…while these measures produce a perception of safety, there is little or no evidence that they create safer learning environments or change disruptive behaviors. There is however, evidence that these tactics unnecessarily thrust more youth into an unforgiving penal system (pp. 7-8).

Chicago Public Schools' zero tolerance policies reflect the national trend towards disciplinary policies that discriminate against youth. In 2003 over 8000 students were arrested within Chicago Public Schools (The Advancement Project, 2005). More than

40% of these arrests were for assaults or batteries which involved no serious injuries or weapons, and in all likely were minor fights. Over 75% of those arrests were African American students. (The Advancement Project, 2005). Chicago Public Schools Uniform Disciplinary Code has several stipulations that suggest appropriate policies when dealing with students, including those who should be expelled from school, truancy issues, or have low test scores. However, recent advocacy work has decreased the amount of punishment practices that exist in some Chicago Public Schools (CPS) (Chicago Tribune, 2006). Although advocacy groups have worked to change CPS's dress code policy standards and other policies that help enforce zero tolerance (Chicago Tribune, 2006), this still does not minimize the overall impact of educational practices that "push-out" students. Student's who end up dropping out, particularly males, are more likely to participate in illicit behavior than their in-school peers. The link between schools and the criminal justice system are beginning to be explored within both scholarly and policy realms (The Advancement Project, 2005; Brown, 2003; Fine, et al., 2003; Noguera, 2003; Wald & Losen, 2003). The criminal justice system, upon arrest of a youth, interact with the schools in a number of ways. (see table 1)

Table 1. Circumstances under which arrest or court involvement might affect school Options 1

Arrest on school grounds or at school-sponsored activity – off-campus arrests may or may not become known to school officials
Detained or incarcerated – School absence noted
Detained – Detention center school notifies youth's prior school upon release
Transfer from transitional program for youth on parole or probation
On probation – Probation officer visits school
Youth voluntarily informs school personnel

1-Adapted from Mayer (2005)

After a youth is detained within the county's juvenile temporary detention center and starts attending the school within the center, the previous school is generally contacted by the center and notified concerning the students' whereabouts. However, many workers within the center have noted that many times Chicago Public Schools sends the students records back to them after they attempt to contact the students' school that he/she is to re-enter into (Mayer, 2005). Because of the disparity associated with race in public education, and the disparity associated with race within the criminal justice system, and items such as the increase in funding for penal institutions in proportion to the educational system, the low-amounts of retention for African American males in higher education and in high school, and the increase in percentages of African American males in penal institutions, the relationship between educational failure and criminal justice system involvement begins to make sense. Many men who are incarcerated as youth and adults cite difficulty within schools as youth, and only a small percentage of men who are incarcerated have high school diplomas, and an even smaller amount actually have college degrees (Brown, 2003; Juskiewicz, 2000). It is important here to briefly examine the current peculiar institution that has affected the predominately low-income African American communities in Chicago and many cities, the criminal justice system.

African American Males and Criminal Justice

African American males represent disproportionate numbers within the criminal justice system, and the statistics concerning their involvement can be quite jarring. The ethnic composition of the inmate population of the United States has been inverted in the

last half-century, going from about 70% white male at the mid-century point to about 30% today (Wacquant, 2002; Street, 2003). In 1975, the incarcerated population for all races had been declining over the years to reach 380,000. No one foresaw that it would reach a number over two million in the year 2000 (Wacquant, 2002). With the decline in work opportunities in inner-city communities (Wilson, 1996), unrest in inner cities concerning conditions for African Americans, a backlash concerning the democratic policy initiatives of the 60's, and a vilification of the urban Black male as prone to uprising and violence (e.g. North Lawndale/Liberty City/Watts's riots), the penal arm of the government began to exert itself in the Black community (Davis, 2003). What has developed, as Loic Wacquant (2002) calls it, is "an ethnoracial control and closure built out of four elements: stigma, constraint, territorial confinement, and institutional encasement" (p. 50). The stigma of being young, black and male and attending "failing" schools, the constraint of living in communities where employment opportunities are absent and racial profiling exists, the confinement of neighborhood boundaries based on informal segregation and gentrification, and the institutional encasement *beginning with schools* and moving into mass incarceration for inner city African American men continue to be barriers for the development of young males.

Those who are convicted criminals have been expelled in many states from being eligible for Pell grants, excluded from public aid, and in many states banned from political participation. Nearly one black man in six nationwide was excluded from the ballot box due to a felony conviction and more than one fifth of them were prohibited from casting a vote in Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas, Washington and Wyoming in recent elections (Wacquant, 2002). Thirty percent

of African American males currently aged 20 to 29 are "under-correctional supervision"- either in jail or prison or on probation or parole (Maurer, 1999). According to a model used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, a young black man aged 16 in 1996 faced a 29 percent chance of spending time in prison during his life. The corresponding statistic for white men in the same age group is 4 percent (Street, 2003). "Going downstate" for many males of color in the state of Illinois means a trip to the state penitentiary (Street, 2003). Of two million people behind bars, seventy percent of the inmates are people of color, with fifty percent being African Americans and seventeen percent Latinos. Although African Americans do not make up the majority of drug users in the U.S., they make up thirty-five percent of all drug arrests, fifty percent of all drug convictions, and seventy-four percent of all sentences for drug offenses. A Justice Department report points out that on any given day in this country, more than a third of the young African American men aged 18-34 in some of our major cities are either in prison or under some form of supervision, and black youth are forty-eight times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison for drug offenses (Giroux, 2003). Within such a context mentioned above, the possibilities for treating African American males with respect, dignity, and support becomes minimized based on racialized stereotypes that exist (Giroux, 2003).

African American males and juvenile justice. The figures in the previous section have outlined some of the major concerns for this population, yet, there continues to be a group that deserves more attention. Many African American males, prior to being involved in the adult criminal justice system, where arrested prior to the age of 18. Currently, there is little tracking of youth who were involved in the juvenile justice

system who were later arrested and incarcerated as an adult, but from looking at interviews with adult males of color, many cited prior arrests before the age of 18. These adults were once youth, and many were youth offenders. In 1991, African American males made up 15% of the population between the ages of 10-17 in the United States, and yet made up 46% of the juveniles in residential detention settings (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999, p. 94). These statistics have changed very little within the course of 15 years, and the types of crimes the youth are charged with, and their interactions with schools differ across racial and ethnic lines.

Juvenile court, detention and probation. African American males who are arrested go through a series of events in order to determine their guilt or innocence, level of punishment, including sentencing and confinement, and monitoring upon release. This process, designed to ensure the fair and just treatment of youth and society, has been criticized as contributing to the delinquency and dehumanizing of Black males in one extreme, and upheld as a necessary evils in a society that must protect its citizens from predatory members of that society who consistently break laws and participate in all levels of criminal activity, including theft, violence and the selling and use of illegal narcotic substances. There are several categories of youth who participate in criminal activity. There are those youth who commit illegal acts, but are not arrested. The next are youth who are arrested, but are not charged or who go through a “station adjustment”, where they are at times connected with guardians or other resources to prevent subsequent court-involvement. The next group of young people are those who have been arrested and received a referred to the state’s attorney where they receive a delinquency petition. This opens the door for the juvenile court (Mayer, 2005). The focus of this

study is on youth who fall in the latter group. The writer of this paper does not attempt to hold court-involved youth as innocent victims, acknowledging that many youth are involved in some level of criminal behavior. However, this paper does look to understand where the system works to discriminate against these youth both inside and outside of the criminal justice system. From the initial surveillance and arrest, to booking, trial and acquittal or conviction, to incarceration and afterwards, release and re-entry, many of the practices involved work against the positive development of these youth (Brown, et. al., 2003; Hinton Hoytt, Schiraldi, Simth & Ziedenberg, 2002; Mayer, 2005).

For example, in the 1980s and 1990s, most states responded to an increase in juvenile violence and gang activity by enacting transfer laws which place juvenile offenders within the jurisdiction of the (adult) criminal system. Many of these laws are currently being challenged, yet, some of the same problems continue to exist. For example, youth who are transferred into the criminal justice system lose the guarantees of record confidentiality that are common within the juvenile system (Brown, et. al., 2003). Attention is beginning to be paid to methods that work for these youth within the context of jailing, but little research has been done concerning what happens with these youth after they are incarcerated (Black, 2005). However, what *is* known is that African American youth are six times more likely to be locked up than White youth, even when charged with similar crimes without a prior record. African American youth represent 55% of youth in detention, and 85% of youth automatically transferred to criminal court. Of the 39% of drug crime cases involving African Americans that are petitioned for transfer by the courts, 63% were granted transfers; of the 59% of drug crime cases

involving Whites that are petitioned, only 35% were granted transfers (Brown, et.al, 2003; Juszkiewicz, 2000). Many of these youth come from poor communities and will return to them upon release. Up to two thirds of these same youth will be re-arrested and one-third incarcerated within a few years after release (Mears & Travis, 2004).

African American males and reentry. African American males face significant barriers upon re-entry into the community, including diminished access to education, training, employment and housing (ICAH, 2002). Overcoming the social stigma of incarceration becomes a challenge as well (Mears & Travis 2004; Steinberg, et al., 2004). Mears and Travis (2004) outline this problem here:

> One powerful example of this point arose during a presentation at the (Roundtable). A 20-year-old recently released from his latest term of confinement at the California Youth Authority was asked what the most difficult challenge was that he faced during reentry. The young man thought reflectively for a moment and said, "It's the way people look at you." He described how people, especially the police, assumed that he was the same person that he'd been before, and that he was not to be trusted. He also emphasized that he struggled to find work, support his family, get into school, and avoid the influence of the drug dealers and criminals in his community (p. 6).

At this point, little is known concerning the transition of young people from prisons to communities or how best to increase the likelihood that the transitions are successful (Butts, Mayer & Ruth, 2005; Mears & Travis 2004; Sullivan, 2004; Mayer, 2005).

Due in part to maintaining ties in high crime activity networks after reentry; African American males often develop adversarial, conflicting and non-trusting

relationships with public institutions, from police departments to public schools (Fine, et al., 2003; Foreman, 2002; Moore, 1996). However, these ties do not necessarily imply that the youth are engaged in criminal activity, as these relationships often offer safety, protection, and even status, but the stigma associated with their social networks prevents the development of relationships based on the youths' intent and desire to seek positive alternatives (Foreman, 2002). This supports that there are inherent problems within these systems that continue to stratify court-involved African American youth from engaging in trusting relationships with systems and adults. This lack of trust of outsiders becomes a part of the fabric of schools' relationships with young Black males. In Illinois, at least **half** of youth between the ages of 14-17 released from the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center, the Cook County Jail, or an Illinois Department of Corrections Juvenile facility will return to prison upon release (Illinois Department of Corrections, 2005). These youth often show an increased tendency to engage in delinquent behavior that enhances their recidivism rates back into penal institutions. They are years behind when they return, and schools are often reluctant to accept them and may remove them for relatively minor infractions (Mayer, 2005; Mears & Travis, 2003; Sullivan 2004).

Little work has been done to understand the identity formation with African American males and the reentry process after they return from incarceration and arrest (Beale Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004). From what we know, the trajectory of human development for these youth differs from development trajectories in more privileged communities, factoring in not only the normalized aspects of youth transitioning from childhood to adulthood, but also cultural factors and challenges associated with youth who transition from incarceration back into community (Sullivan, 2004). When these

youth return from being arrested, their complex histories and present day realities are often filled with challenges to re-integrate into society. It is no secret that court-involved African American males face several challenges integrating into traditional societal settings (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Mears & Travis, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2003; Steinberg, et.al, 2004; Sullivan, M. 2004). Traditional societal settings include employment or school settings.

African American males and reentry to public schools. For persons under the age of 18, educational settings are generally the primary setting where they spend the majority of their time. As noted earlier, many African American males in urban centers struggle within the public educational system (Duncan, 2000/2002; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2003; 2004). A particular portion of them, court-involved African American males, have significant challenges with schooling, including returning to public schooling after arrest or incarceration (Mayer, 2005). The percentages concerning the impact of having a high school diploma, and the figures associated with men in prison at age 30 who have not received a high school diploma, suggest a relationship between a lack of completing school and prison (Black, 2005; Pager, 2003). They have not easily adjusted to school, and the schools they often find themselves in do not easily accommodate them. Mayer (2005) in an exploratory study concerning court-involved youth and public school policy, interviewed several key informants who work with court-involved youth. She identified several types of schools that court-involved youth return to after leaving detention or after being expelled or dropping-out of regular Chicago schools.

Many of the informants in Mayer's study suggested that court-involved students were often "not a good fit" or in many ways "unwelcome" and school officials found a

way to exclude them (Mayer, 2005). Several types of schools were identified that many of these youth attend after becoming involved with the court system. Those include: Transitional programs, regular public schools, alternative/safe schools, dropout retrieval schools and GED Programs (Mayer, 2005). (See Table 2) Transitional schools are specifically for youth reentering from juvenile detention, and although they are credit bearing, do not grant high school diplomas or GED's. Five of the six transitional programs are run by Chicago Schools. The programs range from 10 weeks with a 10 week follow-up for some and six months to up to a year for others (Mayer, 2005). Alternative Safe Schools are designed specifically for youth who have been expelled from Chicago Schools. Run by private vendors under contract from Chicago, there seven total in Chicago. Dropout retrieval schools are alternative schools are for students, generally between the ages of 16-21, who have formally dropped out of school and are seeking high school diplomas. The main dropout retrieval program is Changing Lives Charter School, which serves as the umbrella for 22 "alternative schools". These schools often have autonomous identities and have missions that include culturally-specific or social justice oriented curriculum. However, they are still required to meet other standards associated with Chicago Schools, including mandatory 11th grade testing, as students receive a standard Chicago high school diploma. There are those who believe that Chicago Schools sees alternative schools as a "dumping ground" for students that the district no longer wants (Mayer, 2005). As accountability and disciplinary practices continue to change, students are "pushed out" of regular schools, by default allowing

school administrators to increase attendance, test scores, and behavior reports (Mayer, 2005; Lipman, 2003/2004). It should be noted as well that many students attend school

Table 2. Educational Options Used by Court-Involved/Non-Court Involved Youth[1]

School Type	Target Students	Capacity/Enrollment per Year	Getting in	Diploma/Certificate
Regular Public Schools	Ages 5 to 21 Reside in Chicago	407,905 [2]	Self/family referral	8th, 12th grade diploma
Alternative/Safe Schools	6th-12th grade Expelled from Chicago Schools	Approximately 307 [3]	Only by CPS referral following expulsion or pending expulsion if an emergency placement	8th, 12th grade diplomas earned during enrollment show as being from regular school
Dropout retrieval	Dropouts Ages 16-21	Changing lives charter school: 3100 seats with 1100 on waiting list [4]	Self/family referral	12th grade alternative school diploma
City Colleges GED	Prefer adults age 18 or over; will accept 16-17 years old	Approximately 5000 16-17 year olds [5]	Self/family referral	GED

1- Adapted from Mayer (2005).
2- Total enrollment for Chicago Public Schools for 2008-2009; includes Alternative/Safe and dropout retrieval schools.
3- Reflects as of December 2008
4- Reflects enrollment cap for 08-09 school year; waiting list as of April 2009.
5- Reflects GED enrollment only.

within the temporary juvenile detention center, and as mentioned earlier, are referred to Chicago Public Schools upon release from detention (for an exhaustive study on these types of schools, see Ayers "A Kind and Just Parent").

As schools are supposed to be the places where young people begin to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to develop them in order to become productive members of the larger society, for African American males in low-income communities, the terrain of schooling can be challenging. Several factors work against their achievement. However, one aspect that can be critical is the development of their social resources that can support them in gaining access to educational opportunities, economic resources, and a sustainable quality of life. Something is happening that prevents them from accessing these resources. They may not deem the system as manifested in public schooling as trustworthy, nor does this particular system appear to trust them. Thus, their relationships may block them from accessing positive resources in society.

Education workers have begun to explore *social capital* between school system relationships (e.g., schools, parents, students, community, etc.). Social capital has been positively linked to educational attainment, educational achievement and positive psychosocial factors (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coleman, 1994; Dika & Singh, 2002; Putnam 2000). Low-income communities within the traditional understanding of social capital often are considered to have very little social capital (Putnam, 2000). However, it is difficult to interpret processes such as social capital development in addressing educational systems without exploring the relationship of schools to the communities that they serve, and the under-performing of public schools in many urban settings, particularly concerning communities of color.

Social Capital

The concept of social capital has many aspects that illustrate the importance of how communities and networks organize to achieve common goals. However, the term is not without controversy, and several theorists interpret its value and importance differently. It is a term illustrated in several different disciplines, including sociology, political science, and education, and has been utilized by both conservative and progressive academicians and practitioners.

Alejandro Portes (2000) articulates social capital as the ability to marshal resources through social networks. Although marshalling resources through common networks appears to be a common thread among social capital theorists, who has social capital, how it is generated among different communities and groups, and how people access or are denied different forms of social capital become points of diversion between the different theoretical camps. Exploring two of the major theorists may be helpful in this regard to examine the utility of this theoretical utilized for this study.

Initially popularized by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986), theories of social capital can be traced back to the development of the United States and other western countries (Bellah, et al., 1985). Historically, indigenous societies often relied on strong networks and had deep relational ties in order to work together for survival. With the development of slavery, colonialism, and capitalism, these communities often began to develop different forms of engaging with each other that was both different from their previous ways of existence and also different from the dominant culture. Bourdieu (1986), in addressing systemic inequalities and group position that reinforced and

supported dominant culture, believed that there is an interaction between money capital, social capital and cultural capital that is supported by social reproduction and symbolic power. Bourdieu refers to cultural capital as the formal educational credentials that an individual possesses together with the more intangible complexity of values and styles and demeanor that lend access to networks and resources within the dominant society (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 2000).

Each society produces some form of structural exercises that transmit one form or another of practical mastery and knowledge in order to function within that society, thus the production of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Exploring the duplication of societies and classes within these societies, Bourdieu (1977) postulated that marginalized communities often had strong ties to each other, and established relationships based on trust, but could not often move within the larger social structure of a capitalist society, reproducing underclass societies. Social capital could not be acquired without the investment of some material resources and the possession of some cultural knowledge or capital, enabling the individual to establish relations with *valued* others (Portes, 2000). Two points of interest come out of Bourdieu's work: first, the relationships that allow the individual to claim resources possessed by the dominant group collective and second, the quantity and quality of those resources (Dika & Singh, 2002). Social capital becomes, in this regard, the interest of the dominant class, often without intent, in maintaining and reproducing group solidarity and preserving the group's dominant position, limiting the subordinate group's access to greater resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 2000; Monkman, Ronald & Theramene, 2005).

James Coleman (1990; 1994) takes the concept of social capital further. He explores the different types of community networks and how processes such as relational ties, trust and social norms are exhibited in these networks (Coleman, 1990; 1994). Communities function in ways that reinforce the different forms of "capital" that exists. Coleman focused primarily on family structure as a determinant of high levels of social capital within a community rather than the role of community and society's role in reproducing it. The family could be considered ultimately responsible for developing the engagement of youth in schools or accessing community social capital (Coleman, 1990). For Coleman (1994), social capital is intangible, and the levels of trust, informal channels and norms and sanctions that promote common good over self-interest become relevant. Based on research that suggests the links between the importance of two parent families in determining higher performance in schools and lower incidences of delinquency among youth, he saw working mothers and single parents as two of the main causes of the decline in social capital, particularly in poor communities. Access to resources and policies that reinforce inequality do not appear to be emphasized in Coleman's work (Dika & Singh, 2002). While Coleman obscures the ability to obtain resources, and Bourdieu emphasizes structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender and race, it is important to briefly mention the work of Robert Putnam in adding momentum to the importance of understanding how social capital is created, developed and sustained in communities.

Robert Putnam's work has further fueled scholarly debate concerning social capital by focusing upon the civic engagement and responsibilities of communities. In "Bowling Alone", Putnam (2000) begins to discuss how social capital has dissipated over

the years, noting a decline in civic and volunteer participation in low- and middle-income communities. Social capital, according to Putnam, is defined as those shared norms and values, social networks and the trust inherent with them that develops in a given community or society. According to Putnam (2000), the decline in social capital is evident by the decrease in citizen involvement in formal groups.

However, Putnam's conceptualization of social capital is different from its original description by Bourdieu, who emphasized social capital existing among those who may be members of marginalized groups, although the results of this social capital would be different for these groups (Portes, 2000). Problems arise in viewing the positive outcomes of social capital without understanding the structural factors that either produce what may be considered positive social capital, or reproduce what could be considered negative social capital (Portes, 1998; 2000; Morrow, 1999; Dika & Singh, 2002). Simply put, and what Putnam and Coleman acknowledge, the social capital that middle class and wealthy families have helps them access greater resources. Yet, their analyses stops short of critiquing how social capital can serve as a barrier to prevent low-income groups from accessing resources held by the dominant culture.

Portes (1998), in a critique of social capital as defined by Coleman and Putnam, felt that there were problems in measuring social capital, and that there was little analysis of systemic issues that question the different types of social capital. He describes social capital as one of the most successful imports out of sociology (Portes, 1998). He lists the downside of social capital as the exclusion of outsiders, restrictions on individual freedom and a downward leveling of norms. This downward leveling of norms, for example, exists when a community or given group of people develop a group solidarity

based on oppressive factors from the dominant group, and leveling occurs that prevents networking and forming ties with different groups.

Believing that the work of Coleman is difficult to translate to a practical understanding of social capital, Morrow began to look at how children may be affected by systems outside of the family (Morrow, 1999). For Morrow, large scale studies and secondary analysis, which both Coleman and subsequent researchers utilizing his data sets rely upon, prove problematic in addressing family relational factors. Much of the research that currently exists, including Putnam's, rely on this type of analysis (Dika & Singh, 2002; Portes, 1998; 2000; Morrow, 1999). This type of data fails to help understand the complexity that exists within many communities. For this reason, a greater emphasis on understanding how the networks interact qualitatively with each other within community becomes important. For example, Sampson (1999) argues that support for children in community is consensually desired but problematically achieved, owing in large parts to variability in structural constraints. This variability differs based on several factors within a given community, and could include such factors as race, ethnicity, gender and financial and social position, and past studies have rarely addressed cross-cultural norms associated with social capital. Morrow (1999) writes:

> [S]ocial capital is a rather nebulous concept that can include anything from how parents interact with their children to how people feel about where they live, to whom they know, how much they use their 'networks', and how much they trust their politicians. In Coleman's case in particular, social capital is not adequately contextualized in socio-economic history; in both Coleman's and Putnam's' formulations, it is gender blind, ethnocentric, and arguably a concept imported

> from the USA without due attention to cross- and inter-cultural differences. (p. 749)

Cross- and inter-cultural differences, in this context, not only include race and ethnicity, but also class and the culture of many of the major institutions that exist in community and society.

While Coleman focused upon the resources themselves, Bourdieu focused upon the access to them. In this regard, it becomes important to understand how social networks, social ties and trust differ among various groups, and how this may tie into the obtaining of resources and the development of what some consider being positive social capital across cultural boundaries. For the purpose of this study, social capital as conceptualized by Bourdieu as the set of valuable connections of an individual that gives her/him access to resources becomes useful. In this regard, the social networks that people engage in, regardless of social position, have value (Eccleston & Field, 2003). Education workers have begun to explore social capital with schools, parents and school system relationships. Social capital has been positively linked to educational attainment, educational achievement and positive psychosocial factors (Dika & Singh, 2002; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1994). However, it is difficult to interpret these types of development in addressing educational systems without exploring the relationship of schools to the communities that they serve, and the under performing of public schools in many urban settings, particularly concerning communities of color.

The majority of research on social capital, education and school settings has focused upon outcomes such as test scores and grades, study habits, high school drop out patterns, and college attendance (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Dika & Singh,

2002). Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (1997) developed a framework for studying people of color and identifying intrinsic mechanisms of mainstream institutions that account for the problems in accumulating social capital for low status youth. This framework was further articulated in his study of the school and kin support networks of Mexican American youth. Although these youths' test scores and graduation rates were well under those of White youth, they maintained having strong relationships and ties within their families and kin networks that demonstrated having high levels of social capital (trust, strong familial networks, etc.), although this did not always exist within the school (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). His work coupled with others from the field highlights as well the embedded-ness of adolescents in their social networks affected by constant ratification and stratification forces, and the difficulty in formulating relationships outside of these networks (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Dika & Singh, 2002). These stratification forces include difficulties developing cross cultural relations due to community boundaries created and reinforced by class and oppression (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; 2001; Sampson, 1999), as well as factors like those that exist within schools, such as ability group tracking.

Building upon the work of Boykin and Phelan, Stanton-Salazar postulated that youth socialization into society is a process where youth learn to "negotiate, and participate in, multiple and simultaneously existing worlds" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 21). Youth develop boundaries associated with within-group networks and external groups, and learn to navigate both within and outside of these groups. These borders could easily serve as barriers as well, and prevent access to social groups outside of their normal networks (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). For youth of color, successful socialization is

usually associated with the ability to decode mainstream institutional settings, and develop various abilities to navigate in the outside world beyond their networks. Stanton-Salazar identifies four barriers borrowed from Phelan to describe the barriers to these other "worlds": (1) socio-cultural barriers, (2) socioeconomic barriers, (3) linguistic barriers, and (4) structural barriers. Socio-cultural barriers are erected when the cultural components of one world are viewed as less important in another world. Socioeconomic barriers are present when economic barriers prevent the youth from engaging in the social world of schooling. Sociolinguistic barriers exist when a students' primary language is not validated within the context of schooling. Structural barriers exist when features in the school environment prevent, impede or discourage students from engaging fully in the educational process (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). For African American males, all four of these factors may exist and prevent an engagement in the educational process.

Horvat, et al. (2003) suggest that the "rules of the game" which Bourdieu describes in his notion of "fields" have been generally overlooked by researchers. The rules of the game reproduce and maintain existing structures by creating networks and social ties that keep people locked into existing systems. Although social capital as described by Coleman-oriented theorists speaks to how structural factors function to create environments of risk, they have little critique of how these structural factors are reinforced by the dominant culture, and are completely beyond the control of the individual actors, particularly children-such as the physical school environment, traffic on roads, etc. (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Morrow, 1999). These environments often create a challenge for many youth who attempt to engage the educational process within them. According to Bowles and Gintis (1976),

> [c]onformity to the social order of the school involves submission to a set of authority relationships which are inimical to personal growth. Instead of promoting a health balance among the capacity for creative autonomy, diligence, and susceptibility to social regulation, the reward system of the school inhibits those manifestations of personal capacity which threatens hierarchical authority…….Capitalist production is not only a technical process, but a social process (p. 95-96).

Although some information currently exists concerning the reinforcement of this social process within the educational environment, little research exists concerning formerly incarcerated youth and social capital (Wright, Cullen, & Miller, 2001). Most studies focus on the effects of low social capital on achievement or delinquency, and generally center on parent-child interactions (Coleman, 1994; Morrow, 1999). These studies discuss some of the structural implications of social capital, but do little in discussing how social capital may be present among so-called delinquent youth, and if present at all, considering it as "low" social capital. Portes (2000), in countering representations of social capital as "high" and "low", particularly among low-income communities, discussed how social capital exists in both socially acceptable and unacceptable ways. Youth involved in street-life may actually have developed some form of social capital. In Putnam's and in many other social capital researchers' model, street life would have little or no social capital between themselves and within their communities.

McCarthy and Hagan (2001) argue that social capital plays some role in criminal success, raising the possibility that both licit and illicit achievements are brought on by the development of both human and social capital. An individual may develop a certain

skill that would allow him to achieve economically and in illicit ways, and that same skill could apply for those who pursue licit means of supporting themselves. This has important implications because court-involved youth are often vilified both outside and within their communities, and ways of identifying positive assets that can be neutral will be important. It may be that norms, networks, social ties and trust do exist, but continue to support barriers that impede progress in traditional settings. Due to little attention being paid to systemic problems within the educational system, the stepping across social and community boundaries in order to establish new networks and ties becomes difficult for many youth (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). School quality issues and the conditions of teaching, learning and the curriculum also play a significant role (Henderson, Greenberg, Schneider, Uribe, & Verdugo, 1996).

Trust. It is important to note here how simply just being in the same environment with others does not lead to the development of positive social capital. Simple contact among diverse groups does not necessarily lead to trusting relationships (Schneider, 2006). For example, Valenzuela (1999) reported that the recent immigrants in her study of Latino students in a Texas high school have higher levels of social capital than their U.S.-born counterparts, but also found that the social capital held by these students was no match for the exclusionary tracking practices of the school. Some consider trust to be a key factor in the development of positive social capital in this regard (Woodcock, 2001).

Trust on a social level has been used in many studies as a means of approximating levels of social capital. Halpern (1999) suggests that there is a need for a simple "quick and dirty" measure and this can be addressed by the systemic measuring of social trust.

He considers it easy to measure, and to be associated with more policy-relevant outcomes than traditional measures of voluntary activity and association memberships. However, some researchers find using trust as an indicator of social capital may be flawed based on structural inequalities (Morrow, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Baron et al. (2000) suggest that the practice of using single questions about trust and linking them to broad measures of a nation's economic performance is an example of poor social capital measurement. However, it can be helpful to begin to understand how trust works on a relational level, particularly surrounding schools and communities, in order to understand how it impacts social capital and beyond. It would be helpful at this point to distinguish between different types of trust.

Generalized trust and particularized trust are examples of ways to differentiate and identify ties that people develop in order to address their needs. Generalized trusters tend to believe that most people share common values, and are willing to bridge community and cultural gaps in order to form relationships that may be reciprocally fruitful (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). Particularized trusters tend to have faith in other people but only in people from their own groups (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). They believe that they have little in common with outside groups. Although Putnam (2000) tends to hail generalized trusters as being the fabric of a democratic society, the impact of institutional oppression and questionable policy reinforce particularized trusting in many marginalized communities, and limit the civic participation that could exist (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). Whereas generalized and particularized trust assumes that a given society should trust, it is unrealistic to expect all parties to trust in similar ways. For example, youth in the community, who may or may not be gang-affiliated, may not contact the

police department if an event happens that may be problematic, instead relying on gang affiliated youth to address a problem. The particularized context becomes relevant, where both current and previous histories with institutions and personnel inhibit the development of what Putnam (2000) calls *bridging* social capital, or generalized trusting relationships.

Another way of describing these differences is in looking at two particular forms of social capital, *bridging* and *bonding* social capital. Bridging social capital refers to the building of connections of homogenous groups (Narayan, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000). These relationships are more likely to be fragile, but also can lead to greater social inclusion through the connection of diverse groups with each other. Bonding social capital refers to the links between like-minded people, or homogenous groups (Narayan, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000). This form of social capital can be generated among families, communities, or small networks of close associates. Bonding social capital builds strong ties, but can also exclude outsiders. There can be tension between the two groups, and can limit access to other groups through this exclusion that can occur. African American males often see teachers and administrators as outsiders of their particularized group, and it is very likely that those outside their groups see them the same way, thus reinforcing a two-sided wall that inhibits development of cross-cultural relationships. In education, the relationship between teacher, student and society is the critical apex of learning, but without the mutual trust, the relationship may exist, but not with the quality and information exchange that may be needed in an educational relationship. Yet, these youth are often able to develop trusting relationships with peers and family. Anderson (2003) shares that

"many youth develop trusting relationships with youth and develop "family" ties with other youths like themselves…..these groups dominate the public spaces and every young person must deal with them" (p. 99). This development could result in a form of bonding social capital and resistance culture, where youth resist engaging within dominant culture, and connect with who they may see as participants within the same struggle.

Trust is fundamental to the capacity to care. Relationships are to child and youth development what location is to real estate. The trust and care that youth may experience among their social networks, may not exist when they enter into the educational system. The current educational structure may not exhibit the level of trust needed for these youth to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship. Bryk and Schneider (2002) refer to the type of trust needed in the educational environment as *relational trust*. This relational trust is essential, but highly complex, and often the meaning and understanding of the many roles involved in forming significant interpersonal and institutional relationships can be complicated (Rauner, 2000; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). For Bryk & Schneider (2002), these roles include relationships between teacher and students, teachers and parents, teachers and their school principals, and teachers with other teachers. For example, African American males exhibit help seeking behavior among institutions at a significantly lower rate than white males, and their reasons for seeking help differ. In a study done in Washington D.C., white males tended to not seek help because of financial reasons, while African Americans did not seek help due to a fear of what others might think of them for doing so (Snell & Scott, 1998). In one study concerning 10 reasons youth choose to leave gangs, one reason cited was that they leave with the help and assistance of a non-gang affiliated adult (Spergel, 1995). If trusting relationships are

not developed between youth and adult, then transitioning from gangs would be significantly difficult. These examples illustrate not only how different groups might engage in institutions for different reasons, but also how the type of assistance becomes important.

For African American males in low-income communities, shared values and norms exist within their communities that support and enhance social networks. These shared norms and values, offer a level of trust that exists between members of the social group. Bridging forms of social capital must take place, as they rarely exist. They are difficult to develop where mistrust and racism have existed for so long. Bridges must be developed and positive networks formed in order for learning and development to take place (Narayan, 1999; Warren, 2001).

Social networks. Educational achievement is supported when social capital is developed via social networks through "weak ties" (Horvat, et. al. 2003). The term weak ties imply that an individual's acquaintances are less likely to be socially involved with one another than ones close friends or "strong ties" (Granovetter, 1973). The set of relational lines between an individual and his or her close friends will be dense and tight-knit (strong-ties), and relations between acquaintances of the opposite or low density (weak-ties). The individual's acquaintances have links to their own closely knit networks, thus allowing the individual to form a crucial link to other dense networks, forming a bridge for those who may be a part of their own respective strongly tied networks. Thus, individuals with few weak ties will not have the same access to larger parts of the social structure as those with many weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). For example, according to Troyna (1984), race and social networks, rather than educational

accomplishments by itself, are linked with developing positive employment prospects. Social networks and the weak ties developed within them enhance opportunity to increase social position and economic opportunity. In this regard, there is little evidence that spending more time in school will improve African Americans' social position in relation to whites (Patterson, 1998). Patterson (1998) notes that there are three things about networks that are critical: first, their size, or the total number of other persons that an individual can reach out to if and when she needs help of any kind; second, their density, or the extent to which individuals in the effective group of contacts that a person has also know each other and third, range. A person's network has a wide range if a high proportion of the people he knows are merely acquaintances who themselves do not share his own dense network ties but have their own network (Patterson, 1998). In this regard, it can be important for court-involved African American males to develop social networks that extend beyond their strong ties.

Theories proposed that highlight such ideas as racial inferiority, culture of poverty, racial and class discrimination have been espoused to attempt to explain the factors that limit African American male success in public schooling (Cross, 2003; Dance, 2002). Although racial and class discrimination are viable entry points to address the many factors, the discussion needs to include how a cultural alignment framework and how cultural oppression alienate youth and prevent the engagement in broader systems (Schiele, 1998). Ultimately, as Stanton-Salazar (1997) puts it, only youth who have a *bicultural network orientation* are able to cross borders, and these youth represent a minority within a minority grouping.

Many young African Americans often put a premium on the ability to "code-switch" and many youth adopt a code of ethics where they behave according to different sets of rules, depending upon the situation (Anderson, 1999). Those more inclined to participate in the street may have greater difficulty code-switching, either not knowing the rules for (decent) behavior or seeing little value in acting a certain way (Anderson, 1999), thus limiting their access to networks beyond their strong ties. It becomes increasingly difficult for them to navigate across the barriers that exist, in order to formulate the weak ties. Thus, Stanton-Salazar's bicultural network theory becomes a useful way of understanding how court-involved African American males navigate their worlds and engage with the dominant culture. To quote Stanton-Salazar (1997):

> An authentically group solution rests with the development of a bicultural network orientation among all minority children—an orientation that is anti-assimilationist and culturally democratic at its core (Darder, 1991). The overwhelming evidence in the research literature is that learning the dominant "culture of power" is very difficult for many minority children and youth….the principal underlying reason for why this is so has to do with the fact that learning to negotiate the dominant culture of power within the typical school environment is usually fiercely alienating and symbolically violent experience—particularly when one goes it alone (p.34).

Conceptualizing court-involved African American males within their context prompts us to consider the networks of peers, parents, teachers, school administrators, law enforcers and/or others who support and limit their development (Daiute & Fine, 2003).

Summary of review of the literature

There is a disproportionate amount of African American males dropping out of school. Many believe that, as opposed to dropping out, they are actually "pushed out", with many of the practices within schooling being discriminatory towards them, and this process has increased the likelihood of African American young men entering the criminal justice system. Particularly of note is that little research has been done eliciting the perspectives of the young men who experience this phenomenon, understanding who they are and the important relationships they have. Very little research exists concerning court-involved African American males, social capital and schooling (Mayer, 2005). The majority of research on social capital theory, education and school settings has focused upon outcomes such as test scores and grades, study habits, high school drop out patterns, and college attendance (Horvat, et. al., 2003, Dika & Singh, 2002). This study serves as the beginning of research that can add to the literature concerning court-involved African American males, schooling, and social capital. Analyses of systemic policies that increase incarceration, and limit educational opportunity are rare in the literature for African American males. One of the main developmental challenges for these youth is the two fold challenge of transitioning from childhood to adulthood and from being incarcerated to reintegrating within community (Sullivan, 2004). Many of these youth have narratives that describe their experiences within schools. Embedded within these narratives, are histories of relationships that have succeeded and failed, and values and social norms that can possibly compete with the hidden norms of public schooling. When forced out, often due to disciplinary policies that reflect dominant cultural

practices, they struggle with returning to school, and often find themselves involved within the juvenile court system. hooks (2004) offers that,

> [S]mart black boys who wanted to be heard, then and now, often find themselves cast out, deemed troublemakers, and placed in slow classes or special classes that are more containment cells for those deemed delinquent. Individual poor and working-class boys who excel academically in the public school system without surrendering their spirit and integrity usually make it because they have an advocate, a parent, parental caregiver, or teacher who intervenes when the biased educational system threatens them with destruction. (p. 39)

Many court-involved African American males do not have that advocate that supports them in over-coming obstacles, and even those with goals and dreams struggle to stay in school and achieve. The importance of developing this study is best stated in the words of Angela Davis. Davis (2003) shares:

> Effective alternatives involve both transformation of the techniques for addressing crime and of the social and economic conditions that track so many children from poor communities, and especially communities of color, into the juvenile system and then on to prison. The most difficult and urgent challenge today is that of creatively exploring new terrains of justice, where the prison no longer serves as our major anchor (p. 20-21.)

Many of these youth, given the opportunity to engage in a meaningful way within schools can succeed. A transformative way of working with these youth can be the result, and possibly a transformation of the system as we know it.

CHAPTER III.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

Many studies exploring social capital have been quantitative in nature, or large-scale studies associated with large data sets. Recent studies have turned to approaching the understanding of social capital from a qualitative perspective, particularly exploring both the ways that social reproduction has occurred in societal settings as well as ways that historically marginalized groups challenge and upset the reproduction process (Richardson, 2005; 2003; Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). As loosely defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible……qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). A qualitative study can explore the underlying actions concerning relationship development and choices made within the context of schooling surrounding social capital (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003), and can also support the use of a theoretical lens to raise questions associated with race, gender, and class (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The form of inquiry that I will utilize in this study is narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a particular type of qualitative research, and can be characterized as a mixture of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods, all revolving around an interest in the biographical "story" as

narrated by the one who lives it (Chase, 2005). Researchers study the lives of individuals and ask one or more individuals to tell stories about their lives (Creswell, 200). Narratives can be oral or written, and may be a short topical story about a particular event or character a person encounters, or an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life (Chase, 2005). Information is retold or "restoried" by the researchers into a narrative chronology (Creswell, 2003). Narrative designs supports the researcher in examining an issue related to oppression of individuals via collecting stories of individual oppression (Creswell, 2003). Individuals are interviewed in-depth to determine how they may have personally experienced life circumstances and oppression (Creswell, 2003).

Given the importance of presenting the voices of the court-involved African American males in my study, it was appropriate to utilize this method with this population. Parker and Lynn (2002) share:

> Traditionally, educational research has (a) ignored historically marginalized groups by simply not addressing their concerns, (b) relied heavily on genetic or biological determinist perspectives to explain away complex educational problems, or (c) epiphenomenized or de-emphasized race by arguing that the problems minority students experience in schools can be understood via class or gender analyses that do not fully take race, culture, language, and immigrant status into account (p. 13).

Narrative inquiry can challenge the norms of traditional research by placing the voice of these youth up front, and supporting a context that includes how race is lived or played out in schooling.

Narrative researchers view stories as both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances. In a sense, narrative is retrospective meaning making, where the story-teller offers context to events that have taken place in his or her life. The young men of my study have lived experiences that are often mis-interpreted in the media and in other venues. The opportunity for them to engage in "meaning making" for themselves becomes important here. However, this "story-telling" is not a sedentary activity, or reflective in a passive sense. When someone tells a story, it is actually verbal action, as the narrator explains, entertains, informs, defends, complains, and confirms or challenges the status quo (Chase, 2005). As the young men in my study have moved across the different settings in their lives, these settings offer their respective constraints on them and opportunities for how these young men have constructed their narratives and their lives.

Interviews are the primary means by which data is collected for narrative inquiry. During interviews, participants can provide historical information, and the researcher can guide the questions and assist the interviewee in constructing his or her narrative (Creswell, 2003). In a society where interviewing is a common norm that exists in every form from the evening news to the Oprah Winfrey show, to think of the interviewee as a narrator is to make a conceptual shift from the idea that interviewees have answers to research questions and toward the concept that the interviewee has a story to tell and a voice of their own. Qualitative researchers recognize that interviews are not neutral tools of data collection but active interactions between two people that lead to negotiated, contextually based results, focusing on both the "what's" of individuals lives as well as the "how's" (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I highlight here what has been described by some

as "identity work", what people engage in as they construct themselves within an institutional or cultural context…..highlighting the institutional and organizational settings that "shape the selves we live by" (Chase, 2005, p. 659).

Participants and Setting

I interviewed eleven court-involved African American males, ages 18-20, who are enrolled in an alternative high school settings where I currently volunteer. These youth were all previously enrolled in traditional Chicago Public School school settings, and were previously involved within the Cook County Juvenile Court system. I am currently a volunteer at the school, and I co-facilitate (with school staff) weekly discussion groups for males in grades 9-12. I met with the school officials to propose my study and the steps for completion of the project. I also gave the educational leaders a brief letter detailing my study and a written summary of my prospectus for their records. I obtained a letter of permission from the educational leader, and I obtained human subjects approval from the DePaul University Institutional Review Board, and approval through Chicago Public Schools.

Data Collection Plan

Once approved, I invited youth directly to participate in the study via my participation in the school as a volunteer co-facilitating young men's groups. At the end of one of the group sessions, I described the nature of the study, and invited them to meet with me after the group briefly if they fit the criteria and were interested in obtaining additional information about the study. All youth who agreed to be a part of the study were over the age of 18, and they were given consent forms to review and sign, and asked concerning their understanding of the consent form. All participants reviewed and signed

consent forms. I asked all participants to explain, in their own words, why they believed I was doing this particular study. All participants appeared to understand why I was doing the study, and asked appropriate questions concerning confidentiality. Once consent was received, I arranged a time to meet with each student after they had completed classes for the day. I met with the youth within the school setting, in order to provide them with a familiar and safe setting. Specifically, I met with each student in a designated office space, classroom, or the cafeteria during non-use hours. All settings were visible to school personnel, but allowed for privacy. I engaged in one form of data collection: formal interviews. Each youth was interviewed at least once utilizing a formal interview protocol (see appendix A) concerning the youths' history of schooling, significant events from the youths' perspective concerning their relationship with school, and significant relationships that they have encountered within the context of schooling, including relationships with teachers, administrators, counselors, parole officers, and family and friends. The interview protocol had some structured questions, but also allowed for flexibility and questions that emerged from the interviewees responses. This allowed for a flow of trust to develop in order for me to gain more information concerning the youth's history and relationship with schooling. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour, 20 minutes. Each interview allowed for the establishment of rapport, and development of in-depth understanding of the youths relationship to schooling. Initially, in order to receive quality responses, the interviews were to take place over two occasions. However, the initial interviews captured the intent of the study and all questions were asked, and follow-up interviews took place on only a few occasions to confirm aspects of the data that were unclear from initial interviews.

These interviews and conversations allowed me to gain an in-depth awareness of key relationships surrounding the youth, and these key persons' views of the education of these youth.

All interviews were audio-recorded via a digital recorder, and the interviews were then transcribed verbatim. Each participant was informed that the interview was recorded, transcribed, and would later be placed in a narrative form. Codes were created that refer to each participant. After downloading the interviews to software on a computer that only the researcher has access to, and to a USB flash drive, the recordings were erased on the digital recorders. The software and computer is password protected with a password only available to the researcher. The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants will be strictly protected during this study and thereafter. Other data (i.e., transcripts, USB flash drive) from this project is stored in a locked file cabinet in a secure office, and will remain there during and at the conclusion of the study. Presentations and publications will present data as group analyses or using pseudonyms. Affiliated agencies will only be named in published reports with the consent of the participants and the agencies themselves. All of the above precautions are specified in the parental consent and child assent forms. In addition, we read aloud our instructions, guarantees, and limits regarding confidentiality prior to the start of our discussion at each school. Data will not have participant identifier information available for public view. The data (transcripts and USB flash drive) will be kept in the principal investigator's office locked in a file cabinet for one year following the dissertation defense, with paper materials destroyed via paper shredder and the flash drive erased. Coded information is stored at

the principal investigators office in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed after all presentations and publications using the data are completed.

Data Analysis

All names of participants were changed, and transcripts will not have identifying information of the youth. A separate code sheet aligned codes with names in order to keep track of participants. After the interviews had been transcribed, and field notes taken during the interviews typed up, the data (interviews, field notes, and documents) were printed out and read through and sorted, following several of the steps as suggested by Creswell (2003) and Seidman (1998). First, I attempted to get a greater sense of the whole. I began with the narrators' voices and stories, extending the narrator-listening relationship and the active work of listening beyond the interview into the interpretive process. As opposed to looking first at the themes across the different interviews, I listened to the "voice" first within each narrative (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In a feminist approach to interpretation, Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1995) describe reading each interview four times - first, attending to the overall "shape" of the narrative and the research relationship, second, to the narrator's first person voice and how and where he uses "I", and third and fourth readings to "contrapuntal voices", voices that express psychological development on one hand and psychological risk and loss, on the other (Chase, 2005). I found this approach helpful and important due to the potential complicated juxtaposition that many of the youth make between being individuals and being members of a larger group, as well as the complex emotions that many of the youth described concerning the events of their lives. I then made a list of all topics, clustering together similar topics, forming major and unique topics (Creswell, 2003). I then turned

the topics into codes, and wrote the codes next to the appropriate segments within the larger narrative text. I assembled the data associated with the codes or categories and began the analysis (Creswell, 2003). I then used the coding to identify themes or categories associated with potential major findings.

Narrative researchers treat narratives as socially situated interactive performances, as produced in a particular setting, for a particular audience, for particular purposes. The youth in this study serve as narrators, and as the researcher and writer, I served as a narrator as well. Thus, I offer here that my lens of interpretation had some affect on the outcome of this analysis.

Quality

In order to ensure quality and credibility, I utilized some of the methods described by Creswell (2003) in my study. Those included: (1) peer debriefing, (2) negative case analysis, (3) progressive subjectivity, (4) member checks, (5) dependability, and (6) confirmability. Peer debriefing allowed me to consult with a "multi-layered" peer group. As a licensed clinical social worker within the state of Illinois, I have had the opportunity to develop acquaintances with men, women and youth from different professions who share similar interests concerning African American males and public schooling. It is not unheard of in educational, sociological or anthropological research to have outsiders read field notes and interview transcripts, although special processes should be in place to protect subject anonymity. I am an advocate of peer support, and the challenging of beliefs and knowledge to best serve some of the most difficult populations in the city. I met with a fellow social worker in the city of Chicago who is working in the criminal

justice and youth development fields, and with fellow classmates who have been aware of the focus of my current study since I entered the doctoral program at DePaul University.

Negative case analysis allowed me to see inconsistencies that emerged from the data that did not connect to the initial themes that emerged (Creswell, 2003), and helped me clarify, broaden, and confirm my analysis. In terms of progressive subjectivity, due to the subject matter reflecting some of my prior experiences as an African American male in public schooling, it was important for me to reflect and journal my thoughts, experiences and feelings prior to interactions and observations concerning this study. This allowed me to uncover any pre-existing biases that I experienced. I also conducted both formal and informal checks concerning data collected with the participants, contacting a few of the participants to clarify statements and discuss the meaning of some words and phrases (Creswell, 2003). Due to this study relying heavily upon the involvement of these youth, it was important for me to ask for their opinions concerning information reported by them, asking them their opinion about the data I have recorded and the analysis and interpretation. The tendency to view African American youth homogeneously often exists, and I also looked forward to potentially uncovering anomalies and inconsistencies between different youth. I believe this allowed me to build a stronger rapport with the youth involved, and allow for a deeper understanding of the information as presented by the youth without prejudging them based on societal or personal biases. I documented the process of decision making concerning each phase of the research process, including how decisions and choices were made concerning the research. Dependability refers to assuring that the data, interpretations and outcomes of inquiry are rooted in the contexts of the study and not the evaluator (Guba & Lincoln,

1994). This ensured that the sources of the data were solid, and that the researcher's biases did not influence the study negatively. Confirmability refers to the degree with which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This was does to ensure that my personal bias' would not interfere negatively with collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Limitations of the Research Design

Although the theoretical and interpretive approaches that I am utilizing in this study have all been previously used concerning educational research, there are still a number of critiques concerning each approach. Many qualitative studies utilize small sampling sizes that may not necessarily allow for generalizability concerning the population or theoretical approach. Second, the researcher has to rely on the information provided by the participant as reliable (Creswell, 2003), and adolescent reliability in research studies has been challenged within the research environment as being inconsistent at best, misleading and false at worse (Bauman & Ennett, 1994; Hindelang, Hirschi & Weis, 1981). However, given the number of quantitative studies done on education and people of color, and that fact that social capital has been studied traditionally utilizing large data sets, it is important to develop research studies that capture the diverse voices and perspectives that exist within the educational context. Also, the population within this study tends to report a level of accuracy concerning their lifestyle choices, particularly criminal justice system involvement (Paschall, Ornstein, Flewelling, 2001). As well, some researchers have utilized qualitative approaches to further clarify questions that are unable to be understood from quantitative studies. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) remind us that we must continually ask "whose stories are

privileged in educational contexts and whose stories are distorted and silenced" (p. 36). This research study does not seek to answer all questions associated with these youth, as well as the educational system, but seeks to add to the existing literature, and in the tradition of critical scholar Paulo Freire (1970), further assist researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and even students, in "problem posing" in order to transform and challenge the educational system to provide equal education and opportunity to all citizens of the United States of America.

CHAPTER IV.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify how social capital works in the lives of eleven court-involved African American males within a Chicago public school. One main research question and two supplemental research questions guided the research:

- What are the barriers and enablers that court-involved African American males encounter that influence access to social capital within public schools?
    - What kind of social networks do court-involved African American males develop to enhance social capital within schooling?
    - How do court-involved African American males develop trusting relationships within schooling?

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the setting where the participants' stories were collected, and an introduction to the participants themselves. In order to protect the anonymity of the institution and the confidentiality of the participants, each were given pseudonyms, as were any other persons, institutions or places that might reveal the identity of the participants. Further, this chapter provides an analysis of the research questions based on the interview data.

Setting and participants

Youth Leadership Institute

All participants attended the school Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), an alternative high school, and part of the Changing Lives Charter School network within Chicago Public Schools. Alternative high schools exist in Chicago to support young

people who have either dropped-out or have been expelled from traditional high schools within the city. Changing Lives Charter School is a part of Chicago's alternative schools network. YLI targets those youth who have stopped attending traditional Chicago Public Schools. The average age of the students that attend these schools is eighteen. YLI works to create a safe and caring environment to promote students academic success. In summing up the school, and its importance to the young men of this study, one of the students interviewed for the study, Real, had this to say:

> This school? This school helps a lot of kids, whether they don't know it or not, like a lotta times, they be "Ah, the rules school" bit, in the long run they don't see it, now, in the long run, it will help you in life. Especially the teachers. The teachers in here are all like, every teacher in here is excellent. And they be knowin' like this, if they get kicked out of here, that's they last chance. You gettin' a second chance right here, so now we'll make the best of it, and a lot of 'em don't do it.

For many of them, this is their last chance at success within a system that they have struggled in to realize their promise.

All students who participated in the study were African American males between the ages of 18-20, currently enrolled within Chicago Public Schools, specifically YLI, and had been involved with the juvenile court system at least one time prior to their enrollment within YLI. All had been arrested more than once, and several spent significant time (more than 30 consecutive days) within a juvenile or adult detention center, with arrests ranging from disorderly conduct, assault and battery, drug possession, drug possession with intent to deliver, and possession of a firearm. All had attended at least one "regular" enrollment Chicago public high school prior to attending YLI, and spent at least two weeks out of school for reasons unrelated to health or illness, including suspensions, expulsions, and unexcused absences related to a number of reasons. All of

them were raised by a single parent, with extended family, or with a foster parent. They all stated that family is the most important thing in their lives, followed by the pursuit of education and a high school diploma. In the tradition of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the researcher collected oral narratives from the participants based on a semi-structured interview guide, allowing for their stories to be told here. Following are introductions to the students who participated in this study, where they come from, and in some cases, where they are going. This introduction uses narrative excerpts from the data, complemented by descriptive prose based on the researchers' field notes, varying in length based on the information shared by the participants.

Capital

Tall, healthy looking and cordial, Capital is a 19 year old African American male currently in his senior year at the Youth Leadership Institute. He attended two previous high schools before entering YLI. Capital states that he was expelled from his first high school for fighting, and simply stopped attending the latter school. Capital shared that one of the main reasons he stopped attending school was due to the amount of fighting, or what he called "altercations" that took place at the school. Capital shared

> [it] was just the more I see stuff happening and other altercations happening I wondered, "Okay, what if an altercation comes towards me?" I can't really be in that altercation because I'm really gonna get kicked out of school anyway if I got into an altercation, so I just thought of it like, "This is my work in front of me." That's when I stopped going to school.

Capital has what he describes as a "temper" problem, where there are times when he finds himself easily angered and ready to fight. During last school year, Capital "mugged" the basketball coach during a basketball game with another school (his coach attempted to tell Capital something during a timeout, and Capital pushed the coach in his

face with his hand). He was briefly suspended from the team, but was reinstated after demonstrating his remorsefulness with the coach and school administrators. Capital believes that his anger problems stem from problems that he encountered in elementary school:

> [in] elementary school I really wasn't that much of a behavior problem. I got picked on lot. I was a little smaller and chunkier. I got a little picked on…I was just getting picked on a lot, sometimes where a lot of the anger comes from. A lot of old anger built up from getting picked on, that's where a lot of all my temper comes from.

Capital has a personable affect, and shared that he likes to joke around some times during class when he has completed his work. He feels that this makes the day go by faster for him. Capital has a one-year old daughter, and cites her birth as being an important motivator for him, and that the experience of his daughters' birth taught him to value life:

> First, like, I just got my values from my daughter. She needs me. I need her, you know what I'm saying. When I was sitting in the hospital watching her come into the world it was like it was crazy 'cause I'm actually watching it. I see another life being brought to us, and it's like I just picture my mother, and that's me coming out. Okay, this is life. You see the light in that, you know? You're coming out fresh; you're newborn. That's value, fresh and new, new blood. That's new life. Like if you can't really just sit there and think about it, what life is, and cherish it that means you ain't gonna have no values for it. That's my value.

The experience helped him reflect upon the importance of life, which also helps him discern between staying engaged in the streets and doing other positive things. Capital belongs to what some may consider as a street organization, but he feels that it is simply a group of people that have developed a close relationship within his neighborhood. He acknowledges however, that they are affiliated with a larger street organization in the city and state. Capital shared that he has moved frequently, including recently living in

Montenegro, Illinois and Roosevelt, Indiana. Capital lived with his mother, younger brother, and his younger brother's father in Roosevelt until he was in the eighth grade. He shared that his mother and brother moved back to Chicago because his grandmother became ill, and in part due to an increase in gun violence in the area where he lived in Roosevelt. Although he believes this was the right thing for his mother to do, he appears to feel some regret about the move:

> Once I started coming back it's like, how I see it I don't blame my mother for moving back here 'cause my grandmother was sick, but if I was to say so as I thought that like the things that I do and the things I was doing is like it's not going right. If I would have stayed in Hatcher I would have been somebody. I would have been going to some type of college. I would have been in college right now, like a D1 [NCAA Division One college or university] school playing ball, but I moved back here, and I started hanging with the wrong people. Then I got into high school, and I really went down, and I started hanging with the wrong people.

He believes he still has the opportunity to get a college basketball scholarship, and he wants to major in business administration, exercising somewhat of a creative side by designing clothes and shoes. Capital currently lives with his maternal grandmother and his uncle, who he has conflict with at times. He does not know the current whereabouts of his father.

Dante

Dante is a 19 year old senior at YLI. He has attended YLI for two years now, and shared that he started attending YLI after dropping out of Tyson High School. He stopped attending Tyson when he learned that he was not going to graduate on time. Dante has a good perspective on why he was unable to receive enough credits to graduate:

> I was a clown and shit, I always like to play. I really didn't go to class. I'll come to class but I would go late. When I go I would be disruptive. Talking all class

> time, I would get put out or something or get in trouble and stay in the hallways. Go to all the lunches. So that's my fault….I should have been paying more attention to my work.

Although he has been at YLI for two years, he was put out briefly last year for what he describes as the same behavior he exhibited at Tyson. Dante still appears to be a bit immature in affect, citing that he wants to eventually open up a strip club. Dante states that he has been arrested several times for what he cites as petty misdemeanors, including disorderly conducts, but his most significant time out of school related to the juvenile justice system was when he was arrested in the fifth grade for bringing a BB gun to school. Dante felt that this was a significant time in his life, as this was the beginning of his disengagement from school. Dante was raised by his grandparents until his grandmothers' death, and then by his grandfather, stating that he knows his mother and father, but has had little contact with them. After moving around often after his grandfather's death, he currently lives with the mother of his child's family.

Nate

Nate is an 18 year old senior at YLI. Short in height but charismatic and tall in stature, Nate came to YLI after being expelled from Salien High for continued disruptive behavior. He has a few friends that he is very close with at YLI, and they all come from the same neighborhood. As YLI is "around the corner" from his house, this was a natural choice for him after leaving Salien. He is an avid basketball player, and spends much of his free time at local gyms, sharing that the only thing that motivated him in grammar school was playing on the school basketball team. He is openly opinionated, and speaks highly of the school, and other related programs that have helped him get on what he describes as the right track. Careless about his schoolwork initially, Nate studies hard,

and allows others to help him stay focused in order for him to get into college. When asked who supports him concerning getting ahead, Nate responded:

> Everybody around me cause everybody know that's what I want to do. I want to go to college. I want to go to college and get this over with so I can hurry and get this money. Everybody around me really keeping me focused, making sure my grades look alright and everything.

Nate describes himself as being a part of his community, but discerns himself from many of his peers, sharing why he believes many have difficulty getting out of the streets:

> ….for some of them I guess it's the money they be getting. Everybody see money and they just go crazy, you know. But I'm telling them ya'll need to see these books and go crazy, if you see these books you gone see way more money then you'll see outside doing these little petty sides.

In this way, Nate has become a leader among a small group of young men at the school and from his neighborhood, as they listen to what Nate has to say and respect his opinions. In fact, at east one other student interviewed for this study did so after he found out Nate had participated in an interview. Often brining up "money" as a motivating factor for him, at this point in life, Nate sees the benefit of succeeding in school as a pathway to economic success.

Deon Jay

Deon Jay currently lives with his mother and brother. Deon Jay's father is incarcerated, and he has some contact with him. He wrote him letters when he was younger, but speaks only periodically with him now. He stated that he did well in the elementary school until the fifth grade, recalling that he had all A's in fourth grade:

> My mom was proud of me. My dad, he was in jail. He was in and out of the crib. I wrote him a letter and told him what happened and he was like "Keep it up, son, just keep it up."

However, Deon Jay believes it was the distractions outside the classroom that began to interfere with his class work.

> 'Cause a lot of things that be happening to me in my life, you know what I'm sayin'? That just made me go astray, so stop doin' what I had my mind set on doin', and that's school. Lotta things outside a school kinda made me go astray…….Like gangs, you have to worry about people shootin' at you, and you got your family that you gotta worry about, you got little brothers, little sisters that you gotta take care of. Just a lot of things.

When I first met Deon Jay, he was neat and well-dressed for the summer time, with his jeans iron-pressed, clean new gym shoes, and a nice t-shirt. However, on the day of the interview, he appeared somewhat unkempt, with his hair uncombed, and somewhat disheveled. When I asked him prior to beginning the interview how he was doing, he shared that he had been up late at night with a young woman, and had just returned from Alabama with family as well.

Deon Jay has not gotten along well with most of his teachers, sharing that they "just seem like they always be pickin' on me". However, he acknowledges that he has been more of "follower" during his life, going along with his peers disruptive behavior, and acting up in class. After witnessing his brother's shooting, he does not want to continue on a path similar to him. Deon Jay's brother is currently paralyzed from the waist down, and during the time period when he dropped out of school, he spent time caring for his brother.

Luke

Luke is a 19 year old in his senior year at YLI. He attended Tate High School prior to attending YLI. Luke said that he was often engaged in fights, not going to class, and generally being rude to teachers and staff. At some point, he just stopped going to school. After a stint in Job Core in Wisconsin, Luke found out about YLI:

> So I came back home, and I went up to my old school, and they gave me a whole list of schools I could go to, and this was a school that I had heard about previously from a couple other people, so I checked it out and made it happen.

He feels he has made a significant turnaround in his life and his education. He states that there may be many reasons for his turnaround, but one of the main reasons is that one of his friends was killed during an outing the summer before out interview:

> He was with the wrong people at the wrong time, and I know bout me, I don't be doin' no harm to anybody, and I be hangin' with them, I could be that victim. So it just be standin' around, so I kinda like, since then, I kinda drift myself away from all the old dudes I used to hang with, like I see them and still say "What's up?" to them, but you wouldn't catch me walkin' down the street or gettin' in the car with 'em or somethin' like that.

He currently lives with his mother, but does have some relationship with his father, who lives in a western suburb. Luke did not feel that he was on a path to higher education until recently:

> Now, since I'm changed, and doin' this work, I wanna go to college now. That was never a option at all, in my mind, to go to college. It was never a option. I just thought I wasn't bright enough to go to college, like wudden no college want me at they school. But now, that's my plan, to go to college now.

Since the beginning of this school year, Luke has taken to wearing shirts and ties to school, something that is not a requirement of the school. Last school year, Luke was arrested for a possession of a firearm, at which time he was stated he was headed to a confrontation with another young man from the neighborhood over "some basketball stuff". This was Luke's first major offense.

Real

Real is 20 years old, and has attended YLI for two years. He is of a slender build, and his shoulder length hair is locked. Currently living on his own, he recently started a job that he feels is a good opportunity. Real feels spirituality is important for him,

realizing while he was in the Volvo home how spirituality could change his perspective on things:

> When I picked up the Bible I realized I was doing something wrong but I didn't even know I was doing wrong all the time. But you don't know you doing wrong unless you learn that you doing wrong, nobody ain't gonna tell you, this is something you should already know, natural knowledge. But I didn't know it 'cause I never picked up the Bible and turned the pages.

Introspective, Real has reflected on some of his past experiences previously in school and jail, reflecting upon the lure towards the street and subsequent behavior as having some origin in his self-esteem:

> The lure was – I don't want to tell a story to you. I was – my head's shaped kinda funny, I got dreads for a reason; my head's shaped kinda awkward and they talked about me a lot. And that kinda lowered my self-esteem when I was younger so it was like I had hatred within-side of myself 'cause of people always seemed like talking about me but I wasn't the bully type.

Real shared that his mother is a big supporter, and has been there for him in spite of his past behavior:

> She was very supportive the whole time while I was causing chaos. She kept trying with me and I just kept on just, I don't want to say neglecting, but it was going in one ear and coming out the other. I was just being me, doing me like thinking I'm grown don't even know how hard it is to take care of yourself. Now I see.

He knows his father, and has talked with him and visited him often, but does not have a good relationship with him.

Q

Q is an eighteen year old currently in his first year at YLI. He smiles a lot, and was very interested in talking with me. He states that his sense of humor is his strong point, and that he wants to be a comedian some day, in the vein of a famous comedian

who was an alumnus of his previous high school. Talkative and inquisitive, he was eager to share his past and current experiences. Although he is not sure how it started, he cites that he has had a serious anger problem for a couple of years now:

> Since like, I'm 18 now, since I was like 16. That's when I really sat down and I was like, "Man, I got a real bad anger problem." Some of the littlest stuff would just tick me off, and then there'd be no return. Once I get – I ain't even gotta get real mad. Once I get a little mad, there's like no control. I have no control. Especially if it's a single person that made me mad, then I can't control.

This lack of control has created some difficulty for him, including fights with both students and staff of his previous school, and run-in's with adults in public places, resulting in related arrests, citing that he gets himself in "a lot of trouble". The recent birth of his first child, a son, has encouraged him to "stay out of trouble" more, but he still struggles with it:

> Like since my son was on his way here I tried to stay out of trouble. My son, I knew he was coming. Trying to get back in school, trying to do good, trying to do good. So I still do that, that's why it be killing me sometimes when it's like every time I try to do good, I always end up in cuffs. I always end up messing something up. Always.

He has a sister in college who is very supportive of him, and he looks up to her, and a brother that is currently incarcerated, who he has followed more in his footsteps. As stated above, Q has a history of doing good for a time period, and then "falling off", and ending up back in "trouble".

Tek

Tek is a 19 year old, currently in the 12th grade. He is slender, and attempts to present as being more mature than his peers. He feels more comfortable talking with the women in the school than the men, sharing concerning the highlight of his school day:

> A highlight may be – the highlights are the females. That's it. Probably a female has been my highlight because what the guys talk about I probably maybe – you know what I'm saying, on a higher level as to what they talk about.

He talks in a low voice, as if sharing something that only he and the researcher can understand. He is inquisitive, and fashions himself as a deep thinker and intellectual. Tek was put out of his previous high school, and had troubles at YLI before finally settling down. He shares that some of his difficulties stemmed from an unstable living environment, citing frequent moving and an unstable family as reasons for some of his troubles:

> I was just going from house to house; people were tired – my peoples were tired. I don't have a mother. My father you know what I'm saying was addicted to crack so my grandmother and they kicked me out. So I stayed with my female friend, my girlfriend and I moved with my dad. And we was in traps and I was just basically sleeping on the streets, you know what I'm saying……..so I decided I needed to get back in school, maybe if I help myself maybe somebody else try to help me.

When he was in elementary school, his mother passed away. He shared that this was a difficult time for him, and that one of his more vivid memories of elementary school was a counselor that helped him through it:

> I used to cry all the time and miss my mother. And he would try to comfort me as far as like I was a shorty, so he'd tell me like she's in a better place and things like that. Just there's a lot of guys who don't have their mother so don't think I'm the only. I used to really think like I was the only person who didn't have a mother. And he opened me up; he opened my eyes; that don't mean I can be a failure.

He has been incarcerated, but he shares that he has never been arrested for anything serious. He believes his experience being incarcerated has helped him focus:

> The experience was like I want to hurry up and get out of here cause I don't like to be locked up. I don't even like to sit in class for 45 minutes let alone be locked down in a cell in a dorm somewhere.

However, it did not stop him completely from participating in illegal activities, as he has

struggled since his release to not get in any trouble or to stop "hustling":

> Like I would be outside and I would be hustling. I hustle. And now I don't know. I have to put more work in myself because when I go to school that would take up a lot of time – I'll be in school and people would call my phone while I'm in school for merchandise and I would be in school. Know what I'm saying? That's missing a lot of money, see what I'm saying. So I get thirsty sometime and instead of staying in here and making a little money that I was getting and an education hand in hand. I let money take over the education and I missed a lot of days. This is an education – I mean this is an attendance- based school. So when I missed that amount of days they kicked me out. So I got what I really wanted: the money.

Tek's awareness of his temptation and challenges associated with making money and pursuing his education have been an on-going struggle for him. He currently lives with his father, who is currently clean from drug use, and both his sister and his father are supporting his financial needs in order for him to stay focused upon school. He believes he is a good enough basketball player to play in college, and currently plays for the school team. However, he enjoys working with computers, and feels he has a future with technology.

Malcolm

Malcolm is nineteen years old, currently in the twelfth grade, and was recently enrolled into YLI. He has been in several high schools and grammar schools, and cites his many transfers as due to his instability due to being a ward of the state. He is tall, and physically imposing, and he has an easy-going demeanor. He has the reputation as being "one not to mess with" inside of the school. He is glad to be back in a high school, as opposed to a GED program, sharing:

> To me, I'm glad it's a alternative high school, actually, because if I'm not gonna go to an alternative school, what would I be? I'd have to settle for a GED, which sometimes society look down upon people that have GED amongst people that have high school diplomas, so you know, how they go, like you get hired for a job, or try to get hired for a job, they are gonna select someone with a high school

> diploma before they select somebody with a GED, so that's why I'm glad it a alternative high school, so I can receive my high school diploma.

Malcolm identifies an important marker for many of the youth of this study, that the value of a high school diploma for them is greater than a GED, implying the important status of being a high school graduate for them.

Malcolm lived in a group home until early 2008, when:

> They program shut down, cause some kids was just runnin' buck wild, they ain't know some people come from DCFS, just tryin' to see what was goin' on, see if the house was runnin' right, and that's what was goin' on, so, it was just runnin' buck wild. I was like "Chill out, man, you know what I'm sayin'? You all need this, you know what I'm sayin'?" And they shut it down. [According to Malcolm, DCFS-The Department of Children and Family Services-closed the group Home down due to the staff's inability to offer programming effectively]

He currently lives in his own apartment, via the assistance of the child welfare system's transitional living program. At times his thoughts appear disorganized, but he is talkative and open about his life and his challenges, particularly the constant moving from place to place that he has undergone:

> Really just kinda made me disorganized, lotta thoughts goin' on at one time, not bein' stable, not knowin', do something at one point in time, then you start doin' other things at a certain point in time, so I learned that later in life.

In spite of his inconsistencies with schooling, and the challenges he has had, he appears to be incredibly resilient:

> You know, like now, I'm startin' to get back into it. So like, when I was goin' through all that, it was like flip flop up and down. Far as like you bein', you gotta start doin' other things, you know, how you gonna eat, how you gonna maintain to make it to the next day.

Although moving several times and being incarcerated, he has managed to avoid being a part of a street organization, and he explains how he has been able to do this:

> I had to fight. I had to fight, you know? Like if you'll, basically, if you come outside, they expect you to look the other way. You know, they want you to

> come out, I don't know how to put it. I guess they want you to fear them. To me, I was goin' through the motion – okay, that's what you do. Respect me for what I do. I'm gonna respect you for what you do. I'm keepin' it movin', I'm not affecting you no way. You shouldn't try to affect me no way.

His father has been in and out of the penitentiary, and although he did not live with his mother for the majority of his life, he currently has a relationship with her, even recently going to jail for defending her from an abusive relationship. He has an infant daughter by his current girlfriend, and shared that this is one of his main motivations in life:

> My daughter, yeah, she woke me up, though, like I didn't know that's how I was really lookin' at it. Like me, I was just goin' through life, I didn't say, like, what's really goin' on? I really had no thought of what's really was goin' on out there……I have a lot of dignity and respect for myself for what I need to accomplish. When a child look up to you, actually, but you'll never know, at the same time, your child probably look up to somethin' else, but they need for you to steer them into that right direction, but at the same time, say like your daughter tellin' you she wanna be like you, you know what I'm sayin'? That's what I want to happen.

Lydell

Lydell is a nineteen year old senior at YLI. He strikes the researcher as a "no-nonsense" type of student, who is leery of outsiders, or what he describes as "fake people". However, he was open about his history concerning schooling and relationship with the "streets". Lydell shared that school work has always come easy for him, a statement confirmed by staff and teachers at YLI, and that his major problem has been his behavior, reporting that "the school work was easy, but I stayed in trouble, stayed in arguments, fights". Lydell came to YLI after being expelled from his previous school for what he described as poor attendance and constant fighting. He took a year off from school, spending his time "trying to get some money". However, he realized that the life in the streets did not offer as much security as getting a high school diploma and degree:

> Well, it's just streets ain't promised. You could – you'll get by. You know, I was doing good, getting a little money, but all it take it one time and it can end real quick. Everything can end once. It ain't like you got a degree. Okay, if I lose now this degree gonna back me up. No, what you got is what you got. If you lose it, you gotta start over and no telling when you'll have to start over, so it wasn't really promising.

Although his parents were supportive of him early on, most of the people in his environment were involved in the streets and fighting. Lydell acknowledges that this is where he gets much of his temper:

> It'd just be the environment I grew up in. I grew up around nothing but people who did bad things and always fighting or arguing. I feel whatever – a kid is a kid. They don't know anything. They know what they taught and what they see.

Respect is an important thing for Lydell, and he shared that much of his fighting has been about being disrespected. He also shared how he also realizes how people "look up to you" when one is able to fight well. He has been arrested several times, and is currently on probation, but in his words "I've never been arrested for nothing too big, but I just did a whole bunch of little simple stuff". He equated incarceration to being like "slavery", and hates the experience of being locked up. He has aspirations to enroll and complete college, possibly entering the technology or engineering fields. When asked about today's schools and helping children in his community, Lydell shared: "I would speak to the child, try to help them, but I really would want to talk to his parents cause whatever come out of him is really them".

Jake

Jake is a twenty-year old senior, preparing for graduation and entry into a downstate community college. Jake smiles often, and has a cheerful demeanor. He wants to be a teacher and a social worker in Chicago Public Schools after graduating from college. Jake entered YLI after spending some time in Wisconsin and returning to

Chicago. He was assisted in finding YLI by both people in his neighborhood and people in a transitional living shelter that he lived in as a ward of the child welfare department. After "catching a little case", his family thought it would be good for him to move to Wisconsin for his education. He has two children, by two different women, and states that both mothers' are very supportive of him and his continued desire for education.

Although inconsistent with school at times, Jake believes overall he has been a good student when his life has been stable, stating that "it wasn't until the sophomore year that I fell off because a lot of people in my life was like the people I depend on, like they started turning they back on me". Jake missed the entire third grade due to his moving from the south side to the west side:

> …my grandma kicked my mom out and she took us and we moved in with my auntie on the west side. And it was like my mama wasn't working at the time, so it was kind of hard to get me and my little brother to school from the west side to the south side.

Jake's mom later ran into life difficulties with drug addiction and incarceration, and Jake and his younger brother ended up with his grandmother back on the south side. Jake believes they were instrumental in his belief that education is important, because in spite of his negative behavior, they still believed in him. Jake has several extended family members that he shares are important to him, including aunts and uncles, god-brothers, and cousins.

Introduction to themes

Narrative inquiry allows for the idea of "re-storying". Re-storying places the voices of both the interview subjects and the researcher front and center simultaneously, by acknowledging both the "story" that participants tell and the researcher's interpretation as becoming intertwined in the telling of the participants' story. As stated

in the introduction, these young men interact with schools and the surrounding society in a manner that often places them at odds with the school. Many of the students shared parts of their story in a non-chronological order, so the researcher will "re-tell" in a manner that places the students' lives in some order, based on both their understanding, and the research lens. Although interviews were structured around the research questions, themes and sub-themes emerged in open coding concerning the students' lives surrounding school and education. Five major themes emerged, with sub-themes supplementing them. Themes one and two describe the students' early lives within school, and their relationship with their families and community, theme three and four describes the process of "leaving school", and theme five discusses the process of re-engagement in school for these youth. Table 3 details the organization of themes and sub-themes by section.

School engagement

In predominately African American communities in Chicago, the discourse associated with education centers around how students "underperform" in schools. However, if there is one thing positive about the No Child Left Behind Act, it is that it makes clear that schools, and teachers, can underperform as well. The students in this study shared both their hopes and frustrations with schools, beginning as early as kindergarten, and moving into their high school years. Although sharing at times about positive experiences, many of their experiences were couched in difficult interactions with teachers and administration. This section will detail

some of their experiences with school officials, and in some cases, the challenges encountered outside the classroom that influenced their choices within schools.

School life. All of the students interviewed talked about the importance of education, and ultimately desiring to graduate from high school, with a mixture of wanting to learn, and desiring to please parents and trusted figures. Deon Jay serves as an example of this, talking about how he excelled in school:

Table 3. Themes and Sub Themes
Theme 1 – School engagement Sub theme – School life Sub theme – Home life and its influence on school engagement
Theme 2 – Neighborhood Bonds Sub theme – The block
Theme 3 – School Exclusion Sub theme – Classroom as hostile space Sub theme – School as hostile space
Theme 4 –Purgatory Sub theme – What now? Sub theme – Moment of clarity
Theme 5 – Social capital reconceptualized Sub theme – Building bridges Sub theme – Relational trust Sub theme – Family ties Sub theme - Neighborhood ties

> When I was in fourth or fifth grade, I came home with all A's on my report card. That was the first time I ever had saw that many A's, ever, so that was a big turning thing, there, and that was a big step, too, and I just kept goin' forth from there.

For Deon Jay, although he had been doing fine in school previously, an improvement within his grades was not without notice to both himself and his family:

> My mom was proud of me. My dad, he was in jail. He was in and out of the crib. I wrote him a letter and told him what happened and he was like "Keep it up, son, just keep it up." And that was it.

Deon Jay's brief report of succeeding, although short-lived, and his brief tale concerning his family, illustrates what many of the youth in this study encountered: A brief turn of events in school highlighting their ability to succeed, a connection to family members, some in precarious situations that supported their educational involvement, followed by a disengagement from the educational process. Something happened during their involvement with school, often involving a mixture of school response, outside influences, and a slow disconnect from the life of schools.

Many shared how education was important to them in elementary school, as it is to them now, but talked of often being bored and disinterested in school. Most shared how, as they grew older, moving into the third, fourth and fifth grades, they became more disengaged from classroom life, and that they would have disruptive relationships with teachers.

For example, Luke shared, until an incident occurred with his third grade teacher, how he was engaged in school:

> Before then, I always had good grades, but then, after that, every teacher after her hated me. I gave 'em hell. I know I did. I didn't ever admit it at the time, but I was blamin' it on them, not takin' responsibility for what I was doin' in the classroom.

For Luke, a poor relationship with one teacher led to Luke giving other teachers "hell". Concerning his behavior and attention in school, Capital also shared that "once I started getting in fifth and sixth grade it just changed". After talking about his success in earlier grades, Deon Jay shared how "sixth grade was C's, seventh just goin' down". Similar to Luke and Capital, Dante talked about how he was doing well in school until the 5th grade:

> I was cool all of Kindergarten up through 5th grade. I got locked up when I was in 5th grade. I was playing but I bought a little BB gun to school and they caught so they locked me up. So after I got that, after I go there I didn't want to be locked up.

For Dante, this was the beginning of his involvement within the criminal justice system, with the disciplinary actions that he encountered with this event not only ended up with him being suspended, but arrested and charged with possession of a weapon as well. Of here it is important to note, that at about the time Dante was in fifth grade, the effects of zero tolerance policies had begun to increase with Chicago schools, with suspension rates for elementary school students beginning to increase in alarming rates.

Many of the young men also talked about being distracted by peers. Deon Jay talked about becoming distracted with his friends during this time period, stating "Cause I was jus tryin' to be cool with everybody, make everybody think I was cool." Nate, sharing on what he believes happened to him after the fourth grade, offered:

> I don't know. I know like my reason, like in 5th grade…..that's how it was for me too though. I was doing all good for the first 4 years of Grammar School. Then

> once I got like 5th, 6th grade I started slacking off. I guess it was because I started noticing more people, people started knowing who I was and once you start interacting with new people you start doing new stuff, you just start slacking off.

Although Nate attempted to define this for himself, whether it's "slacking off", "going down" or "giving 'em hell", these youth describe a phenomena that often happens in many elementary schools similar to the schools that these young men attended. Kunjufu (1995) calls this phenomenon the "fourth grade syndrome". Students not caught early and redirected in the areas of academic, character and moral development, begin to drop out of school *mentally and emotionally* around the fourth and fifth grade, developing discipline problems and poor academic performances. The majority of the young men in this study described their experiences in this way, having some success initially in school, or even "liking school", and almost overnight, disengaging from classroom and school life.

Although many shared having some success or engagement in school until a certain period, some of the youth shared how they struggled ever since they could remember. Tek shared how he had difficulties in school from the start:

> I'd say what was bad like I was always bad, like I was always in my head that school wasn't for me like from preschool. Like from preschool up past preschool I got to kindergarten I was bad. Like from the neighborhood I ain't really like going to school; it was boring to me. I wouldn't do schoolwork. I don't know why, like when I was a shorty I never did homework or things like that. So that was the bad part.

Tek's participation in school, marginal at best, and his burgeoning behavioral problems led to other consequences with his school. Getting into a fight in the fourth grade, maybe calling for school based interventions for some youth, resulted in other consequences for Tek:

> Like I think I was in 4th grade, I had a fight, 4th grade, a serious fight, like maybe I was a freshman or something that's how bad the fight was. I got kicked out of school and my grandmother transferred me to a better school, better environment and I still, you know what I'm saying, still on the same thing but as far as fighting not but as far as doing work and all that I still wasn't doing nothing.

Like many African American males in other scholarly reports (Boykin, Tyler & Miller, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Duncan, 2000; Ferguson, 2000; Hall, 2006; Kunjufu, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Noguera, 2002/2003), Tek was already disengaged from school even before a fight that forced him to be kicked out *in the fourth grade.*

For some of the participants of this study, school life at an early age was recalled as a time of fondness and warm memories of teachers. For the majority, however, this time period was filled with memories of boredom during classroom life, distraction and classroom disruptions. Before going further, it will be important here to look at some of the outside influences to school life that occurred for these students.

"Even though they say don't touch it, you still want to know on your own why or why not." (Real)

Home life. Although challenges occurred within the school, many of the young men talked about challenges outside of schools that influenced their education. All eleven of the youth interviewed discussed challenges at home that interfered with school life. None of the young men lived with both parents in their households, and at least four were raised by grandparents or lived with extended family or spent significant time in foster care. The young men were asked concerning the importance of family in their lives, and how their family helped them engage in school, or created barriers. Although

they tended to discuss how their family attempted to encouarge school involvement, the challenges that they encountered tended to overwhelm this.

Jake talked about the difficulties he had outside of school, how he became involved with the child welfare department, and how this interrupted his educational process:

> It was like my mama she was out there when we was younger, a drug addict, so and then it was like me and my brother was like, we got – we ran away cause it was like man, we didn't want to be around that, running away, running to my – like we stayed on the west side and we didn't stay too far from my grandma's cousin. And we always like – I don't care how old we is, we always – they, my grandma and my mama always knew if we stayed somewhere, like you got a family member that stayed with you and we used to always run over there. One time when my mama disappeared for weeks at a time, we'd run over there. Like we kept our own – we kept ourselves up. Like we knew our cousin had laundry. She had a washer and dryer. We'd get our clothes, go hustling, get some money to buy detergent and stuff, and just walk over there, take our clothes. We was…… like the best way you be.

Even in spite of his circumstances, Jake demonstrated a level of resilience associated with attempting to take care of himself and his brother. However, as mentioned earlier, the challenges proved to be too much, as Jake missed the entire third grade due to the circumstances mentioned above. Malcolm, involved with the child welfare department as well, shared some of his challenges:

> Yeah, I lived with my grandmother, but she was like kinda' half crazy. Half her brain was actually gone, or half bad, you could say. So basically, we couldn't stay at her house cause one day, she put us out, just Pampers on and somebody seen us, we outside crying. That's the story that I was told. But really, the thing about it – I remember that day, when it happened. I don't like to talk about it, basically that's what happened. That's how I got into the system……My mother was never there, I guess my father brought her down, her self esteem…my father was messing with her at a young age, he was like 20, my mom was 16, so I guess that was her first love. Probably messed with her mentality. My daddy, he was into gangs, you know. He shot somebody while she was on the side of him, so you know that was probably tough, almost killed her…..That was before I was made, so that what was goin' on. Then, while he was locked up for that, when he

> got out, that's when they had me……So, I guess she was stickin' by him for that first time he was in jail, but the next time he went back, she left and I guess she got into the wrong lifestyle.

Malcolm's story details a level of trauma associated with his life events. Often youth who are involved in foster care have some level of complex trauma, a type of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that comes from exposure to multiple types of trauma, including abuse or neglect (Herman, 1992). Some studies report that former foster children are twice as likely as Iraq war veterans to suffer from PTSD, and that many young people in exposed to violence in their communities are at risk (Bell & Jenkins, 1991). Abram, et. al. (2004), in a study identifying the incidence of PTSD in Chicago Juvenile Detention Center, found that 93 percent of the males incarcerated had experienced at least one trauma related event, with more than half citing six or more traumatic events, and 11% were diagnosed with PTSD within the previous 12-month period. They noted that trauma seemed to be more prevalent among this population than in regular community samples (11% compared to 3-9% in community samples of youth and young adults) (Abram, et al, 2004). Half of those with PTSD noted that the precipitating traumatic event was witnessing a violent act (Abram, et al, 2004). For Jake and Malcolm, even with assistance with the state, the above circumstances served as the beginning of several disruptions over the years, with both young men moving from the west and south side several times within the last decade, living with both family members and foster parents. When young people have these types of disruptions, particularly from issues of neglect, they are more likely to have poorer academic performances than their peers (Bell & Jenkins, 1991).

Real talked about some of the care that he received from his mother, but how it eventually backfired on her (and him, to some degree):

> Well, okay, then I wanted to – when I realized – I wasn't ever really that tall so then it was like my mama wanted to keep me away from the streets but at the same time you like that curious kid; they tell you don't touch it, why not to touch it? Even though they say don't touch it, you still want to know on your own why not. She kept me away from the streets. And I say she kept me away from the streets, she used to treat me like a female, she treated me like I was a little kid, she ain't let me do nothin, she ain't want me to do nothin', 'cause she love me that much. But I wanted to get out so bad I got out there on my own even if she told me not to and after awhile it started being –…….How she used to keep me in like I was a – so me and my mother, she used to treat me like I was a female…..I want to go places with my cousins, she won't let me just 'cause it wasn't no adult around and I was at the age that I was supposed to be getting out to see what was out there. And she ain't let me and I got out there kinda late and when I got there I was out there like as far as a female. Like if you got a young daughter or whatever and they want to go outside let 'em go outside a little bit. If you don't let 'em go outside at all, that's something bad. Whenever they do get outside, they gon' be out there.

These stories, first of Jake and Malcolm's family challenges, and Real's struggle with his mother, although on the surface seemingly contrasting and completely separate, denote a conflict that exists for many urban families. On the one hand, for Jake and Malcolm, disengagement from the life of the child due to family vulnerability *based on the circumstances* of street life, and in Real's case, over-protectiveness on the behalf of his mother to keep Real *from being involved in the circumstances* of street-life. The struggle, of families that have members engaged in the streets, attempting to maintain some sense of cohesiveness and stable support for young members until they end up being involved in street life themselves, and the struggle of "decent" families to prevent their youth from being involved in the streets as they reach maturity, is a common family story for families with African American males. Unfortunately for Jake, Malcolm and Real, concerning

education, the result was the same as they all ended up in similar circumstances, being both incarcerated at young ages and dropping out of school.

Tek shares concerning challenges that he had early in school associated with the loss of a family member:

> When I was in preschool I had a counselor, I never forget him, his name is Dr. Black. Went to Tennyson [elementary school] on 3rd Street. He was a good counselor. He used to talk to me a lot because my mother had passed so he used to try to counsel me about that. My grandmother signed me up for that……I used to cry all the time and miss my mother. And he would try to comfort me as far as like I was a shorty, so he'd tell me like she's in a better place and things like that. Just there's a lot of guys who don't have their mother so don't think I'm the only. I used to really think like I was the only person who didn't have a mother. And he opened me up; he opened my eyes; that don't mean I can be a failure. But at that same time you get sidetracked, you go outside and you forget about that. You probably will never forget about him but you'll forget about all what he said. I don't know. I remember that.

Here Tek talks about his grief, and in spite of having a caring professional offer him counsel, it did not keep him from becoming distracted in school. However, Tek remembers this as an important figure in his childhood, and still carries with him the lesson of the moment.

The brief stories of Jake, Malcolm, Real, and Tek share how many dynamics outside of school can interfere with a students' educational progress. For Jake and Malcolm, becoming wards of the state at an early age, eventually living with both family members and foster parents at various times, interrupted both their educational and social development. For Real, although having a caring mother, the desire to connect with other male figures outside of his home outweighed his mother's concern for his well-being. For Tek, the loss of his mother, and a counselor's attempt to help him with his grief served more as a reminder for him that help may be available although outside influences "sidetracked" him. Given that all the students spoke of various dynamics outside of

family life, our focus turns briefly to their surrounding neighborhood, as this appeared to have a measure of influence on their behavior as well.

Neighborhood Bonds

> *"So no matter what you do,*
> *the streets gonna' be a part of you".* Jake

The block. Many of the youth talked about the dynamics of street-life, and how it interacted with their daily choices, not restricted to schools. Luke shared concerning the dynamics of his neighborhood, and how the relationships become important in often complex and contradicting ways:

> Well, like I been over there for a while, so the whole neighborhood know me and my family, so it wudden like I would have any problems goin' outside, it just like you know these people all your life, but you never know what they into. You never know, talking to them for five minutes could get you killed. You don't know what they just did before you walked up on 'em, cause they'll never tell you, so it's kinda, you gotta watch your shoulder, or look at your surroundings, see what was goin' on, cause stuff be happening in a split second, so fast……[concerning positives about the neighborhood] They all stick together, like, see somebody from the neighborhood havin' problems, even though you probably don't like that person, they still your community, they still in your area, and your problem they problem. So they all stick together.

In spite of the stress associated with safety, the above illustrates the contradictions inherent in the streets for many of these youth. Luke still identified the assets and bonds that exist within his neighborhood, where relationships can serve as a source of strength, in spite of the problems.

Jake reported on this aspect of community life as well. Dealing with the pain associated with his family and living circumstances, Jake shared how, on an emotional level, the block nurtured him more than school life:

Jake: It was really some hurt. It was hurt and it was like deep down inside. Like I was missing home and at the same time, I wasn't missing home, and like I got much more love on the – I got much more love from the block than I did at school, so….

Interviewer: So what was going on at school? Tell me about that.

Jake: It's like, you know, friction. Like every day I was there, I would have a different story, getting into it with a different person, getting into it with that person, getting into things for something stupid, stuff like that. But on the block, it was like I didn't have no problems because everybody looked up to me. So like that's the way I wanted it.

Jake illustrates here the tension that he encountered in school, and the stress relief he encountered from being on the block. Jake earned a form of capital through his ability to be successful on the streets, and the streets helped affirm his identity. Here it is important to briefly mention the type of social capital that occurs within the context of street life.

Bonding social capital occurs when people engage in trusting relationships with people within their same class or ethnic ranking (Putnam, 2000). Family ties, peer and neighborhood relationships are often forms of bonding social capital. Jakes' strong ties with the people on his block formulate a type of social capital that brings more value from the streets for young men like Jake as opposed to the value of schooling. Jake understood the significance of school and receiving an education, even at times excelling, but it could not compete with what he received from the streets. Although Jake did receive economic capital from his endeavors in the streets, as well as a level of respect from people in the streets, the emotional capital that he received outweighed the benefits of school life. Thus the relationships that he encountered in the neighborhood with family and peers, the trust developed through them, and the reciprocal dynamics

developed a form of bonding capital that competed with the bridging capital that occurs in schools and similar institutions.

As the emotional impact of the streets affects many young people, Jake also gives some insight concerning the dynamic of respect, offering his analysis on why street life is so alluring to many young people. Here, in talking about how money and sex influenced their choices, Jake shares:

> ….And now you've got her and now you running through her friend, her sisters, and everybody else, and that attracts a lot of people cause they want to live that life as like the rappers talk about on TV. They try to live that life, which that ain't the right life to live though. You still hundred grand [strongly connected] like this with, your brothers, your uncles, your cousins that's still in the streets. So no matter what you do, the streetsgonna' be apart of you.

Jake here connects the dots concerning how success in the streets leads to access to resources and women that that may not be available by going to school.

Students' peer relationships play a significant role in their development in their neighborhood, and ultimately, many of their choices associated with school. Deon Jay shared how, although he cares about his mother, peer influences played a greater role concerning his choices:

> 'Cause really, I thought my mom was lyin' to me, when she used to say "Go to school, just go there and do your work, don't let nobody distract you" and all that, but I wanted to do the opposite. You know, I wouldn't listen, I ain't listening, so a hard head make a soft butt. And it catches up with you in the end.

Deon Jay speaks to the fact that a caring mother, in spite of her warnings about distractions, was unable to disconnect from peer influences. In a similar way, Lydell shares concerning his friendships in his community, and the feeling of family in peer relationships:

> In my community, it's a lot of us, but then again, it's a group. I break off. So I know like he's my brother, they there for me. They – whatever I go through, they there. So it's a group of friends I got I feel like family.

Confirming Anderson's (1999) identification that peers are more "like family", and the presence of a "fictive kinship" (Chatters, et al, 1994) that can occur for these youth, Real shares concerning how people in the streets become this:

> ….early back then I used to let nigga's on the streets be my family. Even though I had a real family see, people on the streets when they let the people on the streets be they family they don't have a family. I had a family and I still let them do that just 'cause my family wasn't treating me how I wanted to be treated.

Real felt a level of connection and respect from his street family that he did not receive from his "real" family.

For many young men like Lydell and Real, the street family is also intertwined with being a member of a street organization. With the exception of Malcolm, all the young men interviewed belong to a street organization, although some are "insiders", young men who have been heavily involved in street organizations, and others on the periphery, or "wanna be's", those that identify as members of the street organization or clique, but have loose membership and are not as heavily involved in street life. As described earlier, there is a clear intertwining of"street organizations" and "family", with many young people either associating peers of street organizations as extended family, or in many cases, actual family connections that extended into the streets. Tek shared how he "grew up" connected to a street organization:

> Affiliated with gangs since I was a shorty….my father was affiliated with gangs so that's why I thought family. My whole family is gang bangers. At least on my father's side. On my mother's side they more – I ain't gonna say squares but they you know, you know what I'm saying ,they're more like into getting money legitimately. They got their head on a little tighter than my father's family.

Tek also illustrates another dynamic mentioned earlier, the tension between "street" and

"decent" people in a community, here showing how at times that tension exists within one's own family.

Given that many street organization's have existed for several decades in Chicago, the students identified some changes that they have noticed in their limited years. Lydell, from a family heavily involved in street organizations and street life, critiques current street organization members, as opposed to where he and his family grew up, calling them now "fake" and sharing:

> Most of the people in gangs nowadays don't know the background of it, don't – the gangs not even what they was back then, what they was started for, the reasons. It ain't none of that, and then it's real fake cause GD's shoot at GD's now. Back then none of that would have happened.

Lydell offers a critique common among street life and those that work with street organizations today, that many street organizations have become localized to neighborhood interests, or ties to "the block". Still connected to "parent" organizations, they work independently of the larger organization, maintaining a sense of connection and territory defined by neighborhood boundaries. Q, discussing this difference today, shares how he still identifies some connections that people have, but that being affiliated does not necessarily "plug you" (connect you) in different neighborhoods:

> I can't say it, it matters. You got some niggas, we going through the neighborhood, I'm GD you're GD. We come in your hood, okay just 'cause I'm GD don't mean y'all won't get down on me. Or you got niggas that go to the old school, the "one love" act. Nigga I'm GD, ok you a gangster that's good, whether I know you or not. We got some "we GD's can't no mo's come down here". That really don't matter to me now. They know not to cross that line.

For Q, there is an implied understanding that formal ties to a gang, unlike in the past, may not give a person the same level of access and capital that previously existed. However, this "capital" may exist when incarcerated. Q shares about his "time":

> You know how to go in there, you know how to present yourself when you go in there. If you go in there with a gang banger act, you better know what you're supposed to know if you gonna go in there with that act.

Lydell and Q illustrate some of the uniqueness of street organization affiliation in Chicago today, and also the intersection of neighborhood and gang life.

Capital shares how being affiliated with a street organization has changed over the years, with the emphasis falling more on neighborhood life as well:

> I mean, it was just something to do. I mean, really it never was like the clique. How we see it where I'm from, Franklin and Ash, the little complex area. You from the complex, you from the complex. I mean, I've been, my grandmother been living there since they put that first section right there. She been living there forever, living there since my mom and them was kids. But like this how we saw it. Like we not – this how I see it, and this how I be trying to tell them. "We is not in no gang. We just really claiming where we living from." You know what I'm saying? Ain't none of them older gang members come pull us to the side, you know, stick a little literature to us, none of that stuff. We went upon ourselves, like I said. We went upon ourselves and just start smoking and drinking. We went upon ourselves to find the literature and learn the literature on ourselves. We were just claiming where we from. This is where we live at, you know what I'm saying? So we weren't in no gang; we were just claiming us. We claiming the complex, CP. And then we started – after that little era then we started claiming Folks Yates, 4 Corner Hustlers, you know what I'm saying? We not none of that. How I see it we all not no gang bangers because we never went through the real steps to become a gang member.

For Capital, there is a strong identification with his peers and the geographical space where they live. Claiming a since of ownership to the area as a third generation family member there, Capital and his peers formed a bond with each other, later connecting to the external resources of the larger street organization.

With the "block" or neighborhood life seen as a nurturing space, street organization members as family, the influence of family and street life over school life becomes predictable for these young men. The dynamic intensifies when met with

problems that transfer back into the classroom and the school. As Jake notes, it is difficult to totally separate from the streets:

> And it's like no matter if you – you could overcome and make it out of the hood, but you still got people that you grew up with that's hundred grand that you like this with, your brothers, your uncles, your cousins that's still in the streets. So no matter what you do, the streets gonna be a part of you.

If schools are not prepared or able to offer an engagement within school that counters the benefits of street life, then students often make the choice that offers them the greatest reward, if only for the short term. The next section returns to looking at life within schools, dealing with the barriers that the students encounter when attempting to negotiate the life of the streets with a school that, in their view, has little interest in supporting them.

School exclusion

"I know how you feel about me, so I know to keep my distance from you." Jake

Classroom as hostile space. Many of the students shared that the majority of teachers they had previously encountered soured them towards education and school. Deon Jay, with the exception of one positive teacher, shared:

Deon Jay: But all my other teachers, as far as I can remember, was whacked. I never did like 'em.

Interviewer: Why were they whacked? Why do you think?

Deon Jay: 'Cause they used to just seem like they always be pickin' on me, that's what it seemed like. I started holdin' a grudge against all teachers, even if I didn't know you.

At some point in his school progression, Deon Jay begin to develop a resistance towards his teachers. At times, relationships may not only be about what the student is doing in the classroom, and may stem from other issues that occur. Luke shares:

> She was the reason why I used to hate teachers as much as I did, cause she used to be so evil, it was ridiculous. Anything I did, anything, she would give hell for it. I used to get 100's on every test. Every test she would give us, on whatever it was, and on my report card it wouldn't show. It never showed. My momma always wanted to know that, and it was a personal issue with me because she was datin' my father, and he did her wrong, so she took it out on me. I didn't know that at the time. I was a kid. I didn't know that at the time……Yeah, that probably would be it. I never liked a teacher after her, cause I thought they were all gonna be the same from there on. As I was gettin' older, I thought the teachers were gonna get worser and worser and worser and worser like that. Yeah,that probably when it started.

Whereas Deon Jay used the term "whacked" and Luke used the term "hate" to describe his relationship with teachers, and many of the students discussed their dislike of teachers, some of the students had a more nuanced description of the teacher-student interaction.

Jake goes a little further in describing how he identifies teachers who do not care about students:

Jake: It was just I didn't need to conversate with those people. They wouldn't – it was like, "Oh, well, that's how you feel."

Interviewer: Like what? What would they say? What would they do?

Jake: They wouldn't say it. It was just the way how they would interact when I'm around, how they interact. So it's like and they think people don't notice it, but I was noticing it, so okay, I keep it to myself. I never say nothing. I keep it to myself, but all the time in my head, I got a presumption about this is what this person thinks about me already. So I just keep it like that, man.

Interviewer: Was it male and female, black and white, or whatever?

Jake: It was all the – yeah, it was male, female, black, white. It didn't – to me, it didn't have a color. All I seen is what y'all thought about

> me, how y'all interact. It wasn't about if you was a male or female, black or white. It was just about me. It was just like okay, I know how you feel about me, so I know to keep my distance from you.

In Jake's view, race and gender did not factor into how teachers negatively interact with students, that it was more how teachers interacted with him. Jake describes a phenomenon that occurs in many schools for youth. Duncan (2002), and other scholars call these microaggressions that occur in the day to day interactions with students. These subtle mannerisms impede upon the trusting relationships that teachers and students can form for education, and many students, already vulnerable due to both school and outside circumstances do exactly what Jake did, they keep their distance. For Jake, it was not about what was said during interactions, it was a form of intuitive knowing he had about interacting with teachers.

In asking what he thought could have worked to engage his peers and himself in school, Luke offered:

> It wouldn't get done by you talkin' to the whole class in general, cause we wouldn't even pay you no attention. So you should, whichever kid you think that had the potential, you will pull him to the side or after school or somethin' like that, and you have a real genuine talk with him, and let him know, and eventually, like a kid like me, I know it'd sunk in. Well, I never had nobody do that.

Luke recognized the difficulties with addressing many young males in classrooms, and that an individual connection would have improved classroom relationships. Luke reported concerning one of his previous schools:

> The teachers didn't care. They didn't care at all. It got so reckless, we could pay a teacher $5.00 and she'll let us shoot dice in her classroom for four periods. Four or five periods. That's how you know she didn't care. Over $5.00? That's crazy.

Nate, reporting on his encounter with teacher's once entering high school, shares:

> It seem like the teacher don't care, they have so many students so they like so I'm just getting my check. I'm like man that's crazy, then you'll ask her a question, they don't want to answer the question. They be like" you should have been listening", "I was listening but I didn't get the question but I didn't get it right, I need some more help", "well you gone have to find that on your own, go get a book of something". "Why you can't help me you the teacher?"

In taking these students' stories at face value, a portrait can be created of classroom life in the schools that these young men attended as filled with teachers who did not appear to care about their well-being, who took little time to assist them, or had other agendas within the context of the classroom. However, as noted earlier, the students are not without fault.

A part of the difficulty concerning interpreting relationships between student and teacher is that at times, the student may have a view of the encounter that may not be completely accurate. However, it is important to consider the lens that the student shares from, that even if statements may not be completely accurate, there is some meaning attached to the interpretation that the student has towards the situation that is worthy of careful interpretation. Also, given power dynamics that occur within schools, often the opinions of teachers and administrators are held at greater value than student's voices. Take Q's telling of several situations where he encountered resistance from teachers and individuals in authority. Q shares both how he interpreted the situation, how he was viewed both accurately and inaccurately, and even his flaws. Given that this was a spontaneous story, there is reason to believe Q's accuracy concerning the story:

Q: The teacher be trying to teach us and she'd take points for everything. Sneezed too loud, she'd take a point. Blinked too loud, she'd take a point. And the way she be saying it, she be saying it so funny you gotta laugh. Like, "zero for the rest of the week." You laugh, she'd take a point. I'm like dang, me and her got into it. And I was like, "I want my class changed." But the class I wanted, they didn't have no room. So I'm like screw it. I

> gotta go back in there. And I'm trying to tell her, like I went to apologize to her and that. I've been apologizing. I apologized. I'm trying to go, "Okay, can I come back into class?" And she like, "No. No." But I was playing. I'm sitting there telling her, this not a joke, like this is my future, man. I need this credit. This is my future, you gonna sit here and throw my whole future away off of one little thing because we got into it? I apologized to her and everything. I'm sitting here telling you I'm gonna change what I do in class, I'm gonna come here and do the work, and then we get into an argument? I ain't trying to hear that. And I think that's wrong for a teacher to do that. I think that's wrong for a teacher to do that. If you get into it and you have enough strength to come back and tell her, "Okay, I'm sorry. I need help with this, can you let me back in?" I think they should at least try to hear you out. She wasn't even trying to hear me out.

In Q's telling of his story, he acknowledges questionable behavior on his part, but reports the difficulty in apologizing when his voice is not heard. Although disruptive, in Q's view, he is open to intervention from trusted officials. When viewing these different scenarios of classroom life, and teacher-student interaction, it can be clear to see what happens within the larger school environment.

The disengagement from classroom life extends into the schools. Whereas the classroom embodies the place where curriculum and pedagogical practices take place and guide the teacher-student relationship, the larger school environment is the "space between the spaces" where students gather, form social relationships, and play out other forms of institutional life. The school climate instructs students on the expectations for social behavior and public relationships. For many of these youth, this "instruction" offered an introduction into a public playground of violence and disciplinary practices, where the boundaries between the street, the classroom, and the prison become blurred.

"It like killed my whole spirit".

Nate

School as hostile space. Nate entered into high school expecting to start over from his previous experiences in K-8 classrooms. Inquisitive and ambitious, Nate describes believing in the mission as touted by the school, and preparing to engage in a challenging curriculum and supportive academic life. However, Nate describes what he encountered:

> …so the Public Schools maaaaan from what I experience they didn't help me with nothing, they showed me the worst part. I was learning at Salieon, but not how I expected, man this is a brand new school. This Salieon [high school], the home of tomorrow's leaders. I'm thinking I'm fixin' to be prepared for anything. I'm supposed to be in college right now. I go to Salien and its nothing but gangs in there… like wow I wasn't expecting this. It like killed my whole spirit. I want to grow up to be a thug now I'm at Salieon, that's all you expect. I wasn't expecting to see that there, I was expecting a total different experience.

Nate, in sharing that the environment "killed my whole spirit", speaks to an expectation that many students enter into school with, that the environment will be a safe place with opportunities to learn, and realizing later that school becomes more about protection from aggression. Jake, who at times excelled in school, shared how his fourth through seventh grades experiences were mired in fighting in school:

> From like fourth to seventh, it's like in the school I was already considered a bad guy cause I was fighting and getting a lot of people trying to bully on me and stuff. So I was fighting almost every day, every other day.

Although this temporarily stopped for Jake in the eighth grade, due to what Jake describes as two "caring and down" teachers, the fighting picked back up when Jake entered high school.

Luke also talked about the hostility of the school environment:

> I was hangin' with the wrong people, fightin', not goin' to class, just bein' rude to

> the staff and to the teachers, and it wasn't gonna work out. I was headed down the wrong path like for real, if I woulda stayed there, I'd be in jail right now. I don't know what I woulda probably did, cause it was just terrible. We'd fight every day in there. I had to fight in the school. I had to fight to go home. Have to fight to get on the bus, so it wasn't no place for me at all.

When asked by the researcher concerning why the large amount of fighting, Luke shared:

> Rivals from where we was livin', and where we stayed at, and other guys in the school didn't like where we stayed at, so we was fightin' 'em cause of that, and over some females, and just typical teenage stuff. So that's basically what it was.

The "typical teenage stuff", however, for many of these young men had severe consequences that manifested in being pushed out of school, incarceration, and in some cases for both the youth and those that they were close to, serious injury or death.

Real talks about how the school/streets phenomena begin to show up at his school and the surrounding community:

> Community's messed up. This hell on earth. This is hell on earth. Everybody getting killed everywhere. It ain't even safe out here in these streets no more. Cops killing regular people, regular people killing regular people, regular people killing cops. Just go grab your gun; I got mine, you got yours. Mine ain't got nothing to do with yours. I just got mine for security purposes. I don't even flash it. If I'm pulling it out it's for to use. And if I'm pulling it out I'm using it so I don't even – sometimes I forget I got it. I don'teven touch it. It's just there for precaution. When it's that time and my life on the line that's when I'm gonna get that gun.

Real goes on to say the "hell" in the community flows over into the school:

> Then you have other altercations where there was people getting into it with the people in the school when they get into – like outside of school when they get in the streets and they do they thing in the streets, they gang banging, they bring it to the school, and I see it's too many innocent people at the school that doesn't do those things. And like you got these people coming and shooting at the school at a child and where it's like, that's like I can't be around that 'cause I could be one of the innocent people that got shot 'cause I got shot at in front of Harley [high school], just coming out of school walking….I was behind some other guys though. So that's the schools I've been to, and that's why I'm here now. Then I was making bad choices myself, true that, hanging with the wrong people, fighting a lot, dissing school, doing all that dumb stuff. So that's the reason I'm here, but now I'm on the right track, so that's about it for that.

Like many adolescents, things that occur outside of schools affect what happens within the school, but for these young men, the consequences are harsher. Real, feeling a need to protect himself, speaks of the tension that he experienced at the last school he attended, likening himself to being both a victim and one who makes "bad choices". Seldom talked about, this fear may be at the root of many of the young men's need to fight, among other things. Capital talked about the reality for him at this type of school.

After attending another school where he was kicked out for fighting, Capital encountered the same thing on the complete opposite side of the city. Having transferred into the same school that Real attended, Capital discussed the tension associated with attending school:

> It was a – nothing really never – I never really got into no real big altercation at Haley, it was just the more I see stuff happening and other altercations happening I wondered, "Okay, what if an altercation comes towards me?" I can't really be in that altercation because I'm really gonna get kicked out of school anyway if I got into an altercation, so I just thought of it like, "This is my work in front of me." That's when I stopped going to school. I go to school then I won't go to school, or I go to school then won't go to school, and I just had a couple friends that already went here, and they were just telling me, "If you ain't feeling it just come over here," you know what I'm saying?

For Capital, he took a path that many youth take, opting to stay out of the school, rather than being put out again.

Luke, sharing about an event that proved to be part of his turning point, reported concerning one of his critical moments discussing the cycle:

> …..it was a situation I had when I was at the school last year and I would meet this other fellow over, it was real petty, some basketball stuff, and it kinda escalated. Yeah, I was arrested, for a gun……I can't really remember cause everything happened so fast. I know like when I was actually caught in the handcuffs, and I was thinkin' "What did I just do?"

Luke, ready to shoot another young man over a basketball game, illustrates how easily these young men can go from being students to incarcerated youth. The resulting consequence for many of the students was a gradual process of disengaging from school, missing days, and getting into trouble both within the school and in the streets.

For other youth, the fighting took on a common form. Anderson (1999), in discussing oppositional culture, wrote about the importance of "respect" and how this plays out in both the streets and in schools. Lydell talks about this phenomenon, and how he contributed to the fighting in schools:

> And then again I – I don't know why. I know it was dumb, but I used to – I like fighting cause when I was, you know, people look – I mean I wouldn't say looked up to me, but you get respect when they see you fighting and steady whipping people. That ain't a good thing, but that's how it is.

For Lydell, beginning as a child in elementary school, and extending into high school, fighting became a normal way for him to interact with others when entering a new environment, or when new persons entered his school environment.

Malcolm talks about going to an alternative school similar to his current school, YLI, called "Queen Nzinga", and encountering some of the similar challenges as a traditional public school:

> Reason I end up here is Queen Nzinga (high school) is disorganized. I was gettin' into it in school with a lot of guys, you know, like real playful. You know me, I'm just more like laid back, just go with the motion type of guy, like people like to start things, you know, just being childish, so that's why I moved up here. Cause I got in trouble with someone, and then, you know, that's where really I caught a case, but only reason I didn't get convicted because I wudden in the wrong, I was defending myself, and at the same time the principal got into it, tried to break it up, she got hit from the guy that I was fightin', so we had to go that little court procedure, so that's why I like to end up to stop goin' there.

In offering an analysis of what happened to him and others in schools concerning fighting, Malcolm goes on to say:

> Like, society, like, some kids came, like me, some kids bring what happened in the street inside the school. Some kids react, cause they don't have no home training to adults and students that's in there, and a lotta people, just, it's just like half the time you really won't know what's goin' on inside the school, cause the cycle's just gonna keep goin' on, and you ain't really gonna know it.

For Malcolm, his reference to the "cycle" represents a continuum of outside challenges interfering with school life, and the school life challenges spilling over into community life. In Malcolm's case, he was fortunate in this instance that this did not end up in a conviction, but the subsequent fighting, arrest, and court proceedings that Malcolm discussed spoke to an intersection of schooling and the criminal justice system that often happens for these youth. As schools become violent places where student and teacher safety are in jeopardy, the increasing amount of disciplinary policies and police involvement help foster a relationship between school life and incarceration.

The "cycle" or pattern that Malcolm talked about speaks to a similar phenomenon that occurred for many of these youth. From school to the streets to school to jail often resulted in a disconnect from the process of schooling for these youth. It is important to note here, that on first glance, it would be easy to "blame the victim", and associate the fighting that took place around and between these young men as symptomatic of challenges that they possessed internally. After all, several talked about their own anger issues and difficulties negotiating stressful circumstances. However, disciplinary policies that seek to control and sentence students for disruptive behavior do little to disclose the amount of bias, or show a school's unwillingness to address social and emotional issues with a supportive, caring, educational environment. Since the increasing of zero tolerance and punitive disciplinary policies, the amount of suspensions and expulsions increased until recently. However, many question the accuracy of school reporting on

suspensions and expulsions, citing the recent No Child Left Behind Act, the lengthy process of expelling a student, as students are more likely to be "pushed out". The majority of the students interviewed talked about fear, protection and isolation, as opposed to the hyper-aggressive violence that many portray these youth as possessing. When violence occurs at schools, students can become fearful, affecting their readiness and ability learn. Concerns about their own vulnerability to attacks, and the desire to be on guard and protect themselves can detract from a positive school environment (Scheckner, et al, 2002).

Real talked about his disconnect from school, eventually missing a number of days from school:

> I was going to DVR (high school), actually. And I was missing, like, so many days I wasn't even really goin'. Instead of going to school I was making my mama think I was going to school, but the whole time I was on them blocks. Come to find out, report card time come around, mama come up there thinking I been going to school all this time, come up in there I got 72 days out. 72? That's the lowest days absent I had. I wish I had many that many woo-woo-woo. So after awhile I made a deal with someone on the streets when I got in trouble and when I got in trouble I got a probation officer. When I got a probation officer came and checked on me at my school and realized I wasn't going. So after that she locked me up in the regular, Audi Home, stayed in there for a little minute, then when I got out she put me in that school.

For Real, being out of school made him more vulnerable to illegal dealings in the street, which later resulted in his incarceration. Real never returned to a traditional Chicago public high school. After spending time in the juvenile detention center, he went to a school specifically designed for formerly incarcerated youth to transition them back into the traditional high school, but instead ended up at YLI. Lydell goes on to talk about other factors that related to checking out of school as well:

> Fighting all the time, leaving school. That's another reason. You could just leave a public school when you want to. I'd leave, go smoke. My attendance was

> bad……They put me out once, but it was the end of the year. They let me back the next year, but I wasn't really wanting to come back. I was never coming to school, and when I did come, I'd leave early, go to half of my classes, didn't do nothing.

Lydell, who likes being challenged intellectually, and shares that he likes to learn, no longer saw any value in attending school. Jake reports how he went from being engaged in school to dropping out:

> Now honor graduate, honors classes in ninth grade, running cool. It's nothing. Sophomore year, that's when it came apart. I got caught up with the streets. I fell in with the streets. In junior year I probably, like I dropped out '04, end of '04, and like youcould say from November '04to March '05, it was great, strictly gang banging, selling drugs. It was about me. I'm grinding. I'm eat now, got a little money. I caught that little case. Then that's when they just – I am gone out to Wisconsin. Like my first year, into '05, I didn't go to school. I just worked and saved a little money up, like so when school started back, when school did come back around in January, no, September '06, I really got back.

However, soon afterwards, Jake found himself disengaged again, and found it difficult to re-cover from the almost year of being out of school.

For many of the youth, the cycle of leaving and returning began to wear thin, and many of the schools expelled the students, requesting that they do not return. Tek talked about being put out of school:

> I got kicked out of Bogus my sophomore of high school…..Came back though this is my last time; this is my third strike. Everything. I came to like sign up for school, you know, register day, and the principal just tell me like man we don't want you here no more cause you bad. You know what I'm saying? I had to accept it….. I ain't gonna lie my heart sunk because that was when I was going to go back and try the same thing I was saying, I was going to try and go back and get on business. I didn't get another chance; it was too late so I had to suck it up.

Tek, in sharing that his "heart sunk", describes the realization that his behavior had cost him his high school education, calling this his "third strike". As many youth find themselves in the seemingly inevitable fate of being no longer in the process of achieving

what had been designated for them as the correct path of young people, to go through K-12 education in order to receive a high school diploma, the process becomes dim.

As many of the students described, high school became a place of violence, both within and outside of the classroom. Interactions with teachers proved to be hostile, as teachers often mistrusted them, singled them out in classrooms as misbehaving, or simply neglected to teach them, as in the case of Real's teacher being "paid off" to allow students to gamble in the class. The larger school environment was wrought with fighting that occurred with regularity, with many students seeing little difference between the violence of the school and the violence of the streets. These blurred boundaries of violence become endemic of a flawed disciplinary system that has seen Chicago public high school space move into an increased state of managing school discipline, which includes metal detectors at school entrances, police officers as security personnel, does not appear to have benefited these students. School had become a place of tension and fear, where the need to constantly watch over their shoulders to protect themselves, and in some cases to just disappear from the school, offers a lens into the barriers that prevent students from engaging in school life. As interactions with the justice system increased, engagement within school decreased, later resulting in full out checking out of the process of schooling. The "cycle" of being forced out of school, being in and out of jails, and ultimately being in the streets served as critical period in the life of these youth. As many were in this "in-between" period of being considered a "drop-out", they described an emotional process of examining their lives.

Purgatory

What now? Many of students interviewed, after leaving "regular" schools, and prior to entry into YLI and alternative schools, offered different accounts of emotions and thinking while away from school. The time away for each student varied from a few months to as long as a year, and each student described this time period as being one of reflection, remorse, and determination. After being put out of Salieon, Nate shared "I was depressed…..I was like "I just got kicked out of school what am I'm gonna do now". Nate's mother encouraged him to stay positive, but at the time, Nate was not sure of what his future entailed. Other students used the time spent while detained to reflect. Real talked about how he was able to do this in the Aubrey Home:

> One thing I remember they told me ain't nothing wrong with a change. Just 'cause you're a changed man don't mean you like them brand new. Change is always – it can be a change for the better or for the worse but as long as it's a change and not the same. I'm trying to make a change for the better.

Real spent a percentage of his time reading the Bible, and talking with counselors within the facility. In contrast, Tek talks about how during this time, he found himself not having a stable living environment:

> I was just going from house to house; people were tired – my peoples were tired. I don't have a mother. My father you know what I'm saying was addicted to crack so my grandmother and 'em kicked me out. So I stayed with my female friend, my girlfriend and I moved with my dad.

Tek, basically homeless, took care of himself via making ends meet "hustling" in various ways. In the same vein as Tek, Lydell talked about sustaining himself as well. After spending a year in the streets doing what he described as "trying to get some money", Lydell shared about his time out of school that "Really I was just at home bored". Other students talked about just hanging out with friends from day to day, not doing anything.

Capital talked about being out of school, and what he did with his time:

> Just going outside early, cold, summer, it didn't matter. I just go outside early. Go chill with some of the guys I shouldn't have been hanging with, you know. Just chilling with them, doing stuff I shouldn't have been doing. You know, I was selling weed and stuff, doing that. I shot some guns before, but I realized that's not me.

Luke talked about what he did when he was out of school:

> Nothin' at all, just in the house, eatin', sleepin', just nothin'. I wasn't doin' nothin' at all, all the months I wasn't in school, I wasn't doin' nothin'. Wasn't beginning to care for school, lazy, go on doin' nothin'.

For these students, there was nothing glamorous about being in the streets, and their days were filled with drinking and drug use, idle time, and making money the best way that they could. This time period, being in a place in-between school, at times jail, and other institutions, was a place where all of the students commented on having little awareness concerning their future. Their choices and circumstances made for them by school officials and law enforcement personnel, they at times saw little recourse but to sit and wait. The realization of a life without education and goals was not a life well-lived at all. Lydell, in coming to this realization shared " …and I'm looking at people older than me like most of the people that didn't go to school on the corner drinking, that's it". The process of coming to the realization, although not pretty, served as an important step in these students eventually re-entering school.

Thank God for grantin' me this moment of clarity
This moment of honesty
The world'll feel my truths
Through my Hard Knock Life time
My Gift and The Curse

Jay-Z, from "Moment of clarity"

Moments of clarity. The promise of jails, institutions, and death on the streets became a greater reality for these young men. Tek talked about the impact of witnessing and experiencing the violence on the streets, and how some say individuals become numb to its effects:

> That's not true. If you have a heart it affects you. If you human it should affect you. I don't care how much you see. My brother got shot in front of my face, see what I'm saying. And what you think? I just supposed to be numb because of it? No. you know what I'm saying, you got a heart and you see everybody dying that's that macho, what do you call it, that macho every man for himself, I don't really care about the next, I got to get it how I get it…… It makes me want to get away from it because I can end up being one of the guys who's a victim to it…… No one chooses to, you know what I'm saying, die. No one woke up that morning like I'm gonna go outside and shoot dice and get hit by a stray. Don't nobody choose that.

For Tek, the realization that befalls many young people in Chicago, that the possibility of death through violence is a real threat, and that in spite of perceptions of unemotional youth, the experience of loss is very real. Tek, homeless and hustling, talks about beginning to make an effort to get re-engaged in school:

> And we was in traps and I was just basically sleeping on the streets, you know what I'm saying……So I decided I needed to get back in school, maybe if I help myself maybe somebody else try to help me…..Yeah – I came and tried to talk to [Principal Mr. Ernie] like two times. The second time he thinks I was trying to help myself; I enrolled in a GED program at Kennedy King and he thinks I was really trying to help myself. Before he would just see me outside, I'd come and then when I'd come he'd be like, "I still see you out on the block and all that. I ain't gonna let you back in my school you gonna do the same thing." So once he seen that I was on then he gave me a third chance. So I'm taking advantage of it.

Tek's realization that first, school was a stabilizing factor in his life, and second, that he needed to make some effort for himself before getting a second chance proved to be a major step for him.

Others had more spontaneous events occur that sparked their desire to re-connect with school. Capital talked about one day coming to a moment of realization:

> Then like – it was one day I was in the group, we all together kicking it and stuff, and there was one day I was partying, drinking, and all that. I'm just looking at everybody else like we all the same age. Ain't nobody got no high school diploma or nothing. Everybody want to sit here and do what we doing now, and I just thought, "If I got a chance to go back to school and get a high school diploma, I mean, why not take it and run with it." And that's what I did. That's how I really got here too. I just took that – take that one time to think, and the light bulb just popped like, "You need to go to school today and finish playing ball." That's what I'm doing. I'm trying to get – I'm in here playing ball.

It was important for Capital to distinguish himself from his peers, in attempting to move beyond his current circumstances:

> We way different. Like, they don't think how I think. They don't think about the consequences and what can happen to you when you doing all this negative, you selling drugs, you shooting at people, you getting into with people really over nothing. I had to learn that tool the hard way. We sit here on the blocks and all this, and we into with the other for really no reason. We just making noise. That's how I would say it. We making noise for no reason. Why were we making noise for no reason while we could all just be in school making noise but making noise a positive way? Like that, like we could go to school. I be trying to tell them. I be sitting here actually talking. They be looking at me crazy. They sit there really looking at me crazy like, "You used to do all this." I know that, but it's also it's time for us to change 'cause we 19, 18 years old. We getting old now. We not getting younger. We getting older, so the more we get older we gotta step it up. And like I really be talking to my guy who got the kids. I got a daughter too. That's really another reason why I'm back in school and not doing that dumb stuff 'cause I got a daughter, and I want to live for my daughter. I want to see my daughter have kids and her kids have kids. You out here doing all this negative you probably won't even see your own children make 21.

Luke shares how, after entering YLI in the spring, but still not doing well, how an event during the summer transformed his outlook:

> What really hit me was one of my buddies got killed. He got killed down at the Taste [of Chicago], and I think that was it right there. Cause he was one of them, like, he was always smilin', he was a real good dude, and I just told myself, I don't wanna be in that situation at all. I don't wanna be in no circumstance where I gotta fight for my life, for hangin' with somebody, or somethin', cause that's what it was. He was with the wrong people at the wrong time, and I know bout me, I don't be doin' no harm to anybody, and I be hangin' with them, I could be that victim. So it just be standin' around, so I kinda like, since then, I kinda drift myself away from all the old dudes I used to hang with, like I see

> them and still say "What's up?" to them, but you wouldn't catch me walkin' down the street or gettin' in the car with 'em or somethin' like that. Most the time, I'm by myself now. Listenin', got my headphones on, somethin' like that. That's me now.

Lydell talks more about his process, offering a critique of the streets in how he came to desire re-engaging in education:

Lydell: Well, it's just streets ain't promised. You could – you'll get by. You know, I was doing good, getting a little money, but all it take it one time and it can end real quick. Everything can end once. It ain't like you got a degree. Okay, if I lose now this degree gonna back me up. No, what you got is what you got. If you lose it, you gotta start over and no telling when you'll have to start over, so it wasn't really promising.

Interviewer: So did you see something happen to a couple of people close to you or something like that?

Lydell: A lot of people, my brothers, my families, most of them are locked up, but even the ones that got out, everything they had, they was rich before they went in. They broke now.

Realizing how, without his education, he would have little recourse to back him up in case anything happened, Lydell desired to make a change. Similarly, Nate describes his process:

> I got smart, I was making a lot of dumb decisions and then something clicked "this ain't you, you ain't suppose to get kicked out of Salieon, you was suppose to graduate from Salieon and went right to college." After I got kicked out that put a whole new bulb in my head like man this ain't what you want. You need to do something with your life. Honestly, when I got kicked out of Salieon I was heated. I couldn't deal with it, I was too mad. I wasn't never supposed to get kicked out but when I came here my whole mind set changed. Let me focus on getting a higher education, that's the only way I'm going to get somewhere, where I want to be.

Nate's turn from depression to anger concerning his circumstance, and ultimately his choice to return to school, exemplified a process that many of these young men encountered, that they were tired of placing their lives in harm's way, and ready to make

some necessary changes. However, these changes would not be able to take place at the schools that they went to before, and with the same people that they encountered.

After being pushed out or expelled from school, these young men found themselves, depressed, bored, frustrated and angry about their life circumstances, unable to maintain their enrollment within traditional schools, unable to locate legal, sustainable jobs, and tired of street life. To a person, they all expressed some emotional tension that they experienced between themselves and the streets, offering an awareness of their limited life choices without an education, with a criminal record. They also spoke to the potential of losing one's life, or physical health to violence in the streets, and recognized that they may have another chance at finding success in education. Realizing that they were not welcomed at traditional public schools, they turned to trusted allies to assist in making a change. All of the young men detailed the importance of trusted others in helping them facilitate this process, the process of re-engaging in schools.

Social capital reconceptualized

Once many of these students decided to re-engage in school, they were met with several choices along the way, including where to attend school, how to stay out of trouble, how to leave friends alone, where to find support, and in some cases, how to support themselves. This renegotiation of their educational lives called for a different way of being in relationship with schools and people in authority. It also called for finding opportunities and places where educational personnel could also reach for them as well. This calling for a new way of being in relationship with school, in a way that affirmed who they are, and yet challenged them to connect to new ideas and new people, is detailed in the following.

Building Bridges. Although the students described several different avenues that they took to engage in school, almost all of them talked about trusted others as sources to find out about schools. Some heard through their former schools, others via friends in the street whom they trusted. Some of the students encountered opportunities to connect with officials from institutions outside of schooling. These include other social service agencies, government institutions, and law enforcement. As many court-involved students often find themselves encountering these agencies for a number or reasons both inside and outside of school, the individuals and institutions can play a critical role in engaging or disengaging youth from the educational process.

Often, institutions can serve as a positive referral source to connect to youth to opportunities, such as the case with Jake and the child welfare department. Here, Jake talks about working with child welfare to get connected to YLI:

> After a while I got back. They put me in child welfare…..I was still a ward of the state my case was open -When they put me in the transition living program cause my goal always was independent, so and they was telling me I'd get my high school diploma, I'd get my – I'd get a job, I could get a career, and I was all for it.

Malcolm, in discussing his relationship with the child welfare department in Illinois, had this to say:

Malcolm: No, I was about, I went to a program called Transitional Living, which is transition like you just transitionin' to adulthood, basically, from a teenager.

Interviewer: Right. They helped?

Malcolm: Yeah, they helped. It was helpful, but at the same time, it was basically on your own, still. Staff there workin', we was just like we live here, so we was just goin' through the motion again. It's like you gotta wake up if you wanna go to school. You gotta do that on your own. Eat, feed yourself say you gotta do that with the money they gave out, 50 bucks, $20.00 for your bus, $30.00 for

some food, and a few dollars for your clothing, too, so it was $50.00 a week, so you had to budget your money.

Interviewer: So have they helped you find an apartment?

Malcolm: Yeah, they helped find an apartment. They put the deposit down, then paid my first month, and then I gotta keep payin' it after that.

Interviewer: Okay. Is this your caseworker?

Malcolm: Yeah, he just give me about $300 and I gotta pay the other half, this type program, only I'm not on one of them programs they pay all their rent.

Interviewer: Right, and so do you still meet with them, and they still check on you and stuff like that?

Malcolm: Yeah, you could say that, but –

Interviewer: You don't feel like they supportin' you?

Malcolm: Yeah, basically, that's what I really don't, you know, after a while, once you find out they really don't care, so I was like "alright".

Interviewer: And part of the reason I'm askin' is that I know a little bit about the system, so

Malcolm: Yeah, that was more like doin' them type.

Interviewer: Doin' them? What you mean?

Malcolm: Like basically, like the case workers, they don't really wanna focus, like basically they just wanna go to work, get the money, type, to me that's how I looked at it. They really weren't doin' the job they supposed to been doin'.

Interviewer: So how would you have known if they were doin' the job? I mean, what would it have been about them?

Malcolm: Cause after a while you see things, like you start noticin' other clients gettin' this done, but it's not gettin' done with me, but I'm the type I won't complain about it, you know what I'm sayin'? Cause I don't know why. You know, so I feel like if you complain about it, it ain't my business what somebody else gettin', only one affected to what they get to benefit myself, so I just left it at that.

Although Malcolm talks about ups and downs associated with the state, in the end, he

was able to gather enough resources to assist him in going to school.

Many students spoke of the informal networks and ways information was able to travel to them concerning educational opportunities. While living in a transitional program, Jake heard about the current school he is in:

> ….And I was like I didn't have no – I was like "I don't know what schools", and they gave me a list of schools. I talked with some of the people in the hood. They was like, "We heard of that school. It's good. It's decent. Go try it. Go see what it's about." Got here and now I'm here.

After being out of school for a time, Real shared:

> So I came back home, and I went up to my old school, and they gave me a whole list of schools I could go to, and this was a school that I had heard about previously from a couple other people, so I checked it out and made it happen.

Capital, Tek, Luke, Dante and Nate all heard about the school via friends as well, including Lydell hearing about the school from a former girlfriend. As they made their transition into the school, they all talked about having a different experience at YLI, and a resulting different outlook on education.

Several students talked about the ethic of feeling cared about within the current school. Capital, in sharing about the difference between his experiences in the traditional public school versus his experiences at YLI:

> It's the teachers, you know what I'm saying, where at Hasser and Halo Park the teachers, they cared but they didn't care. But these teachers and principals and any other staff here they actually care. They want to see us succeed. They really said to us, "You need some help. Come on. Let's go do this." They don't want to, "Okay, come talk to me this day, and I'll see you this day." And when you go see them they be like, "Well, I can't do it this day 'cause I gotta do this." These teachers do actually take time out of they own lives, they personal lives to help you to succeed. They want to see us succeed, and that's what I like. That's what brings me to school every day 'cause the teachers is helping us, and if somebody going to help me I'm going to take it 'cause I need the help, and I need the pathway. Somebody show me the pathway even though I'm on the right pathway now, well I still need guidance down that pathway, and that's what these teachers are showing us at this school. That's why I like coming here.

All students discussed the significance of teachers and staff as major contributors to their investment in school. Nate, describing the difference between educators who care versus those who may not care deeply:

> Like some people will tell you to go to college but they'll just tell you that one time and then you'll be talking about something much different the next minute. Like them, everyday that's what [the school staff] put in your head….go to college, do something because you know we all black and we have the opportunity, take it. They not just telling you like just go to college and then don't do nothing else….go to college get you a good education, higher education, all of that.

Like Nate, many of the students were able to speak about this level of discernment, identifying those that offered messages that felt insincere to their ears, versus messages that encouraged the students and seemingly come from a more authentic place. Jake shared:

> ……you gotta take time, take time out. Okay, you might – some teachers just come to work for a paycheck and other teachers, they take time out they schedule. Like if they got stacked up paperwork and they see something wrong with you, you got some teachers gonna pull you to the side and be like, "Man, forget this paperwork. What's going on with you? I know it's something wrong with you. I can see it in your face. I can see it.

Teachers that serve as bridges see through toughened street exterior and see the intrinsic worth in students. Jake shares:

> If they see you a good person and they know you've got a good head on your shoulders, but you just caught up in the streets, that's just how it's gonna – they know that like, okay, we know this person do – he got a good head. He wants something better, but he just caught up in the situation he don't know how to get out of. Let's try to help him get out of that situation, and that's how it supposed to be though.

Jake identifies here how teachers can work with street involved young people. Teachers often played significant roles that the young men reflected upon later. After experiencing

tough times at two previous schools on the west side, Jake transferred to a school on the south side upon entering the 8th grade, and found two caring teachers:

> But when I came back to the south side, got in eighth grade, I ran across a couple of teachers that like man, really believed in me, like, "Don't worry about what everybody say. You can do it, man. Forget what they talking about. Do what you do. Keep being you. Keep doing you. If you think you gonna graduate, do what you got to do. We believe in you." And that was kind of a little bit of motivation too though……It was like my eighth grade teacher, Ms. Foster. Even though she stayed on my case, but she told me, "Man, you can do anything you set your mind to it." And it's this teacher named Ms. Willard, well, like now she's the assistant principal at the grammar school I graduated from. She always kept a tab on me. She made – like I'd always go, I'd check in with her every time I – every chance I get, but she always motivated me.

It is important to note that this type of caring is not provided in the absence of firmness. In the previous passage, Jake makes clear that Ms. Foster "stayed on my case", as well as provided positive support.

When students believe teachers care about their development, they internalize the positive perceptions that their teachers have, as in the case with Jake:

> Like she'd give me a piece of paper with different jobs and what they make. She would like, "Now look, which one too – what you want to make a year? This what you." And that gave me motivation like okay, if she think I can do it, I know I can do it. I know I can do it if she's thinking I can go to school, graduate, and still do the same thing, I can do it, and that was motivation.

Exposure to both positive experiences that take young people outside of their neighborhoods is also an important aspect of establishing a positive bridge. Nate, discussing a college tour that the school went on had this to say:

> Yeah, Mr. Ernie took me down there for a campus tour. Our school and a couple of other school went. It was a nice campus, I like being down there and I can play on the basketball time down there because basketball team wasn't on nothing. Then I know I can just chill there because I know its out of Chicago, any place out of Chicago would be a good place for me, cause I don't know nobody. I won't have nobody to fall back on, so I know if I go out there I know I won't have no choice but to do my work, cause I'm surrounded by all white people. I 'm not really fixin to be associating with them like that cause I don't know nobody in

> Iowa and nobody ever mention Iowa so there's nothing to do. I just know I'll be a big man on campus, I'll do good there.-

Having rarely left Chicago, Nate saw an opportunity to expand himself, and meet new people outside of his neighborhood.

When students encounter this kind of support, it helps their motivation. Jake, discussing what he calls this type of care and bridging support:

> People here? I got – you could say with that, I say that's just like you call that mentoring. Like okay, you see somebody, they mentoring you to be a better person and you probably can over and down the line, I might fall in – like it all depends on how the person act and okay, one minute if they acting this funny, they acting cool the next minute, they funny, you can't trust them….And that's what I want to do. I want to help change people's life like man, it's something better than the streets.

Deon Jay sharing on similar circumstances that he encountered within the school:

> Really, I really thought I wasn't capable of makin' it, you understand what I'm sayin? In this school. Some of the work that I was doin was kinda hard, but one of the teachers here, Mr. P, he brought it out of me. We had a one on one talk. He said you can do anything you wanna do. Just put your mind up to it.

This critical care can help students navigate tough terrain in the streets, and help motivate them to stay focused on their goals. Jake shares:

> That's what – you gotta take time, take time out. Okay, you might – some teachers just come to work for a paycheck and other teachers, they take time out they schedule. Like if they got stacked up paperwork and they see something wrong with you, you got some teachers gonna pull you to the side and like, "Man, forget this paperwork. What's going on with you? I know it's something wrong with you. I can see it in your face. I can see it." And when people – on the streets, you come to school and you see people like that, that kind of lift people up, they get them like okay, I know somebody out there care for me. I know somebody watching me. I know somebody think I can – and you hear from other people like, "Man, you inspire me. You inspire me. We know what you're capable of. We proud of you." And all you gotta tell somebody they proud of you and that's gonna boost them up to get confident.

Jake goes on to say:

> That might even – by telling that person, "I'm proud of you, man. I'm proud of

> you just coming to school every day and being here and take the time – I think you just take the time out and sit down to talk to me even though you don't want to take it. I thank you and I'm proud of you for that." That's what's gonna make a better man and a better woman for anybody out there that's caught up in the street. That – by you doing that, that might make them say the next hour or two, they get out there on the streets, they see something happening. And they don't want nothing to do with it and they might think about like what they sat down and what somebody said to them. They might be like, "Man, fuck this shit. I'm on something better now. It's time to do this. It's time to go a different route." And that's just how it is though.

Jake has this to say about would-be teachers and how they can establish bridging relationships with street youth:

> Like be truthful with them. Let them know right now, we know what you're going through. We know what you're going through out there in the streets and we know it's kind of hard for you. So when you come to school, we gonna support you the best way we can. Like man, okay, like man, we're gonna talk to them. If we see like Mr. Ernie, Mr. Tibbs, Matlock, Lee, through the year they notice like okay, if you was having problems, they noticed it and they'll pull you to the side like, "Man, what's up?" They'll talk to you. They'll let you know like, "Man, don't worry about it. It's gonna get better." And they will – then on, now when you out there in the streets, you know, you got somebody supporting you. Like when you get to school you know somebody supporting you at school too. So you would rather – and it might turn out to be like you would rather be at school having good people supporting you than out here letting these bad, negative people support you. You just gotta be straight on. You gotta take time out with people and then you'll figure out like what's the difference between the streets and education, what makes them come from the streets to education or what make the education – turn education people to the streets. You just be truthful with them. If you see – you know people. You know they – if you see someone and you know they don't act like that, talk to them. Pull them to the side and talk to them. See what's on they mind. They might not want to talk about it, but push, push, like, "Man, you can tell me. I'm here, man. Just let me know. It's something I can do or something I can do to help you." You gotta be there and help support people and that will make – that's real life and I kind of think on it because whenever I needed something, I needed to talk to somebody, they was there. And you gotta have some people in your corner like that cause people on the streets ain't gonna be like that. They gonna be like, "Man, fuck that shit. Leave that shit alone. Don't worry about it."But these people gonna – they gonna tell you like, "Man, look, if you thinking about doing this, it's another way to go. Think about what you gonna do before you do it." and you've gotta have people like that in your corner and then you will really know like, okay, the difference between the streets and the education and what makes them different.

Real, discussing how he views the current teaching staff, relates what he views as the differences between his current teachers efforts to engage him in education, and previous teachers:

> 'Cause I know that they the type of teachers, they're here to make sure that you learn, they're just not here just to get their paycheck. See some teachers in a big school or a regular high school they just there gonna put something on the board and tell you to do it, go sit next to you and do whatever it is they do at they computer.

The students all share having a different experience with the teachers at YLI, using words like "caring", "truthful" and "trust" in describing their relationships with teachers, all important factors in bridging social capital. Capital, offers how teachers have reached out to him at YLI:

> It's the teachers, you know what I'm saying, where at Hawson and Haley Park the teachers, they cared but they didn't care. But these teachers and principals and any other staff here they actually care. They want to see us succeed. They really said to us, "You need some help. Come on. Let's go do this." They don't want to, "Okay, come talk to me this day, and I'll see you this day." And when you go see them they be like, "Well, I can't do it this day 'cause I gotta do this." These teachers do actually take time out of they own lives, they personal lives to help you to succeed. They want to see us succeed, and that's what I like.

Nate sums up how, in many ways, his peers approach the school:

> I think it's like you know a good school, it's a good environment. At first I think it was a good environment because it's a private school but it's a good environment because everybody in here probably went through the same thing I went through to get here, they got kicked out of their regular school. They don't want to get kicked out of here, they all want to do something and graduate. Then everybody in this school want to encourage you to go further, they don't be down grading you telling you not gone be nothing they really encourage you.

Several students talked about how, concerning education, they have come to trust and listen to educators more than family and their peers.

When asked concerning who may be important to his educational process, and who he listens to more and why, Lydell shared:

> Teachers. Staff. Because they was there for me when – they was always complimenting me when I'd do good and telling other people, "Oh, yeah, he's smart." My parents didn't have nothing to do with it. It was – I came to school and got here. They ain't even know I got in school. When I got in trouble, they, "Oh, well, that's him. That's him."

Often educators speak about the importance of parent involvement, which was lost to Lydell. In this case, it is up to the teachers to engage students in a manner that affirms and challenges them. These students talked about how school staff served as a bridge to learning and educational achievement for them. The staff at YLI demonstrated an ethic of care in connecting to these students in a manner that would help them bridge between the streets and educational achievment. Discussing how teachers and staff help him deal with challenges, Lydell goes on to say:

> I like – I trust most of the teachers…….Cause all the teachers, like they all say the same thing. They always tell me, "You're too smart. You don't need to be doing this." They always pull me to the side. Every time I do something bad, they'll just sit me down and talk to me like, "You're way better than this. You need to." So like I trust everybody, all the staff.

Lydell describes what has become for these students a common perception, that the teachers and staff of YLI are worthy of trust. This type of trust, different trust developed with peers and family members, can be described as a type of context-specific trust, related to shared expectations concerning identified roles in organizations and interpersonal relationships. Bryk & Schneider (2002) call this form of trust, particularly identified for them in schools, as relational trust. Key to the formation of bridging social capital, the next section describes how these students identified who may be trustworthy and why in the school.

Relational Trust. In discussing trust many students described how they perceive trust, determining whether or not a person can be deemed trustworthy or not. Q,

describing howhe goes about determining who may be deemed trustworthy had this to say:

> You can see if someone's trustworthy from the way they act, the way they present themselves, the way they carry themselves, the way they talk. You can tell if someone's trustworthy by then. What I do, I'll try to tell you something that I know damn well ain't true. Just tell you, and if it get out, you ain't trustworthy. Set somebody up, you got people that do that to. And see if you gonna ride with me I'll take you in the area and tell folks before we hit the block gone ahead and pull it and if you run you a pussy.

Q offers three observations about trust that are relevant here: First, that the way a person presents themselves offers an insight into whether or not they are trustworthy. As Jake described earlier about identifying teachers who were unsupportive, it was not something they said to him, but just how they acted. The second observation concerns with actually sharing something with an individual, and seeing if the person reveals to someone else later on. Nate shared "I trust all the staff though because they really don't be doing nothing wrong. You can tell them anything and they will keep it between themselves". The third observation by Q includes actually watching a person's behavior in a situation that caused for a level of loyalty. These three situations actually play themselves out between students and teachers often.

Real described how he identifies teachers and staff who he deems to be trustworthy:

Real: Believe it or not I trust all. Mr. Ernie, Mr. Pibbs, Ms. Knowles, Mr. Deliver, Mr. Bear. I trust all of 'em. Mr. Bradley, he a new teacher but he got a head on his shoulders too. I feel like I could learn a lot from him. But I'm perfect with everybody in this building. I don't have no problem with nobody.

Reseacher: So what is it about them that you think is trustworthy?

Real: See here it's a little bit, when I say smaller, it's a one-on-one with your teacher like you can really sit down and learn what you need

> to learn. 'Cause it ain't nice trying to go to college and you only got senior math, you only know senior math.

In Real's analysis, those teachers that take the time to sit with students demonstrate a level of care that he did not always identify at larger schools, in larger classrooms. Recognizing his current deficiencies in math, Real understood the importance of extra attention in helping in achieve on the next level. Real also referenced a transition school, Harrison South, a school that bridges incarcerated youth back into public schools as another example of how smaller schools and classroom size can help:

> Harrison South it was just like it was smaller than this and it was only like four or five teachers. And the teacher's there to make sure that you learn and make sure you do their work. They're not just gonna tell you to do it and don't care if you do it or not and at the end of the day you ain't got nothing to turn in they ain't mad about it. These teachers, they mad; where's your work at? And once you get on they bad side, you on they bad side. So they know the ones that's comin' here to really, like, learn and try to develop some as far as the other ones that's just comin' just to eat lunch and just to talk to females.

Nate shares how he identifies a trustworthy staff member. In Mr. Ernie, Nate tells how trust is developed through what some may consider to be tough love, or according to Nate, "truth telling":

> Yeah, I trust like Mr. Ernie, that's probably it. ……...[Mr. Ernie] is just a positive role model, he'll say something and then you'll probably get mad but he don't be lying he actually be telling the truth about everything. That's why I be like Mr. Ernie, you a cool dude, cause its like some teacher they'll try to nag on you like you ain't doing this right and you'll never get it right or something like that but if Mr. Ernie be telling you something he really mean. Cause he notice that you be messing up in that one particular area and he'll tell you right off.-

Distinguishing between the type of trust that occurs with family and friends, and the type of trust they encounter within the school, the students identify positive characteristics of teachers that deem trustworthy, including trust via observing general behavior, trust through interpersonal sharing and confidentiality, and trust through loyalty in crisis

situations. Also, a level of honesty coming from teachers about students' behavior is also an important form of this establishing of relational trust. As the students in this study have identified positive aspects of school personnel that assist them in being successful in school, they also have identified an aspect of themselves, their values, which are worth highlighting here as well.

Family ties. An important part of returning to school for these young men centered around becoming clear on the things that are important to them. The young men talked of their beliefs and feelings toward life and their relationships, including their values. Many of the young men talked about the importance of their family, and how they were able to call upon lessons learned from family to guide them as well. Nate, sharing how his personal since of determination is important to him, recalls where he received this from:

> My momma cause she was always… I know that's where I got it from because she was always putting stuff in my head like this and that, and if you don't get determined you not gonna get nowhere, all this and that. I'm like man okay. She put that whole determination thing in my head, so I was like I'm just gon' stay determine….that's what I'm fixin' to do so I can get this money.

Deon Jay also discusses where he believes his important values come from:

> My values is my down south blood, 'cause the morals – I used to live in Alabama, and my grandfather and my grandmother, they always store good things, and try to make you go the right way, and try to keep you motivated to do the right thing. And I seen my brother get shot down, and that's a motivate me to do better, cause I don't wanna end up like him, not tryin' to say in a bad way, but I don't wanna end up like him, so go the right way, and good things happen.

Although it at time appears that Deon Jay was attempting to tell himself what he needed to do as if repeating a mantra ("so go the right way and good things happen"), his desire to do the right thing is clear. Discussing what's important to him, Q stated:

> My family. My family's important to me. I got some friends I can just call up – I got some friends I can call up just like we gonna do anything, kill, shoot, rob, steal, anything. I got some friends that are just like, be cool G. My family's important to me. My family, all I got is friends, my son is important. And my baby's mama, she's important. School is so important to me right now. Besides my son, school is second on the list. That's second.

Q also exemplifies moving from the past, the present and the future in speaking about What's important to him. Speaking about a past solidarity with friends, a focus on his education in the present, and his son as the future, Q's tri-spatial connection to his values are typical of youth in transition (Richardson, 2003).

Capital, in telling how he has also changed how he thinks about what may be important to him since the birth of his daughter, had this to say:

> First, like, I just got my values from my daughter. She needs me. I need her, you know what I'm saying. When I was sitting in the hospital watching her come into the world it was like it was crazy 'cause I'm actually watching it. I see another life being brought to us, and it's like I just picture my mother, and that's me coming out. Okay, this is life. You see the light in that, you know. You're coming out fresh; you're newborn. That's value, fresh and new, new blood. That's new life. Like if you can't really just sit there and think about it, what life is, and cherish it that means you ain't gonna have no values for it. That's my value. Just really sit there and think about it because if you're not going to sit there and think about life then you don't care 'cause you've gotta also think about if you want to go shoot somebody before you do it you should think about it. He probably got kids and stuff too. You don't know what that man got. That man probably be doing something for a reason. You just can't go up, "Hey GD, I'm going go kill him." You know what I'm saying? He got a life too. He probably got two or three kids. He probably got something going for him. He probably GD, but he probably got something good for him. That's my values of life.

All of the rest of the young men talked about the importance of family as well. Luke shares:

> Cause education is the key to be somebody, but you can't be nobody without no family. You can have all the money in the world and no family, you'll still have a little piece missin'. I'd rather be broke with my family, cause family, you be around somebody that loves you, somebody that you know won't do no harm to

you.

Tek shares "I value my family. And I value education. I value that now I didn't before but now I do". Dante, illustrating the importance of family in his life stated "My son, that's only thing I really care about now. I don't care about nothing else that's going on in life but him. That's what make me get up, my girl and him. That's what make's me get up in the morning". The bonds that these young men hold with family help tell the story of the multi-dimensionality of their lives. This complexity is also illustrated in the relationships that they continue to have with others in the neighborhoods, and their understanding of the intricacies of relationships and their life choices.

Neighborhood ties. Although all of the young men interviewed are enrolled in school, and focused on graduating, they discussed still having ties with friends from the block, and family members who participate in street-life. Tek shares what he sees differently on the block now than previously:

> Example man when I go home I see my guys all on the block. I don't want to be like that. My brother's friends. They still there, they was there when I was in preschool, they still there now and I'm a senior in high school. I don't want to be like that.

Jake discussed the complexity of being connected to the streets, and at the same time feeling motivated to get out of the streets. Nate also talks about some of those choices:

> Like I can see some of my friends… you know I live in the hood so there's really no way of getting away from it. My friends they do dirt so I just watch them and don't do it. Like one of my friends stole a car, so I know you stole that car so I'm not getting in that car. I'm going home that'll be my decision they'll be like what you fitna do you want to go to the store, then they'll be trying to take something out the store. I'll say ya'll can take that out the store I got my own money……So when the police come, I don't have nothing to do with that here go my receipt. I'll show them that receipt in minute.

Although close in relationship, many share that their peers understand their focus upon

education. Nate shared:

> Because they don't look at me no different, because they know who I am, they know what I' about. They know I know them that they do they dirt work and they know me that I'm still going to school or whatever, so they do them and I do me. But I'm still the same person that they can hang out with. I come over there they probably have a drink or something ya' know, chill play basketball or something, that's how we maintain and still be friends. We still do a gang of various activities together. I don't just be on the block with them all day……They do they dirty work I do what I do.-

Luke shared how he has connections with people in his neighborhood, but that he is cautious about talking about his current educational goals and plans:

Luke: When they around, like, I don't say too much. I just listen. Listen to what they talkin' about, it be a bunch a nothin', but still, like I say, I'll probably have my headphones on and glance at music. That usually help me out a lot. Calms me down.

Interviewer: Is there any of them that you actually talk about doing positive stuff with?

Luke: Nah. I don't tell 'em nothin' about what I'm doin'. They still think I'm the old Luke, so that's good. They can just think that. I don't want them to know nothin' about what I'm doin', cause then they know, then that's when they'll try to pull you down, when they see you on somethin' new, they'll try to get you to go back to your old ways, and I don't want that, so gotta leave 'em alone.

Luke made the choice that he would approach his breaking away in a more subtle form, maintaining relationships but not revealing what his real plans are. Tek, in a completely different neighborhood than the above, talks about his current relationship with the street organization he was affiliated with, about being concerned about consequences for leaving the clique, stated "I mean, I been over there so long, they sayin' they don't care what I'm doin'. And I wouldn't worry about them tryin' [to do anything to him] anyway, no". Deon Jay discusses how he has friends from different "walks of neighborhood life", and how he gets along with them:

Alright, well, everybody's got different spots. I got some killer best friends, some

> nerds, mediocre, gang bangers, you know. People are the most cool, that's the Hoopers, that's my friends. They like to do the same things that I do. Play basketball, and get females. I don't really too much be with the gang bangers and stuff like that no more, they call too much attention to their self.

Although he is still affiliated with a street organization, he spends less time with them than previously.

Many youth serve as positive barometers, reminding their peers that there are alternatives to street life in their own language. Nate, contemplating why it is sometimes difficult for young men to leave the streets, shared:

> I don't know… for some of them I guess it's the money they be getting everybody see money and they just go crazy, you know. But I'm telling them ya'll need to see these books and go crazy, if you see these books you gone see way more money then you'll see outside doing these little petty sides.

As opposed to having many friends within school, Nate is typical of many adolescents when it comes to his close associates, and his comfortability with them:

> Because I just talk to them about school, we don't have no other connections. Its' about 4 people off the block that I hang with everyday. So these people in school I just know them in school, outside of school you're nobody. But everybody on the block know me and what I'm capable of and I know what they capable of so we all just kick it. Those are like my real friends. These people in here I just know them.

Tek talks about how he identifies the positive friends versus negative ones:

> How can I put it? Like the ones who I see that's on my team no matter what the season they behind. The ones that don't support me, that try to throw something in that you know, try to pull me back to the old me or the ones who really don't care. I don't know. Like the ones that do care they try to say stuff to me to persuade me to stay on track and don't fall off. But when they do see me falling off track they try to put be back on track. And the ones that really don't care they with me. Like that.

In this interview excerpt with Deon Jay, he demonstrates the often thin line that exists with family members and neighborhood life, even when family members get hurt:

Deon Jay: ….And I seen my brother get shot down, and that motivated me to do better, cause I don't wanna end up like him, not tryin' to say in a bad way, but I don't wanna end up like him, so go the right way, and good things happen.

Interviewer: Is he still alive?

Deon Jay: Yeah, he's still alive, but he paralyzed, you know? You just gotta do the right thing.

Interviewer: When did that happen?

Deon Jay: Two years ago. He's paralyzed forever, though.

Interviewer: Really? How did that affect you? How did that make you feel when it happened?

Deon Jay: I wanted to go start a war. But my momma was like, you can't do that. You just gotta keep doin' what you're doin', let God handle that situation.

Interviewer: How hard was that to do?

Deon Jay: It ain't easy, cause I used to be like "God takin' too long. Why he ain't never –" you know what I'm sayin'? Nan one of these guys is locked up for shootin', none of that. So I stopped havin' faith, you know what I'm sayin'? But everything came to work out good, though.

Interviewer: How so?

Deon Jay: Well, the old lady whose house he got shot in front of, she saw everything, but this is three months after the situation, so she know the people who did it, and my momma went to got talk to her, and now dem' dudes….all of 'em locked up. There's like three of 'em. All of 'em locked up. That's some good justice, but my brother still paralyzed. He ain't gonna be able to walk again.

Interviewer: So do you think that was a critical point for you, goin' through that with him?

Deon Jay: Yeah, it was critical, cause when my momma was workin', and I gotta take care of my big brother, cause he paralyzed, I got two little brothers and Melissa, so I gotta take care of four people, you know what I'm sayin'? So that's what made me wanna be mature,

> on account I wanna pace myself, stop movin' so fast, jump into crazy stuff. I'm gonna think before I do stuff now.

In this excerpt, it appears that Deon Jay still struggles with the situation, evidenced by the passage where, almost as if attempting to convince himself, he shares "you just gotta do the right thing". The right thing, in this situation, for Deon Jay's mother, was to allow faith and the law to take care of justice. For Deon Jay, and many street life youth, as well as many in other parts of society, the right thing is to take justice in one's own hands. Here, Deon Jay's words, appear reflective not only of the influence of person's who have tried to talk to Deon Jay about this situation. It was as if Deon Jay's mother was speaking to me in this situation, and not just Deon Jay himself.

Family members may also attempt to motivate in strange ways. Jake relates how his uncle, who he respects greatly, shared some painful things with him about his educational progress:

> Yeah. Like not even – I can say this wasn't even – I could say about a year ago probably to date. I don't think it was even that far back, not even probably like back in February or something. The last person I ever thought would be on there with me doubting me like that, but he got on there with me like, "You'll never be shit. You'll never amount to nothing. You'll never be better than me."
> And I was like, "I don't want to be better than you. I ain't trying to take what you got cause I know you struggled to get where you at now. I ain't trying to be better than you. I'm trying to make it where we both gonna be straight in 10, 20 years."
> It's like and when he told me like – when he told me that, that like really broke me down and it really hurt my feelings.

In spite of this, Jake demonstrated his resilience in putting the incident into perspective:

> So but it's just like it was some life experience like okay, if he feels like that, I know it's a lot of other people feel like that, so I gotta watch who I be around, to watch around, cause coming from my uncle, I thought like, "Man, okay, that's how you feel?" It broke me down. It hurt me inside, but it made me rebellious.

Jake, here, refers to "rebellious" not in defying his society, but "rebellious" towards negative thoughts and perceptions that he may get from people with questionable motives. Jake talks more about the complexity of this situation, particularly how his uncle has supported him in the past:

> Yeah, had my back and was there for me. Like he knew my mama was and he knew me and my brother was in DCFS and we ain't really – and our foster mama was playing us. He didn't want to, but he put us on. He gave us to get what we got to get. Like man, all right, this – to keep y'all from stealing and robbing everybody, I'm gonna give y'all this to keep a little money in y'all pocket, feed y'all. When I heard that, it just kind of hurt me, broke me down.

When asked why he thinks his uncle shared this with him, Jake stated:

> I think he said it was to motivate me. Now I sit back and look, it was to motivate me cause now after I got to graduation, I got close to graduation, he sat me down. He was like, "It wasn't – I didn't say that to hurt you or break you down. I said that to motivate you. I don't want you." Like he was like, "I knew you was close to graduating. You was there. I know you need the little push and I knew something like that would push you over the edge to get – to show me like, okay, he determined he gonna get what he wants anyway." And I kind of like for that now, I thank him for it, man, cause it – that was the thing that pushed me over the edge to get where I'm at right now.

For Deon Jay and Jake, their family members serve as reminders of the fragility of street life, and the difficulty that many youth have in pulling away. For youth like Deon Jay and Jake, family can be both trusted supporters *and* negative influences. Many of the other youth talked about walking the tightrope between their friends still in the streets and their newfound interest in school. However, they appear able to negotiate the difficult terrain between the streets and education, maintaining relationships that some may feel are "negative". They also work to maintain the importance of trusting caring teachers and adults, finding importance in family and education, and staying true to their goals.

Summary of findings

Many of the students' comments overlapped with several themes. The presentation of findings was to be flexible and attempt to situate student comments in the best category that tells the story concerning their on-going development. Although the students did not always present their stories in a chronological manner, the researcher acknowledges that after the sorting out and coding of thematic representations, the themes would be best presented in chronological order. As many of the youth in this study went through a similar process, it was considerably simpler to "tell the story" in this manner, allowing for the reader to follow their flow though the process of schooling. In themes one and two, the students' interest in school, their relationships with family members and their community is introduced, exploring their earlier memories of schooling and whether or not they were engaged in the educational process. The initial themes focus upon school engagement and the intersection of home and school life, focusing first upon the students struggling to succeed in their earlier years, moving into family challenges, then into neighborhood relationships and the impact of these on their education. Themes three and four move into exploring the process of leaving school for these youth, becoming classified as drop outs in a series of steps from being at a school that presents to them as a hostile environment, the process of actually dropping or being pushed out, and then into a holding space of purgatory, where they wait out what fate befalls them. During this stage, students identify new challenges, and begin the process of re-engagement. Theme five focuses upon this re-engagement process and the intersection of competing forms of social capital, and the relationships and values that surround the youth in achieving in school.

The youth in this study presented that they were all interested in education, but found it difficult to compete with the trifecta of negative school experiences, poor family relationships, and the lure of "the block". At some point for them in their educational histories, the intersection of these set up a vicious cycle for them of disruptive school experiences, missed school days peppered with arrests and incarceration, followed by dismissal from their school of choice. The period of time out of school served to be a time for deep reflection for many of these young men, were they were able to cite learning from past mistakes and being willing to do something about their current circumstances. However, determination on their part was not enough, as they cited the importance of caring teachers demonstrating a level of relational trust that nurtured, inspired, and disciplined them in a way that they had not previously experienced. This time period of re-entry into school and a re-focusing on their goals allowed them to identify with what is most important for them, generally family and education, and separating just enough from their neighborhood bonds in order to succeed, without forgetting from which they came.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Chapter Four presented the findings of this study from the perspective of the participants' voices. This chapter seeks to discuss the findings in relation to the two overarching research questions. The discussion explores more deeply the aspects of social capital embedded within the students' stories, and the impact of social capital on the students' education. Young African American males in Chicago Public Schools represent the highest proportion of drop outs. They are suspended and expelled more than any other group, and also represent the highest percentage in special education classes, juvenile arrests and detention within the city. Of the number of Chicago Public Schools students murdered within the past 10 years, African American males far outweigh the numbers of students from other racial and ethnic groups. Their ability to succeed concerning their education is crucial, yet, schools appear to struggle in relationship to them.

This study sought to clarify one aspect of their struggle by eliciting their voices to gain an understanding of how social capital may play a role in their on-going educational progress. The researcher interviewed 11 court-involved African American males between the ages of 18-20 who were enrolled in a Chicago Public School. The study sought to identify some of the barriers and enablers that court-involved African American males encounter that influence access to social capital within public schools. In addition to this, the study also sought to find the kind of social networks court-involved African American males develop to enhance social capital within schooling, and how court-involved African American males develop trusting relationships within schooling.

Bonding social capital

This study identified several points of bonding social capital that took place between the youth and their relational others: student-family relationship, student-peer relationships, and student neighborhood relationships. Bonding social capital occurs when people engage in trusting relationships with people within their same community, social class or ethnic ranking. Family ties, peer and neighborhood relationships and the strength of these ties are often forms of bonding social capital.

Family as barriers and enablers. The initial theme, school engagement, focused upon the impact of some of their initial experiences with school, and the effects of home life experiences on their relationship with schools. All students in this study discussed some aspect of educational life that was important to them. Although acknowledging their difficulties, to a person, they all talked of wanting to learn and succeed in school, but being unable to become engaged, beginning early in their educational careers, moving into high school. As there were barriers associated with the school, they also noted difficulties with family members in relation to school. As a whole, family tended to be supportive of educational life, although not always in a manner that allowed for a sufficient engagement in school. Contrary to much of what has been generally reported about students in low-income communities and their parents' perception about education (Coleman, 1990/1994), many families want the best for their children, and many of the young men interviewed reflected this. However, desire and action are two separate dynamics. The students described their families as being supportive of education in the best way they could, given their circumstances. However, this support was no match for

the streets and the lack of sufficient engagement in classroom life on behalf of school officials. This study offered a nuanced discovery of these issues, with the data suggesting that students' family lives served as an influence on some of their negative behavior, but also of a school that had little insight into understanding how to engage them in spite of this.

All of the students in the study came from either a home with a single parent, living primarily with extended family (e.g., grandparents, aunts, cousins, etc.), or in some cases, foster homes. Although some research suggests that single family homes that have strong extended family members and external supports can have the same outcomes for young males as intact family systems (Zimmerman, et al, 1995), research has also shown that there is a link between juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and mental health problems and being raised in single-parent, female headed households (Caldwell, Sturges & Silver, 2007). Many of the young men cited difficulties with their relationships with their fathers. In only two cases did the young men talk about active relationships with their fathers: Tek, whose father is recently recovering from substance abuse, and Luke, who sometimes goes to see his father in a western suburb. For these young men, home life and relationships within the home may affect choices and decisions concerning negative behavior, along with school problems (Caldwell, et. al., 2007). It may be considered no accident that many of the young cited their fathers as being either presently or formerly involved in street organizations.

Although the young men saw examples of various forms of domestic, child and substance abuse, at some point in their educational lives, they shared about the presence of a trusted parent or adult figure in their homes distilling the importance of education

and success in schools. However, as shown in this study, parenting, school and community were interrelated in the process of presenting barriers to developing these young men as students. Their descriptions of actual family involved in school support Coleman's (1994) studies associated with family social capital and school involvement. Whereas students whose family members are highly involved within the educational life of their child tend to do well in school, students whose family members are disengaged tend to achieve less (Coleman, 1994; Richardson, 2003). However, Coleman did not account for school responsibility in his studies of social capital. In these student's cases, they encountered several challenges within the life of the school, including uncaring teachers, questionable disciplinary practices, and a seemingly apparent disconnect from school during the fourth through sixth grade years. Having stated this, the current literature concerning the exact influences of family functioning on African American male development, particularly associated with academic achievement, has been inconsistent, showing at times family influence being a major contributor to social behavior, and other studies showing communal influences demonstrating a greater impact (Mandara, 2006).

Neighborhood barriers. As relationships with family, although tumultuous at times, are important for these youth, another important aspect of educational life resides in the surrounding neighborhoods and communities where these students come from. Although some researchers writing on social capital have touched on aspects of family and school life, little has been done to address some of the dynamics of community life in relation to school, particularly for this population. Many of the young men cite both challenges and the positives of neighborhood life, calling their respective communities as

both "hell" and a place where people "stick together". This dynamic of sticking together speaks to the importance of neighborhood life that these young men see from day to day. Whereas in the larger society there may be limitations associated with their ability to advance, in the neighborhood, their emotional selves become affirmed and validated. Whereas in schools they were often labeled as "trouble makers," "at-risk," or "delinquent," in the streets they were often looked up to by peers and those who were younger. Borrowing from Payne (2005), these young men have developed what he describes as a level of resilience associated with the streets, or as they share, "the block". In describing several ways that what he calls "street-life" oriented African American males cope with stress, Payne (2005) offers that resilience becomes more than an individual characteristic. Resilience can become a *site* in regards to African American males, including how the hopes, friendships, violence, risk and struggles for survival on the street corners, basketball courts, and other places serve as protective mechanisms in everyday experiences. The block becomes more than where they live, and embodies emotional markers and boundaries, safety, and nurturing. As both an individual and environmental characteristic, this form of resilience serves as a place of strength for these young men.

All of the students discussed the complexity of neighborhood and family life competing with schools, reporting family and "street" friends as being supportive of schooling and education, although in ways different than what may be commonly referred to as "support". Jake shares:

> Well, like with school, like when I was in school, they were fighting then. "Okay, I know you're gonna be something. You're gonna be something. You're gonna make it better for us." And when I dropped out, it was like everybody was like, "No, you ain't nothing. You ain't gonna never be nothing. You ain't gonna do

> this. You ain't gonna do that."

This speaks to the tension many youth experience in the streets. However, this support may not always be clear, and ultimately, what people around them are doing matters more than what they are saying. Jake speaks to this difficulty again:

> So they made me really realize like okay, school is the key. I see it's like if I go to school everybody will really support me more than if I didn't go to school, and that's how it was. Like it was either school or the streets or both, and what it was, I chose the wrong one. I chose the streets.

The youth in this study discussed the strong degree of importance concerning relationships with family and peers. Often calling friends "cousin" and "play-brother", this sense of connectedness to others, often referring to non-familial relationships as family, is not a unique phenomena regulated to street life youth (Mandara, 2006; Richardson, 2005; White & Cones, 1999). This was exemplified in Jake's connection to his "god-brother", Q and Lydell sharing of their friends as "family", and Capital's connection to his neighborhood friends. This connectedness also is reflected in their relationship to the African American community as a whole.

As Portes (1998) has described a downside of social capital as the exclusion of outsiders, restrictions on individual freedom and a downward leveling of norms, one can see all aspects of this within the young men of this study. In an example of the downward leveling of norms, Portes shares how they exist when a community or given group of people develop a group solidarity based on oppressive factors from the dominant group, and leveling occurs that prevents networking and forming ties with different groups. Portes (1998) writes:

> There are situations in which group solidarity is cemented by a common experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society. In these instances,

> individual success stories undermine group cohesion because the latter is precisely grounded on the alleged impossibility of such occurrences. The result is downward leveling norms that operate to keep members of a downtrodden group in place and forge the more ambitious to escape from it" (p. 17).

As the youth in this study form bonds associated with neighborhood life, connecting around the values of safety, family and friendship, against a seemingly impenetrable outside world, their ties among each other strengthen, and their ability to access the social capital associated with the dominant society becomes harder to penetrate. As social capital can be developed in both socially acceptable and unacceptable ways (Portes, 2000), these youth develop social capital in ways that counter what the dominant group in our society suggests as positive aspects of development. As McCarthy and Hagan (2001) suggest, and the youth in this study demonstrate, social capital can be developed by both licit and illicit means. Youth involved in street life are often seen in their neighborhoods by both street and decent people as assets and liabilities (Rose & Clear, 1998). As Lydell, Q and Malcolm gained respect for their ability to fight, Real, Jake and Tek for their entrepreneurship, and Capital, Deon Jay, and Nate for their basketball ability, we see examples of what success means in street life. However, with educational practices that create barriers to engagement, including questionable disciplinary practices, disinterested and unprepared teachers, and schools that seek to weed out the students who pose the most trouble, there is little recourse in creating strategies to help youth develop the weak ties needed to successfully develop the relational trust needed to succeed in dominant society.

The historical difficulties that have been presented for African Americans in relation to employment, education, and interactions with the criminal justice prelude the level of relational trust that actually develops. These youth have encountered the police in their communities, and find their relationships adversarial at worst, and at best, a condition that they have to deal with as part of their economic livelihoods. As noted earlier, many youth who end up involved within the juvenile court system are involved in street organizations. Although some of the youth talked about belonging to some of the historically relevant street organizations in Chicago, many identified more with their surrounding environment as their primary identity associated with the organization. As noted in other studies concerning the level of complexity with street organizations, including different levels of involvement and hierarchy (Spergel 1995), the youth in this study noted various levels of engagement at different times in their lives. However, the young men's utilization of membership in street organizations as an identifier when crossing into different neighborhoods, into new schools, and into the juvenile detention and jails, speaks to the level of social capital that occurs through gang involvement. For example, Q noted the importance of "being plugged" when entering into new spaces, but also acknowledged the differencing between old school and new school members, citing old schooler's having more of an investment in the operational norms of being involved in the organization. Here, there are norms associated with the involvement, and levels of trust associated with this engagement, and resources acquired include emotional support, safety and protection, and access to financial resources.

Structural barriers

Much has been written about the impact of classroom life upon African American males and challenges for young black males in K-8 schools cover several elements, including teacher instruction, curriculum and school environment (Boykin, Tyler & Miller, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Duncan, 2000; Ferguson, 2000; Hall, 2006; Kunjufu, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Noguera, 2002/2003). Students like the one's presented in this study often get labeled early as troublemakers and future prison inmates (Ferguson, 2000), and efforts to minimize their troublesome behavior in schools take place. This includes their being pushed towards special education, disciplinary programs, and outside interventions (e.g., counseling, mentoring programs, etc.) (Duncan, 2000; Noguera, 2003).

In Duncan's (2000) typology that describes teacher practices that can disrupt the teaching of African American males, we can find examples based on the interviews of students in the current study. Duncan (2000) shares that teachers may engage in criticizing African American males more frequently than other students for failure to respond to questions correctly, providing African American males with less accurate and detailed feedback on assignments, demanding less of a work effort, and interpreting the narrative styles of African American males as inarticulate or incoherent. Students described examples of either being criticized more frequently (Deon Jay), not being challenged in school (Lydell, Luke), provided with less accurate detail on assignments (Deon Jay, Real, Tek), and interpreting their narrative styles as inarticulate or incoherent (Malcolm, Q). This reflected Duncan's description that schools often do a suspect job in meeting the educational needs of African American males.

A school's climate can impact a young person's self-esteem and self-concept, and all of the youth revealed their school experiences prior to YLI as being filled with fighting. Many scholars have written about the importance of the school environment on African American males (Davis, 2001; Duncan, 2002; Ferguson, 2000; Fine, et al., 2003; Hall, 2006; Harry & Anderson, 1994; Hopkins, 1997; Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Sewell, 1997). The school environment can be a key ingredient in determining whether or not there are trusting relationships within the school that support learning for students (Hoy, Smith & Sweetland, 2002/2003). These trusting relationships within the school can help facilitate the academic engagement within a school (Way & Greene, 2006). For the young men of this study, the lack of positive relationships with teachers and staff relate to the lack of safety they feel in the overall environment. As few described positive relationships that they can remember with teachers prior to the YLI, it can be easy to see how this lack of trust of teachers, can lead to an overall lack of trust with the school. For African American males performing poorly within the classroom, one way to achieve some level of respect, competency and normalcy becomes through fighting. Here, their frustration and anger, born in part out of the marginalization that occurs in school, becomes part of a gendered performance that labels fighting as an acceptable "ritual performance of male power" (Ferguson, 2002, p. 193).

Ferguson (2000), in writing about violence in schools for younger African American male students, denotes how gender plays into the role of fighting within the school environment. Fighting also can become a space where it is acceptable for young males to do emotional work (Ferguson, 2000). Whereas a large range of emotions may be unacceptable, including, but not limited to, grief and loss, fear, and shame, aggression

and anger can serve as a bridge to release pent up frustrations and difficult emotional issues. With little to lose, fighting becomes a normalized way of developing and keeping the respect of peers. As noted earlier, for many adolescents, as well as many African American males, the group's influence can be a powerful predictor of behavior, beyond simplistic notions of "peer pressure" (Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Boykin, Tyler & Miller, 2005; Newman & Newman, 2001). Only one student, Malcolm, talked exclusively of fighting to protect himself, and only himself, in different situations. Of note is that Malcolm is the only one who did not identify as being a member of a street organization. All of the other students saw fighting as both an individual and collective act, as being a part of the group. The ability to join in with a fight and to fight, as a form of human capital, allows the youth to enhance their sense of trust and respect from and towards peers. Q, sharing how he often "tests" whether or not someone is trustworthy, shared "I'll take you in the area and tell folks before we hit the block gon' ahead and pull it and if you run you a pussy". Here, he describes that he will determine whether or not someone is worthy of trust by bringing a newcomer to his neighborhood, and having his friends, unbeknownst to the newcomer, attempt to fight Q and the newcomer. If the newcomer runs, then Q identifies this person as a "pussy", unwilling to stay and fight, unworthy of trust and respect. The term "pussy" also denotes an important part of clarifying masculinity for men. As the term denotes both a man not worthy of trust and respect, as well as the objectification of female genitalia, a man who is a "pussy" demonstrates one of the worse forms or expressions of masculinity possible.

In and of itself, the violence that occurs at many of these schools could be used to illustrate the problems that these youth inherently have, that they are disrespectful of

authority with little "home training". However, in order to produce this type of environment, it can be argued that there are covert processes occurring that sanction the more overt forms of aggression. Bourdieu (1977) calls this "symbolic violence". Veiled in rituals and symbols, the object of violence falls prey not so much through coercion, but via complicity, where he/she embodies the objective structures of violence via *habitus*. This type of violence, at its source, is often misrecognized for what it is. The system creates disciplinary policies, including rituals and symbols (metal detectors at school entrances, uniform dress codes to prevent gang attire, police presence in the form of several squad cars after school, etc.). As forces of control and power, for school officials, it is not the presence of these that creates the violence, but the need based on the violence of the youth. However, with the increased presence of these and other items, the violence grows (Ayers, 2001). In reference to Foucault's work, McLaren, et. al. (2000) write:

> Within what Foucault calls modernistic govern/mentalities, an institutionalized scenario privileges a view where violence is quantified and historicized, individuals and their communities are vilified, places (such as inner-city schools) are demonized, bureaucratic plans are rationalized and legalized, and seemingly violent "Others" are marginalized. From this perspective violent "Others" become objects of panoptic space, where the disciplinary gaze of govern/mentalities cellularizes their bodies into "private spaces: e.g., prison cells and detention rooms in schools (p. 73).

Devine (1997) calls this development and impact of symbolic violence a "koine of corporeal experience", whereas emotions range from fear, terror, grief, suspicion, anger, loneliness, and also the denial of these emotions. For Devine (1997) teachers take on

more of a "cognitive role", and the regulation of the body if left for security forces that roam the hallways of these schools, this leading to a degree of "scripting" of black male bodies as dangerous and needing to be "contained" (Jackson, 2006). Unable to see the inner-workings of schools, the students in turn blame themselves for their condition (Lipman, 2003). The youth in this study, although clear about the impact of violence on their lives, did not per se, "blame the schools". However, within the context of talking about classroom life, the fear associated with the merging of streets and schools, and the ways in which there was little intervention or attempt to keep them in schools, described the kind of symbolic violence as mentioned above.

As many schools have attempted to beef up security measures over the last twenty years in schools, school suspensions and expulsions have soared, and the amount of students arrested within Chicago Public Schools has become high (The Advancement Project, 2005). As discipline practices are used to sustain some locus of control for school personnel (Casella, 2005), they become an essential part of the educational life of schools in urban environments. In the 2008-2009 school year alone, there have been 29 homicides of Chicago Public School students, the majority African American male (Sadovi & Rozas, 2009). Although none occurred on school property, the fact that they were all Chicago Public School students speaks to the phenomena that many of the youth talked about. Although attempts may be made to isolate and identify that these have occurred outside of Chicago schools, in reality, as the students mentioned, the lines have become blurred between street activities and those within the school, that many things that occur within the schools spill over into the streets, and vice versa. As many school administrators and teachers struggle to build relationships with their surrounding

communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), the theme of a hostile school takes on other implications for the students, including the schools inability to engage in an effective relationship with the parents of these young men.

Many of the young men, in talking about the fighting, appeared to express relief that they did not have to engage in this form of posturing within their current school. Although there were many incidents that the researcher witnessed where the youth were engaged in various forms of signifying, verbal put downs, and "play" acts of aggression, and some verbal arguing with school officials, overall, the students appear to respect the safety offered them within YLI. The environment at YLI allowed for a greater flexibility of masculine expression, with several African American male administrators and teachers present to portray different aspects of African American masculinity.

For these students, this mixture of family challenges and disengagement from school life, and their difficulties within the school reflect a common tale in urban environments among African American males, that although an awareness persists on behalf of both students, parents, and teachers, a disconnect persists between the school and the family. Similar to what Mandara (2006) suggests associated with community life, this disconnect is further exemplified by neighborhood challenges that exist in the larger community.

Bridging social capital

Bridging social capital allows students to make connections with valued others across cultural, racial, or class bonds. Students talked about the importance of seeing teachers and staff at schools as positive links to educational attainment, as well as how teachers may have negatively impacted a connecting to school. As schools can serve as

a natural place where bridging can take place, it often did not for many of these youth. The majority of students had made little connections with teachers and staff at previous schools, with the exception of maybe one or two trusted adults. These exceptional teachers, then, become the set of valuable connections of the individual students, giving them access to resources beyond their immediate scope, and can compete with the social capital that they develop in the streets. Yet, as Anderson (2003) notes, when these youth often develop trusting relationships and "family ties" with each other, the difficulty of these types of bonds developing between teacher and student, or staff and student, can become unrealistic. The youth in this study demonstrated that the mere proximity to teachers and school does not result in the crucial connection they need in order to access the social capital in schools. As noted by Schneider (2006), trusting relationships do not occur simply being in contact with diverse groups. Something else needs to happen to make this occur.

These youth demonstrated the difficulties that can occur in developing generalized trust between these youth and schools. The workers at YLI opened the door to develop a more generalized form of trust, relational trust, in order for the youth to become engaged. Although the original intent of this study was not to highlight the work being done at YLI, what emerged from the data, related to the research questions, were examples of how relational trust is formed, developed, and sustained within a school context.

Lin (2001) shares how there are four major elements of the embedded resources within networks that enhance the outcome of actions. The flow of information refers to how social ties in strategic locations can facilitate useful information about opportunities

and choices not always available. For urban youth in underperforming schools, their life choices are limited, not only by their personal difficulties with achieving in academic settings, but also by the types of opportunities that are available to them, and how they are informed of the many possibilities that exist in today's society. The flipside of this is that the larger community is also unaware about the possibilities of a particular previously unrecognized individual. In this way, the information flow goes both ways.

Secondly, social ties exert influence on structures as well. Some social ties carry more valued resources and power within a given structure, and thus, have the ability to exercise a degree of credibility within their structures. Thus, they carry a significant amount of "weight" within an institution, and are easily able to "put in a word" for individuals (Lin, 2001). For urban students, this may mean the difference to being "pushed out" or "referred" to other institutions, or they can be "vouched for" in institutions outside of the school. Third, these social ties resources also can serve as certifications of the individuals "social credentials". These credentials "stand behind" the individual, and assure that the individual may provide "added" resources beyond his/her personal capital (Lin, 2001). For these youth, entering into structures beyond their immediate neighborhoods, this type of "credentialing" becomes significant. Finally, social relations can be reinforcements of identity and recognition (Lin, 2001). Knowing one's worthiness as an individual and member of a social group with common norms can provide emotional support and also becomes a public acknowledgement of one's claim to certain resources. The reinforcements provide maintenance of mental health and the entitlement to resources (Lin, 2001). These four elements of social ties can help explain

why social capital works in instrumental and expressive actions not accounted for by forms of personal capital (human, economic, etc.) (Lin, 2001).

The social ties of these youth, as illustrated within the study, consist largely of single parent or guardianship homes and street involved youth and family members. Although at times the "flow of information" helped them gain access to valued resources outside of their networks (referrals to alternative schools, social service programs, basketball leagues, etc.), it is within their current school that they began to see the positive link between themselves, school, and postsecondary education and success. Embedded within the information flow was the relational trust that enabled these students to engage in and benefit from the information provided. As mentioned by Nate, activities such as college tours become places where youth can connect outside of their current circumstance, and benefit from exposure. By having ties with these outside resources, teachers and administrators can vouch for youth across social and class barriers that may ultimately exist. As caring teachers and staff reinforce the strengths of these students, and supportively challenge their weaknesses, these young people develop the necessary psychological health to cope with an often unfair and hostile world beyond the walls of the school

Summary

This study revealed the barriers that impeded progress in school for these youth, including family, neighborhood and structural barriers. However, the term barriers serves as misleading for family and neighborhood, because for many of these youth, the so-called "barriers" are also places of strength, where they gain much needed support and respect from family and peers. This "capital," bonded through tough times and external

forces that operate as control mechanisms, including the lack of availability of economic resources, reinforces a type of social capital that provides protection, affirmation, and needed economic resources. Called "bonding social capital," this allows for exchange between members of family and neighborhoods, but limits the external support. For youth in this setting, negotiating with an at times hostile and symbolically violent external world becomes adversarial and contested space of resistance on behalf of the youth and social control and containment on behalf of institutional forces. For the youth in this study, finding the school, YLI, enabled them to develop a form of "bridging social capital," where they were able to develop a level of relational trust with institutional outsiders, but who had demonstrated a level of care that allowed for trusting relationships to develop. Although not meant as a focus of the study, YLI staff served as bridges for these students to achieve in school and access valued outside resources and beyond.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

There was remarkable continuity over time and in different states in the profile of a runaway. It would probably be difficult to find any group in the United States that changed less over a period of seventy years. When one considers the expansion of slavery across the Appalachians, the growth and expanding economic base of free blacks, and the increase of the slaveholding class, the similarities among runaways-in gender, age, color, physical characteristics, appearance, personality traits, and methods of absconding-seem all the more remarkable. The persistence was not because those who ran away were successful or even because the young men who left in greatest numbers could best endure punishment following capture. Rather, it revealed the nature of slave resistance: those who could best defy the system with even a remote chance of success-young, strong, healthy, intelligent men-continued to do relentlessly from one generation to the next. (p. 233)

Excerpt from Profile of a runaway, In "Runaway Slaves" (Hope Franklin & Schweninger, 1999)

The excerpt above offers a provocative way of viewing these youth in relation to the institutions that surround them. Similar to the miner's canary, these young people, in their resistance to engaging in school or "running away", might offer us an insight into the flaws, or what may be broken within our educational system. Schools have to understand that potentially, embracing dominant culture can be a "fiercely alienating and symbolically violent" experience for these youth, potentially resulting in the dropping out that occurs (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 34). Called members of "oppositional culture" by some researchers, scholars should be careful concerning attempting to label these youth without addressing the "oppositional culture" (Ogbu, 2003/2004) created by disciplinary and policing practices in schools and communities (Polite, 1994; Ferguson, 2000; Anderson, 2003). The youth in this study offer an understanding about their lives, and how schools can work to better help them "bridge" towards achievement in other areas.

The five themes emerging from this study illustrated a developmental sequence for these youth. Beginning with a disengagement from schools, merging their family lives with a school environment that struggled to embrace their full selves. This resulted in a deeper connection into neighborhood and street life, a development of bonding capital that includes emotional nurturing, respect and other resources that emerge from this capital. For the majority of these youth, a relationship with the school developed that began a cycle of school attendance and participation, school violence, both physically and symbolically, arrests, detention and return, followed by a concluding expulsion or complete withdrawal. This led to an emotional period in the lives of these youth were they experienced isolation, confusion, depression, fear and frustration concerning their life circumstances, with a degree of hopelessness and lack of control of their selves. This period, which I call here "purgatory", symbolic of a period or "holding space" where the fate of one's life is determined not entirely by one's actions, but the institutions and the authoritarian figures within them. This period also leads many of the youth on a trail of redemption, offering an opportunity for what many identified as a "last chance" for educational success in a "normal" educational setting. Once these youth found such a place, although not normal in the traditional Chicago public school context, the school offered a level of care and bridging social capital, that allowed for these youth to connect with trusted others, while maintaining connection with the other parts of their lives that sustain them, their families and communities.

The theoretical lens associated with social capital allowed for an understanding of how relationships surround these youth and serve as both barrier and enabler for academic success. However, these relationships are little match for the structural

challenges that exist, including socio-economic conditions, schools and criminal justice systems. However, true to some social capital literature, trusted others who demonstrate an ethic of care, illustrated by both the willingness to be compassionate and "tough" with these youth, allowed for relationships that youth can utilize to access resources necessary in order to succeed in modern society. Although this may not be the "cure-all" for schools, understanding the unique social capital that exists in their communities, coupled with how to successfully link with these youth, offers a way to view how educators, researchers and citizens can conceptualize relationships with similar youth in society and beyond. The following will describe limitations of the study, recommendations for practice, followed by implications for future study, and a final conclusion.

Limitations of study

Social capital has historically been addressed through large scale studies, and studies of community and associational life based on quantitative sampling and community indexes. However, important to understanding social capital, particularly addressing how it works in networks and structures, is in understanding social context. As Foley, Edwards and Diani (2001) write concerning social context and social capital, "context counts, and it counts crucially" (p. 268). Understanding social context is best done through interpretive methods that focus on "the idiosyncratic, the meanings people assign to their experiences, and how people understand phenomena in their own lives" (Glover, 2004, p. 145). Relying on the narratives of the young men in this study allowed for an understanding of schooling and the networks surrounding schooling and education for them. They talked about their lives in relationship to school, and who and what was most important to them. Although some methods may have allowed for an understanding

of the validity of such issues as relational trust and other potential indicators, this methodology allowed for the voice of these students to be heard in an environment where they are continuously under surveillance and marginalized, seen as "at-risk" and not as "at-promise".

The youth in this study did not detail their experiences within the criminal justice system with much significance, recounting experiences within, but often minimizing events that either led up to the arrest, their actual arrests and time within detention centers. It was common for youth to preface their arrests by saying "it wasn't nothing" or "no major cases". Upon re-checking with the youth, major cases meant homicide or attempted homicides, or major drug cases. Although arrests for these youth covered a wide range, from burglary to assault to weapons charges, they saw these as almost "natural". With current reports ranging from 1 in 3 to 1 in 2 young African American males having been arrested or currently are incarcerated or on probation/parole, it makes some sense as to why they downplay the significance of arrest and jail. Also, young people spend a significant portion of their awake lives in and around schools, so it may be that the youth felt more comfortable talking about this. Also, given the role of the researcher as an adult and educator, they may have wanted to play up their desire to succeed educationally, and downplay street success. However, the youth were very candid about both things that they were involved in, things that they were currently doing that conflicted with what could be considered "positive", as well as street-organization affiliation, something that is not easily offered. It can also be speculated that the state of the African American community has become one where arrests and jails are seen as "normal", and that educational success is "abnormal". With only roughly 3 out of 10

African American males in Chicago Public Schools graduating within a four year period, it may be that it has become abnormal to succeed in an educational environment. Having said this, the youth in this study demonstrate that one should never give up on a young person, that even those who have been in and out of the various systems, will take advantage of a "last chance", and work towards achieving in school and beyond.

The youth in this study did not describe race or cultural differences as a salient point for them in the study. In their view, many of the teachers, police officers, etc., that they experienced negative relationships with were African American. This is not uncommon in respect to adolescent analysis of racial issues, or to studies that do not specifically attempt to ask questions related to race. This may have been a product of the research questions; however, appropriate questions associated with race did not arise during the interviews. Although there were specific mentions of "white teacher" and of "being black", the youth concentrated more on their connections to friends and family, and beloved teachers. Further research could explore racial, as well as class dynamics more. The students appeared aware of who they are as young black males, and how society views them, but did not want to be stereotyped as the "typical street-thug" portrayed in the media and the like. To their credit, they offered a more nuanced view of who they are as young black men, allowing for both a connection to the collective identify of being "black in America", as well as of an individuality that gave room for individual expression. Also, further understanding the dynamics of the type of school presented in the study can occur.

Recommendations for practice

This study sought to identify the barriers and enablers that court-involved youth experience in relation to schooling, including identifying the networks and trust developed between them that enhanced their educational experience. The bonds developed between family and peers become reinforced after they deal with the educational system, and as social capital becomes reinforced in their neighborhoods, the ability to move beyond the ethnoracial closure of their communities becomes reinforced. However, there are several points of intervention that could take place for these young men, from institutional, to interpersonal. First, teacher education programs can incorporate community-centered approaches to teaching, utilizing approaches to engaging with the communities that students come from, beginning with parent-teacher interaction, to community-service learning experiences. Second, when young people are experiencing trouble, offering creative programming that bridges street-life and school-life can be important, particularly for young African American males. As many of these young men identified basketball as an important part of their social lives, opportunities to engage them in the realm of athletics becomes important. Third, institutional policies associated with discipline practices should be addressed, as many schools are eliminating restrictive zero tolerance policies that make schools like prisons. Instead, methods that reinforce school safety without offering draconian methods of dealing with students become important. Lastly, there are several points within the educational and juvenile justice system that can serve as points of intervention, including with classrooms, during transitional programs, and even during periods where youth have dropped out of schools.

An unexpected phenomenon that occurred that was outside of the research questions within the study was how many students talked about their time out of school, and how it allowed them to reflect upon their life circumstances, particularly with school. Many of the young men struggled while out of school, finding life in the streets to not be as attractive outside of the confines of school as maybe expected. The emotions they encountered ranged from depression to fear, to confusion about their current life situations, and what appeared to be a grim future. Recognizing that a future without an education may be perilous, they recognized the need for something different, both in their behavior and their choice of environments.

Stanton-Salazar (1997) suggests that a bicultural network orientation can be an important method to address the gap between youth disconnected from schools, addressing their development in an anti-assimilationist and culturally democratic way. As some research has identified the importance of enriching and supportive peer relationships as appropriate buffers to dealing with environmental stressors, understanding how male adolescents respond in groups can be important here (Boykin & Ellison, 2005; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005).

Implications for future research

As this study sought the voices of these young men, and historically adolescent research has to take into account reliability issues associated with these youth, further studies can include a more holistic approach, interviewing parents, teachers and administrators, probation officers, and other strategic personnel in these youth's lives. It is difficult to provide a small sample and generalize for an entire population. This study does not attempt to do that, but to further bring understanding around approaches for

young men who may fit the profile of these students. This can also lead to further addressing research around these types of students.

As research on social capital has been under scrunity, this study certainly does not attempt to prove all critics wrong concerning how to measure social capital effectively. Further research can explore more of the intricacies of the network orientation of these young men. Several network analysis studies have been performed on different populations in relation to understanding social capital, and future research can explore some of these issues in relation to both African American adolescents, and court-involved youth.

Final reflections on methodology and study

This was an exciting and exhausting process, with the interviews, transcription and analysis offering a way for me to both understand the lives of these young men as well as myself as a researcher and educator. As an African American who has attended similar schools that these youth attended, lived in similar environments, and later worked in some of the same communities and schools that these youth attended, much of the material was close to home. However, they offered me insight into a different generation and a different understanding that I thought I had. I attempted to put much of my previous experiences, both personal and professional, on pause as I met with, listened to and asked questions concerning their lives. I attempted to listen harder than ever before, listening to the recordings of the interviews over and over to listen for subtle nuances and inflection in speech. I read and re-read transcripts, and went back to narrative text after coding to make sure I understood context. I made special effort to say things like, tell me as if I don't know anything, to attempt to limit assumptions that they may have had about

both my being a black man, as well as someone who has been seen as "getting it" about street life. Having said this, I have little doubt that I was seen as a "positive role model", as a black man who had been able to achieve in society. In this regard, many of our "after" conversations were filled with questions they had about my current job, my background, etc. The majority of them seemed hungry for positive role models, and I felt fortunate and humbled by the being in the position of "trusted outsider". This study further confirmed my belief in the importance of relationships in life, in education, in professional development. In many ways, as these young people illustrated, our relationships shape who we are, as well as where we may end up. You can separate those relationships that have been most influential from the sum total of our lives no more than you can separate skin color…it may not define who you are exclusively, but it can certainly influence your presentation of self in the world, as well as how the world interacts with you.

As I mentioned earlier, particularly compelling, heartbreaking, and also uplifting in some ways, were the stories of Jake and Malcolm, both wards of the state, and attempting to move beyond their family circumstances. My first and last interviews, respectively, they had the most to say out of the youth, both in terms of family background, but also in terms of their opinions about school and the role of schools in relation to young people. Might it be that those who have been most engaged in the multiple systems, the child welfare, the juvenile justice, the educational system, have the most to say about what may be broken, as well as what may be needed to make them better? Not sure, but they did offer the researcher a clear insight into what may be needed for many youth similar to them: to be seen for who they, to be cared for, to be

held accountable based on clear standards, and to be educated in a way that respects who they are, what they have been through, and what they can become.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

First interview

1. What is your name?

2. How old are you?

3. What grade are you currently in?

4. Tell me about a typical day for you in school, starting when you first leave the house on your way to school, when you enter the school, who you usually encounter, etc., with as many details and specifics as possible?

5. What are the highlights of your day at school and why?

    a. What are the low-points?

6. What are your impressions, thoughts, feelings, etc. about the school that you are in? About schools in Chicago, in general?

7. Can you share with me as much as possible how you believe your educational process has benefitted you?

8. Can you share with me how your educational process has been a challenge to your personal development?

9. Can you identify educational experiences that have had an impact on you?

10. As far back as you remember, tell me about some specific experiences that you have had with school, starting maybe even with kindergarten?

11. Have you been out of school for any significant period of time for any reasons beyond being sick or ill, and if so, for what reasons?

Second Interview

1. Are there things that assist you in achieving in school? If so, tell me about them.

2. Are there barriers, or things in the way, that you believe keep you from achieving in school, and if so, tell me about them?

3. Do you believe school is important for your development? If so, or not, tell me why.

4. What is it that you want to do after you graduate from school?

5. Do you believe completing an education will assist in that, and if so, or not, why?

6. Who do you think will be more important to help you achieve your goals (teachers, parents, friends, etc,)? What are the reasons you believe they will be more helpful than others?

7. Can you identify any people (teachers, coaches, administrators, etc.) in your current school that you trust? If so, who are they, and what is it about them that deem them trustworthy?

8. Are there people who you knew in previous school that you trusted? If so, who are they and what are the reasons you find them trustworthy?

9. Can you tell me about your experiences being involved within the court-system?

    a. Were you ever arrested within a school? If so, how did that make you feel?
    b. What were your thoughts about the school?

10. If you can, tell me about what it was like for you to be "locked-up" (incarcerated)?

11. Tell me about the community that you live in, as descriptive and as specific as possible.

12. Who are the important people to you in your community? (parents, friends, etc.)

13. What is it about them that make them important? Be specific about each one.

14. How do your relationships with friends outside of school differ from people you know inside the school?

15. What are some of your important values that you have as a human being? Are your values similar to those people who work in schools? What about friends and family?

APPENDIX B

CURRICULUM VITAE

Troy Harden

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EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

DePaul University, School of Education

Degree:	Ed.D.	June, 2010
Major:	Curriculum Studies.	
Advisor:	Ronald Chennault, PhD.	
Dissertation:	"Court-involved African-American Males, Public Schooling and Social Capital"	

Loyola University at Chicago, School of Social Work

Degree:	MSW	June 1998
Track:	Clinical/Community	

Chicago State University

Degree:	B.A.	June 1994
Major	Psychology/Sociology	

University of Chicago 1993-1994
Major: Sociology

Harold Washington College
Major: Addictions Studies 1991-1992

Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia
Major: Economics/Marketing 1983-1986

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Assistant Professor, Chicago State University's Masters of Social Work Program August, 2007-present

Teach graduate-level courses within family-centered social work program, specializing in clinical and community interventions, program planning, and youth development; Principal Investigator for research grant

Director of Field Placement/Faculty, DePaul University's May, 2005-August, 2007
Masters of Social Work Program

Responsibilities include designing and teaching field education with MSW Program with special emphasis on community practice. Developing partnerships with Chicagoland community based organizations. Responsible for teaching foundation and community practice courses for masters level social work students; Program planning and development for CSWE accreditation

Director for Community Development, DePaul University's 2001-May, 2005
Steans Center for Community based Service Learning and
Community Service Studies, Chicago, Illinois

Developed and supervised community partnerships for one of U.S. News top 23 Community-based service learning program, developing over 100 strategic partnerships and projects for the university and managed special projects that include faculty and community-based research

Adjunct Faculty, Department of Psychology/Sociology and 1998-2007
School of Education, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois

Taught various human and community development courses within MSW Program, Psychology, Sociology, Community Studies Departments and the School of Education

Program Director, DePaul University 1998-July, 2001
Community Mental Health Center, Urban Systems of Care,
Chicago, Illinois

Managed budget and supervised day to day operations of community mental health program; provided therapy for families and children. Supervised social work and psychology doctoral students

Consultant, Cook County Hospital-Project Brotherhood, 1999-Dec., 2001
Chicago, Illinois

Developed programming for Black men's health clinic; provided individual and group counseling for men

Director, Proviso-Leyden Council for Community Action, 1998
Substance Abuse Operations, Maywood, Illinois

Managed budget and oversaw the day to day operations of a 90 client outpatient drug and alcohol rehabilitation clinic

Clinical Therapist, Roseland Hospital, Chicago, Illinois 1997-1998

Provided clinical counseling for HIV/AIDS impacted men and women; provided clinical case management for hospital clientele

Clinical Supervisor, The Woodlawn Organization, Chicago, Illinois 1997

Provided clinical counseling and case management for families receiving case management services

Mental Health Therapist, Mercy Hospital and Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois 1994-1998

Provided individual and group therapy for women and men within inpatient mental health unit and addictions program

Youth Therapist/Gang Intervention, Youth Guidance, West Englewood Team, Chicago, Illinois 1996-1997

Provided outreach and individual and group services for youth involved in street organizations

Clinical Supervisor, City of Chicago Men's Program/TASC Program, Interventions Southwood, Chicago, Illinois 1991-1995

Provided supervision and clinical counseling services for residential drug and alcohol treatment facility

CURRENT PROJECTS, AWARDS, GRANTS

Project MENTOR, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, Youth Empowerment Project Award, $900,000.00 2009-2012

Community Gang Intervention, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, $78,000.00 2010-2011

MANUSCRIPTS ACCEPTED AND UNDER REVIEW

Harden, T. Book Review: Social Work with African American Males. *NASW Networker Magazine.*

Hall, D., Kenemore, T. & Harden, T. Social Work and Advocacy: A case example. NASW *Networker Magazine.*

Brown, S., Garvey, T. & Harden, T. "A sporting chance: Using athletics and social work with groups for urban youth. *Social Work with Groups.*

Harden, T. "Issues of Identity, Place, and Praxis for a Black Man as a Service-Learning Educator in a Predominantly White Institution". *African Americans and Community Engagement,* Evans, S., Taylor, C., Dunlap, M., & Miller, D., Eds. SUNY Press

Harden, T. "What would St. Vincent's response be to Poverty and Social Work". *Vincentianism and Higher Education.*

Harden, T. *Lynching in the U.S. and Ida B. Wells.* Manuscript accepted for publication.

Harden, T. *Critical race pedagogy and service learning: How service learning can be revolutionized through a critical lens.* Manuscript submitted for publication.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Harden, T., DuBois, D. & Pryce, J. Project MENTOR: A mixed methods study of a youth intervention. *Manuscript in progress.*

Pryce, J. & **Harden, T.** Exploring the impact of mentoring for urban adolescent. *Manuscript in progress.*

Harden, T. *Participatory Action Research with street-involved youth.* Manuscript in progress.

Harden, T. *Reconceptualizing development for urban youth.* Manuscript in progress.

Harden, T. & Rosario, E. *Utilizing a language of hope and possibilities: Social-emotional learning at Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School.* Manuscript in progress.

Harden, T. & Mazza, C. *Male social workers facilitating group work with young men: Strengths, challenges, and possibilities.* Manuscript in progress.

Harden, T. *The unconscious classroom: Utilizing psychoanalytic and social theory to understand racism and teacher-student interaction*. Manuscript in progress.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

MSW Program, Chicago State University Fall 2007-present
Courses: Social Welfare Policy I & II, Community Practice,
Program Planning & Evaluation, Human Service Administration,

Social Work, Addiction & Treatment, Social Work with Groups
60 MSW students per semester

Instructor Fall 2006
MSW Program, DePaul University
Course: Foundation Practice Seminar
18 MSW graduate students

Instructor Spring 2006/2007
Department of Psychology, DePaul University
Course: Psychology of Men
32 Junior and Senior Level Undergraduates/2 Graduate students

Instructor Winter 2005
Department of Community Service Studies, DePaul University
Course: Perspectives in Community Service and Justice
25 Junior and Senior Level Undergraduates

Instructor Fall/Spring 2005
Department of Community Service Studies, DePaul University
Course: Community Development
20 Junior and Senior Level Undergraduates working within Chicago and International communities

Instructor Fall 2004
School of Education, DePaul University
Course: Human Services and Counseling Practicum I
10 Graduate level students

Instructor Spring 2004
Department of Sociology, DePaul University
Course: Technology and Social Inclusion
20 Junior and Senior Level Undergraduates

Instructor Winter/Spring 2003
Department of Sociology, DePaul University
Course: Technology and Social Inclusion
20 Junior and Senior Level Undergraduates

Instructor Winter-Spring, 2000
Department of Sociology, DePaul University
Course: Technology and Social Inclusion
20 Junior and Senior Level Undergraduates

Instructor Fall-Winter, 2000
Department of Psychology, DePaul University

Course: Substance Abuse, Addiction and Recovery
35 Undergraduates

Instructor Winter/Summer 1999
Department of Psychology, DePaul University
Course: Human Development
60 Undergraduates

CERTIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Licensed Clinical Social Worker with Illinois Department of Professional Regulations	2003-present
National Association of Social Workers-member	On-going
National Association of Black Social Workers-member	On-going
Illinois Attorney General's Office, Domestic Violence/Criminal Sexual Assault Victim Advocate	1997-present

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND ADVISORY PROJECTS

Athletic Advisory Committee, Chicago State University	2009-present
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless Re-entry Committee	2008-present
Pan African Association-Member, Board of Directors (treasurer)	2004-present
Erie Elementary Charter School-Member, Board of Directors, Assisted in design and development of bi-cultural, bi-literate charter school	2004-present
BUILD, Inc. Black-Latino Diversity Building Advisory Team	2004-2008
Task force for Community Engagement in Liberal Arts & Sciences, co-chair	2006-2007
DePaul University Strategic Planning Committee	2005-2006
DePaul University NCA Report Committee	2005
Crib Collective Social Entrepreneurship Advisory Board	2004-2008
Erie Neighborhood House-Member, Board of Directors	2002-2007

AAMEE-African American Men Embracing Excellence: Founded and developed student retention program for African American males 2002-2007

Agape Youth Program-Member, Board of Directors 2002-2008

Advisory Board for UMOJA Charter School Development 2003-2004

Through the Vincentian Endowment Fund at DePaul, developed youth development camp for youth in Chicago communities 2003-present

Lead trainer for the Mankind Project, facilitating men's retreats globally 1999-present

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

Rites of Passage and Group Work with African American and Latino Homeless Youth, at Association for the Advancement of Social Work With Groups, Annual Symposium, Montreal, Quebec. June, 2010

A Sporting Chance: Using Athletics and Social Work with Groups for Urban Youth, at Association for the Advancement of Social Work With Groups, Annual Symposium, Montreal, Quebec. June, 2010

Rites of Passage and the Urban Village, at National Association for Black Social Workers, Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA. April, 2010

Solid Ground Rites of Passage: A rites of passage experience for homeless youth February, 2010-May, 2010

"I know it when I see it": Is it erotic or pornographic? Panel for Department of Women & Gender Studies, Chicago State University March, 2010

"Community Praxis: The social worker as practitioner of community-change. Trinity Christian College Februrary, 2010

"Livin' like we're bulletproof": Breaking the Cycle of Violence among Urban Youth. DePaul University Male Initiative Project. February, 2010

"Transference issues and male social workers providing groups with young males" International Conference on Social Work with Groups, Chicago, IL June, 2009

"From problems to possibilities: Utilizing social-emotional learning at a Community based High School". American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, San Diego, California — April, 2009

"When Trust is a Four-Letter Word: Court-involved African American and Latino males within Chicago Public Schools". Social Work with and for men conference, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. — April, 2008

"Strange Bedfellows: Evaluating the use of technology in Field Education". Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, San Francisco, CA. — October, 2007

"Have passport, will collaborate: Creating an interdisciplinary study abroad course". Poster presentation, Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, San Francisco, CA. — October, 2007

"Social Works answer to Poverty Reduction" for Poverty Reduction at Vincentian Institutions — April 2007

"Building Bridges between Latino and African American Youth: Cross Cultural Relations and Youth Development", at Latino Social Work Conference, Chicago, Illinois — June 2006

"Hip Hop and Youth Development", workshop for Southeast Federal Probation Officers — June 2006

"University-Community Partnerships and Mentoring Programs: Best Practices", at Mentoring Conference, Chicago, Illinois — May 2006

Mental Health and the Hip Hop Generation, for the Hip Hop Political Action Committee — September 2005

Youth Development across Cultures: On-going workshop series for BUILD, Inc. — March 2004-2005

"Service Learning Faculty Workshop" for Jackson State University — December 2003

Presented papers on "Technology and Service Learning" and "Working with Generation Y with University/Community Partnerships" at the Conference for Civic Education in New Orleans, LA. — November 2003

"Cultural Competence in Mental Health" for GLATTC/MAETAC, Chicago, IL — June 2003

"Working with the African American Adolescent Male", presented for Cook County Department for Juvenile Probation — April 2003

"The African American Family", presented for DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois — February 2003

"Effectively Transitioning thru Life's Major Challenges" presented for staff and clientele of Provident Hospital's unit for HIV-impacted men — January 2002- December 2002

"Organizational Change in Social Service", presented for GLATTC/Anasi/TASC conference in Chicago — February 2001

"Race Rules: Racial Reconciliation and Cultural Competence in the Church", presented for the Office of the Evangelical Church of America — March, 1998

"Race, Ethnicity and Maleness: Cultural Competence and Racial Healing for Men in Corporate America", presented for the Mankind Project, Chicago — January, 1998

"Poverty and Mental Health", presented for Poverty in Paradise conference for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Puerto Rico — January, 1998

"Cultural Competence in Addictions Therapy", presented for Mercy Hospital and Medical Center, Chicago — October, 1997

"Transformation and African Americans", presented for Kokrobeity School, Accra, Ghana — July, 1997