Towards the development of culturally and contextually relevant model of coping for low income, urban, African American adolescents

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Towards the Development of a Culturally and Contextually Relevant Model

of Coping for Low-Income, Urban, African American Youth

Dissertation

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

BY

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December 6, 2010

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MODEL OF CULTURAL AND CONTEXUAL COPING

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

Low income, urban African American adolescents are exposed to disproportionately high rates of stressors in their everyday lives (Allison, Burton, Marshall, Perez-Febles, Yarrington, & Kirsh, 1999; Attar, Guerra & Tolan, 1994; Gaylord-Harden, Gipson, Mance & Grant, 2008). In order to succeed in their own context and beyond, these adolescents must learn to cope effectively with the stressors they face. Little of the extant coping intervention literature has incorporated low income, urban African American adolescents, even though these youth could benefit from such interventions. The following research develops a model of the culturally and contextually relevant factors that contribute to coping for low-income, urban, African American youth. It is hoped that such a model will inform the development of coping interventions for these youth.

In this mixed methods research, a total of nine focus groups were conducted at a public elementary school in a large Midwestern city with a student population that was predominantly low income and African American. Focus groups were conducted across three stakeholder groups (fifteen parents, nineteen adolescents in the 7th and 8th grades, and eight teachers and staff members) to determine the culturally and contextually based coping strategies employed by youth. Adolescents, teachers and parents contributed their perceptions of the types of skills adolescents should learn to cope with stressors associated with an impoverished, urban context. Additionally, participants provided information about the ways in which a coping intervention could best meet the needs of low income, urban African American adolescents.

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Based on these findings, a culturally relevant and contextually based model of coping was developed to inform the development of future coping interventions. The model suggests that aspects of coping influenced by culture include religion and spirituality, interconnectedness, knowledge of cultural heritage, and emotion focused strategies. Aspects of coping influenced by a low income, urban environment include neighborhood stressors, limited protective settings, compromised relationships, and pressure for survival or adaptation. These cultural and contextual influences were integrated into a conceptual coping model based on cognitive, behavioral and social elements of coping. Cognitive components included cultural strategies such as prayer to accept problems and religious reframes. Cognitive components related to context included perspective taking in relationships with neighbors. The behavioral components of the model included cultural strategies distracting action defined as the use of rhythm, dance and music for expression. Contextually based behavioral included avoidance in some community contexts and portraying a tough image for self-preservation. Social components of the model linked to culture included seeking advice from religious figures and family members, and relying on family connections. Social components linked to context included seeking support from limited protective settings. Based on these findings, culture and context play an important role in coping for low income, urban African American adolescents. Future research should incorporate specific aspects of culture and context to increase the relevancy of coping interventions for these youth.

In terms of specific recommendations for intervention development, study

participants' suggested that the intervention utilize active and engaging methods to teach coping strategies. In terms of the mentorship, participants suggested that mentors have knowledge of the community. Participants also suggested that the coping intervention incorporate a parent component that would enable parents to learn coping skills. Additionally, participants indicated that protective settings were limited and youth should be linked to both protective settings that exist in the community (i.e. churches or community centers) and protective settings outside the community.

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INTRODUCTION

Stressors and Low Income Urban African American Youth

Low income, urban African American youth are exposed to a myriad of chronic and severe stressors (Allison, Burton, Marshall, Perez-Febles, Yarrington, & Kirsh, 1999; Attar, Guerra & Tolan, 1994; Gaylord-Harden, Gipson, Mance & Grant, 2008). Adolescence is already a time of heightened exposure to extreme life stressors, and being both low income and a member of an ethnic minority group places low income, urban youth at even greater risk for stress exposure (Gaylord-Harden *et al.,* 2008; Grant, O'Koon, Davis, Roache, Poindexter & Armstrong, 2000). Many of the stressors faced by low income, urban African American youth are related to racism and oppression (Ward, 2000; Scott, 2003; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop, 1997; Neblett, White, Ford, Philip, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2008).

Low income, urban African American youth encounter racism and discrimination in their everyday lives whether it is subtle and institutionalized or blatant and directly experienced (Clarke *et al.,* 1999; Moos, 2002; Scott, 2003). For example, due to a long history of racism, African American youth are disproportionately likely to reside in poverty, to live in isolated, segregated urban poor neighborhoods (Clarke *et al.,* 1999). Unfortunately, overrepresentation among the urban poor fuels negative racial stereotypes about African Americans such that classism and racism interact to compound negative experiences for low-income, urban African American youth (Moos, 2002; Scott, 2003). In addition the

context of urban poverty exposes youth to a number of specific stressors including

economic stressors, gun violence, muggings, drug trafficking, and gang violence

(Tolan, Guerra, & Montaini-Klovdahl, 1997; Grant *et al.,* 2000; Kliewer *et al.,*

2006). Daily hassles such as community overcrowding, poor school conditions,

and substandard living conditions also confront these adolescents regularly (Grant

et al, 2000). Major life events such as parental divorce, death of a loved one,

moving, or separation from a parent also confront low income, urban African

American adolescents at greater rates than mainstream adolescent populations

(Grant *et al.,* 2000).

The chronic and uncontrollable nature of many of the stressors faced by

low income, urban African American youth have been associated with the

development of internalizing and externalizing problems in the literature (Grant *et*

al., 2000; Rosario *et al.,* 2008; Landis, Gaylord-Harden, Malinowski, Grant,

Carleton, & Ford, 2007). For example, one particularly common stressor,

exposure to community violence, has been associated with increases in Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and delinquency (Rosario

et al., 2008; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Rosenthal, 2000). In addition, stressors

such as child abuse, divorce, and parental conflict have been associated with

heightened levels of psychological symptoms for adolescents in this population

over time (Grant, O'Koon, Davis, Roache, Poindexter, & Armstrong, 2000; Attar,

Guerra, & Tolan, 1994). Given that low income, urban African American children

are at great risk for stress and psychological maladjustment associated with stress,

it is important that intervention researchers incorporate this population into their

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research.

Coping and Low Income Urban African American Youth

Given exposure to numerous severe and chronic stressors, low income, urban African American youth are forced to develop strategies for managing these stressors. Coping is defined as "conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotions, cognition, behavior, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances" (Compas *et al.,* 2001). Two primary influences on the development of coping strategies used by low income, urban African American youth are African American culture and the context of urban poverty (Burton, Allison, & Obedeillah, 1995; Burton, Obeidallah, & Allsion, 1996).

Cultural Influences on Coping

Both theoretical models and empirical evidence suggest that African American culture influences the coping of African American youth. The sections below will provide a review of the theoretical models of African American culture and its influence on coping. Following those sections, a review of empirical evidence that coping strategies based on African American culture are used by and influence African American youth will be provided.

One theoretical model of culturally specific coping developed by Utsey and colleagues (2000) posits the following coping mechanisms as being culturally specific for African Americans: collective coping, spiritual-centered coping, cognitive and emotional debriefing, and ritual-centered coping (Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000). Collective coping is a mechanism by which group interests are placed above individual interests. Spiritually-centered coping is conceptualized as

a spiritually based framework that enhances an individual's ability to understand stressful life experiences in the context of a larger picture that facilitates and optimistic perspective (Utsey *et al*., 2000). Ritual-centered coping mechanisms are those that rely on cultural practices associated with rites of passage and rituals that provide structure to one's life through revering ancestors and enhancing celebration of life events (Utsey *et al*., 2000).

Another theoretical model of African American cultural experience is the TRIOS model (Jones, 2003). TRIOS is an acronym which stands for Time, Rhythm, Improvisation, Orality, and Spirituality, aspects theorized as salient to the African American experience (Jones, 2003). The TRIOS model posits that African Americans have developed a number of ways of surviving adverse circumstances by utilizing cultural aspects of their lives to improve their psychological wellbeing and the ability to cope with stressors. Of the TRIOS aspects, Improvisation, Orality, and Spirituality are the most closely related to coping for low income, urban African American adolescents. Improvisation is goal directed creative problem solving under time pressure and describes the ability to structure interactions amongst people in a goal oriented and expressive manner in order to come up with creative solutions to problems (Jones, 2003). Orality represents cultural preferences for face-to-face communication and primacy of spoken word (Jones, 2003). Historically, many African cultural practices including the transmission of historical events were transmitted orally through song, spoken word, and story telling (Jones, 2003). Orality is linked to socialization messages individuals receive about the African American culture.

Consistent with Utsey's model, the TRIOS model also includes a spirituality component. In the TRIOS model, spirituality represents the concept that a higher power or force beyond human beings acts in or affects the world in which human beings live (Jones, 2003).

Other theoretical conceptualizations of cultural influences on coping emphasize the role of racial socialization and racial identity messages. In particular, the Triple Quandry of Black Experience, suggests that racial socialization may serve as the mechanism through which African American adolescents learn to effectively cope with stress and develop positive racial identity (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Scott, 2003; Neblett *et al.,* 2008). Another model, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), suggests that the multidimensional development of racial and cultural identity influences African Americans' interactions with the outside world and their ability to cope with stressors (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Scott, 2003). Of the two of these theories, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity was the only one developed based on qualitative and quantitative data collected with low income, urban youth.

Nonetheless, several empirical studies have provided support for several tenets of these models. In particular, researchers have found that for African American adolescents for whom race is a central part of their identity, the ability to cope with perceived discrimination is based upon the racial socialization messages they receive from their parents (Scott, 2003; Sellers et al., 1998). Racial identity development and racial socialization messages have been also

been cited as effective means by which African American adolescents learn adaptive coping strategies for stressors associated with racism, discrimination, and oppression (Ward, 2000; Scott, 2003; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop, 1997; Neblett, White, Ford, Philip, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2008).

Numerous studies have established that coping strategies based in spirituality and religion are effective for African American youth (Grant *et al.,* 2000: Kliewer *et al.,* 2006; Linder-Gunoe *et al.,* 1999). Additionally, spirituality has been established in the literature as contributing significantly to the psychological wellbeing of African Americans (Jones, 2003). Research suggests that culturally specific coping mechanisms including strong social networks and spiritual orientation are coping resources for African Americans (Utsey, Bolden, Williams, Lee, Lanier & Newsome, 2007). These mechanisms have also been identified as indicators of quality of life for community samples of African Americans (Utsey *et al*., 2000). In one study of low income, African American youth, researchers found that parental weekly church attendance was linked to fewer reports of children's behavioral problems when compared to the behavior of children of parents who were not church attendees (Christian & Barbarin, 2001). Other studies have reported protective effects against substance use for religiously affiliated African American youth (Xue, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2007). Religious participation and religious coping have also been cited as effective in diminishing African American adolescents' feelings of hopelessness and decreasing suicide risk (Molock, Puri, Matlin, & Barksdale, 2006).

Evidence for the benefit of the theoretical construct collectivist coping has

come primarily through research on social support. Social support-seeking has

been identified in the literature as a coping mechanism linked to psychological

adjustment and well-being for children and adolescents in the broader population

(Gaylord-Harden, Ragsdale, Mandara, Richards & Peterson, 2007). Although

social support-seeking is beneficial for everyone, it has specific cultural

implications for coping for low income, urban, African American youth given that

these youth are raised in a culture in which collectivistic values are often

espoused (Utsey *et al*., 2000).

In an investigation of the links among social support, ethnic identity and

self-esteem for African American adolescents, researchers found that social

support was effective in reducing internalizing symptoms for these youth

(Gaylord-Harden *et al.,* 2007). Specifically, the authors found that the relationship

between social support and psychological symptoms was mediated by ethnic

identity and self esteem (Gaylord Harden *et al.,* 2007). The protective effects of

social support are most likely related to the fact that social support seeking

behaviors enable children and adolescents to obtain help when they are faced with

problems, gain information about problems, or change some aspect of the

problem (Compas *et al.,* 2001). Social support seeking behaviors may also enable

youth to change their feelings about an event, accept a problem they are unable to

control, and acknowledge their feelings about a problem (Compas *et al.,* 2001).

Other empirical evidence of the impact of culture on coping has emerged

from research on pre-existing coping measures. A factor analysis of the Coping

with Problems Experienced (COPE: Carver *et al.,* 1989) measure revealed a

factor structure for African American college students based on cultural theory

that was different than the structure obtained for the measures' normative sample

(Greer, 2007). The culturally specific framework posited that African Americans'

coping processes were related to values, attitudes, and behaviors characterized by

a sense of unity amongst people of African descent (Asante, 1996; Greer, 2007).

Based on this theoretical frame, a latent factor analysis was conducted and

resulted in a four-factor structure that included: Interconnectedness, Spirituality,

Problem-Oriented Coping, and Disengagement. Interconnectedness was defined

as coping behavior that aimed to seek support for emotional and instrumental

reasons and venting of emotions (Greer, 2007). Spirituality was defined as coping

strategies that included recognizing a higher power or relying on a higher power

for assistance or to deal with problems (Greer, 2007). Problem-Oriented coping

strategies included specific behaviors directed towards a problem being

experienced (Greer, 2007). Disengagement coping behaviors were those that were

associated with denial, substance use or other attempts to disengage from a

situational stressor (Greer, 2007). Previous factors established by the creators of

the COPE included Problem Focused Coping, Emotion Focused Coping, and

Disengagement (Greer, 2007). These results suggest that culturally based coping

strategies related to inter-connectedness and spirituality are especially relevant to

African American young people.

Several theoretical models of the role of African American culture in

influencing youth have been developed. Two of theses models (e.g. Utsey model,

MMRI) were developed based on qualitative and quantitative data collected with

low income, urban youth, while the others were based on theory (Triple Quandry, TRIOS). A few of the tenets of these models have received empirical support. In particular, there is some evidence that collectivist and spiritual cultural values and beliefs influence the coping of African American youth. There is also evidence that these influences are beneficial. Future research is needed to develop theory based on these youths experience and to provide empirical support for such theory.

Contextual Influences on Coping

Theoretical models and empirical findings also highlight the influence of urban poverty and the many severe and chronic stressors associated with such poverty on the coping of low-income, urban African American youth. In the sections below, theoretical models of this relationship will be reviewed. Following a review of relevant theoretical models, empirical evidence of the influence of context on coping for low income, urban African American youth will be provided.

Theoretical models of coping for low income, urban youth suggest that context may influence the coping resources available to adolescents and may also have implications for developmental processes (Tolan & Grant, 2008). For example, while an adolescent may be African American in terms of their racial and cultural identity, they may have contextual experiences that differ from other African American adolescents based on their socioeconomic status (low income, middle income, upper income) or community of origin (urban vs. rural, inner city vs. suburban). Tolan and Grant (2008) have proposed a developmental-contextual

model of coping, which posits that stressful contexts, coping resources, and coping responses may interact, reciprocally, to influence the psychological outcome of inner city youth. The model suggests that for low income, urban, African American adolescents, contextual elements reflected by conditions associated with chronic, uncontrollable stressors may impact the ability to cope with specific stressors (Tolan & Grant, 2008). The model also suggests that context interacts with cultural and developmental processes to potentially influence coping patterns (Tolan & Grant, 2008).

Kliewer and colleagues (2006) have also proposed that neighborhood and community characteristics may contribute to the development of contextually relevant coping mechanisms for low income, urban African American adolescents. The Socialization of Coping with Community Violence model suggests that parents socialize their children to cope with specific stressors associated with the context in which they live (Kliewer, Sandler, & Wolchiks, 1994; Kliewer *et al.,* 2006). According to the model, parents influence their children's ability to cope with community violence through coaching, modeling, and by providing context for their experiences.

Neither of these theories of culturally relevant coping mechanisms were developed based on qualitative or quantitative data collected with low income, urban youth. While the Socialization of Coping with Community Violence model was based on qualitative data from the mothers of low income, urban children, children's report of socialization was not incorporated into the model (Kliewer *et al.,* 1994). Even so, several empirical studies have provided support for a number

of tenets of both models.

In particular, two factor analyses of measures of coping for adolescents provide empirical evidence of the influence of context on coping for low income, urban African American youth. One investigation sought to replicate coping typologies for low income, urban adolescents who were primarily African American on the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problems Experienced Scale (A-COPE; Patterson & McCubbin, 1998). The A-COPE was originally comprised of twelve scales representing coping for urban adolescents. The scales consisted of Venting Feelings, Seeking Diversions, Developing Self Reliance, Developing Social Support, Solving Family Problems, Avoiding Problems, Seeking Spiritual Support, Investing in Close Friends, Seeking Professional Support, Engaging in Demanding Activity, Being Humorous, and Relaxing (Tolan *et al.,* 2002; Patterson & McCubbin, 1987). Tolan and colleagues found that a seven-factor structure was more applicable to a group of low income, urban, minority adolescents than a factor structure established for other adolescents. Four of the seven factors were similar to factors identified in other conceptualizations of coping and included: Emotion Focused Coping, Distraction, Avoidance, and Parental/Family Support. The remaining factors were dissimilar from other findings and may represent more contextually relevant factors for low income, urban youth. Those factors included Venting Emotion, Positive Thinking, and Being Humorous (Tolan *et al.,* 2002). The authors also identified five person-centered coping style clusters: Support and Guidance Seekers, Minimizers, Emotional Substance Users, Emotion Focused Copers, and Complex Copers

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(Tolan *et al.,* 2002). Across those clusters, most of the African American

adolescents in the sample were characterized as Support/Guidance Seeking

Copers or Complex Copers (Tolan *et al.,* 2002). Based on these findings, it

appears that low income, urban African American adolescents may seek

assistance from individuals around them for support and guidance or combine

different coping mechanisms to deal with different types of stressors. Overall,

African American adolescents in the sample scored lower on scales of

psychopathology compared to Hispanic and White children exposed to similar

stressors suggesting the use of effective coping strategies by these youth (Tolan *et*

al., 2002).

In another factor analysis, Gaylord-Harden and colleagues found that the

structure of coping strategies for low-income, urban, African American youth

differed from those of European American, middle income youth on the

Children's Coping Strategies Checklist, a self-report coping checklist (CCSC:

Ayers, Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996; Gaylord-Harden *et al.,* 2008). Previous

factor analyses of the CCSC, demonstrated four distinct types of coping:

Avoidance, Distraction, Social Support-seeking, and Active coping (Ayers,

Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996). Results of the study by Gaylord-Harden and

colleagues (2008) revealed a three factor coping model for low income, urban,

African American youth. For these adolescents the items that contributed to the

Distraction subscale were not contextually relevant. As a result, the factors

Avoidance/Distraction, Social Support Seeking and Active Coping resulted in

better model fit and were deemed more contextually relevant. Additionally, youth

in the sample tended to fall into two categories of "copers," and primarily utilized either Social Support-seeking or Avoidant coping techniques (Gaylord-Harden *et al.,* 2008).

Other empirical evidence related to context suggests that parents living in impoverished communities characterized by high levels of violence are more likely to promote coping mechanisms that focus on safety precautions (Moore, Kliewer, Douglas, Hinton & Ray, 2005; Kliewer *et al.,* 2006). In keeping with parent instruction African American children have been to shown to endorse problem focused coping strategies including going to a parent for help or calling the police (Daley, Jennings, Beckett & Leashore, 1995; Constantine *et al.,* 2002). When dealing with stressors associated with community violence, these children also endorsed proactive avoidance strategies such as staying away from unsafe places or leaving the situation before trouble ensued (Kliewer *et al.*, 2006). Arousal reduction strategies and aggressive responses were endorsed by smaller numbers of the youth (around 25-27%) and ignoring was the least endorsed coping strategy (8% of youth) suggesting these strategies are less effective in this context (Kliewer *et al.*, 2006).

Unfortunately, there is also evidence that contexts such as urban poverty may limit the effectiveness of coping mechanisms such as social support seeking due to the stressful nature of such environments (Gorman & Tolan, 1998; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Zapert & Maton, 2000; Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). For example, in one study of the impact of violence exposure on low income, urban African American youth, researchers found that the benefits of

parent-provided social support were limited (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008).

Parental support may have been limited due to the chronic nature of stressors

faced by parents. Due to the fact that parents may have been overwhelmed by

their own experiences of stressors, they may have been less emotionally available

to support their children in their children's experience of similar stressors

(Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). Since previous research establishes that low

income, urban African Americans are exposed to heightened stressors linked to

the environment, it is important to further develop our understanding of the role of

context in the development and maintenance of specific coping strategies to deal

with such stressors.

Differences in Efficacy of Coping Strategies based on Context and Culture

Additional research has provided evidence that the effectiveness of coping

strategies may also be limited by stressors associated with urban poverty. In a

study of stress and coping for this population, researchers found that active coping

techniques were associated with negative psychological outcomes (Grant *et al.,*

2000). An example of an active coping technique that might actually have

negative implications if employed to deal with a particular stressor would be

hearing gun shots and then going outside to find the individuals who are shooting

or asking those individuals to stop shooting. Another example would be directly

confronting individuals engaged in drug trafficking near one's home and asking

them not to sell drugs there.

It is important to acknowledge the overlap between cultural and contextual

strategies. In a study by Grant and colleagues (2000), avoidant coping was the

only coping mechanism that provided a protective effect for low income, urban,

African American males in particular. Avoidant coping protected youth from the

negative psychological outcome associated with exposure to urban stressors. For

African American girls within the sample, religious coping was protective. The

authors suggested that avoidant coping allowed boys to escape possible danger

they might face if they responded to a situation inappropriately (i.e. externalizing

behaviors) (Grant *et al.,* 2000). Religious coping was surmised to be especially

effective for girls in the context of urban stress since it might be more acceptable

for girls to engage in activities related to religious participation. On the other

hand, it was concluded that some males may feel that open expressions of a need

for support in the context of religious activities are not aligned with masculinity.

Perhaps urban norms associated with hypermasculinity limit the extent to which

urban males engage in and benefit from religious coping.

Several theoretical models of the role of low income, urban context in

influencing youths' coping have been developed; however, few of these models

have been based on qualitative or quantitative data collected from low income,

urban adolescents. Some of the tenets of these models have received empirical

support and have even provided evidence of some overlap between contextual and

cultural factors. Future research is needed to understand the impact of contextual

influences from adolescents' perspectives.

Viewing Coping Strategies within a Cognitive, Behavioral and Social Framework

Within the developmental psychopathology literature, evidence based

coping interventions with adolescent populations have utilized principles of

cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to teach youth stress management skills and

new ways of coping (Kraag, Zeegers, Kok, Hosman, & Abu-Saad, 2006; Yahav &

Cohen, 2008; Hampel, Meier, & Kummel, 2008). CBT skills incorporating stress

management, problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, relaxation, and social

skills training are often a part of coping curricula (Hampel *et al.,* 2008). These

programs attempt to provide clinical and non-clinical populations with tools that

allow them to master stressful events over long periods of time (Hampel *et al.,*

2008). Such interventions have demonstrated effectiveness for treating anxiety,

depression, trauma, and have been used in more general interventions to improve

psychological functioning for children and adolescents (See Hampel *et al.,* 2008

for a full review).

There is evidence for the effectiveness of coping interventions in general,

and preliminary evidence for the incorporation of cultural components to these

interventions for low income, urban, African American youth (August, Lee,

Bloomquist, Realmuto, & Hektner, 2002). To date, few coping interventions have

incorporated aspects of both culture and context which would make such

interventions more relevant for this population (Huey & Polo, 2008; Barerra &

Castro, 2006; Miranda *et al.,* 2005). Additionally, when cultural and contextual

adaptations have been made to more specific interventions (focused on anxiety or

depression), few have incorporated components based on the unique perspectives

of low income, urban African American adolescents (Resnicow *et al.,* 2000;

Wright & Zimmerman, 2006; Guerra & Knox, 2008). Since researchers have

established that culture may moderate intervention effectiveness, future

interventions could benefit from the incorporation of both culture and context in intervention development (Guerra & Phillips-Smith, 2006; Guerra & Knox, 2008

Gaps in Our Knowledge: Rationale for this Study

In particular, the field has yet to incorporate both culture and context in coping models relevant for African American youth. While a number of culturally specific coping mechanisms related to African American culture have been proposed in the literature, it is less clear how culture interacts with context to predict coping within urban poverty (Constantine, Donnelly, & Meyers, 2002; Utsey, Bolden, Lanier & Williams, 2007). In addition to gaps in the literature specific to cultural influences on coping and specific to contextual influences on coping, there is also a significant gap in research that integrates these two influences in the lives of low-income, urban African American youth. An understanding of how these influences are integrated within the context of urban poverty is important for building a model of coping for low income, urban African American youth.

An ideal method for developing this understanding is qualitative research. Qualitative phenomenological research focuses on the commonalities shared by individuals with common experiences (Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark, & Morales, 2007). Such an approach is especially relevant for the development of an integrated coping model for low income, urban African American youth because it would allow researchers to understand the specific cultural and contextual elements that contribute to the ways low income, urban adolescents cope with the stressors of urban poverty.

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Focus groups in particular, represent a qualitative method that allows individuals to provide insight into the cultural norms, practices, and social and psychological processes of a specific group (Hughes & DuMont, 1993). Focus groups can be combined with survey data to provide a more complete picture of youth's experiences.

The current study used focus group methodology supplemented by survey data to address existing gaps in the literature related to cultural and contextual influences on the coping of low income, urban African American youth. This approach will inform the development of a culturally and contextually based coping model and ultimately a culturally and contextually relevant coping intervention for low income, urban African American adolescents. To address these goals, the study addressed the following research questions.

Research Questions

    I. How does being African American shape youth's coping strategies?

    II. How does living in a low income, urban environment shape urban, low income, African American youths' coping?

    III. What are adolescents', parents', and teachers' perceptions of the coping needs of low income, urban African American youth?

    IV. How can a culturally specific coping intervention best address the needs of low income, urban African American youth? What aspects of culture and/or context should be included to make such a program relevant for these youth?

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CHAPTER II

METHOD

Strategies of Inquiry for Culturally Based Coping Strategies

The present study was conducted as part of the development of a culturally relevant coping intervention for low income, urban African American youth. The larger study will result in the development and dissemination of a coping intervention that will incorporate mentoring and involvement in extracurricular activities to improve adolescents' ability to cope with stressors associated with urban life. The focus of this portion of the study is to understand adolescents' needs in terms of developing effective coping strategies. Contextual and cultural elements were addressed in order to develop an understanding of how specific coping mechanisms could be paired with specific stressors faced by youth (Grant, Tolan, Gaylord-Harden, & DuBois, manuscript in preparation). Qualitative data from focus groups with parents, teachers, and adolescents provided insight regarding culturally specific coping mechanisms and ways these mechanisms could be disseminated to low income, urban minority youth. Gaining insight into the contexts in which coping mechanisms are utilized or need to be developed, from the perspective of parents, teachers and adolescents allows for a more meaningful understanding and integration of specific coping mechanisms into a larger intervention (Creswell, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative methods, it is important to identify the role of the researcher to acknowledge the role of the researcher's perspectives (Creswell, 2003). My

primary role was to collect the qualitative and quantitative data. I served as the focus group facilitator and administrator of surveys. Additionally, I served as a liaison between the selected school and the community organizations involved in the larger coping intervention.

From a more personal perspective, I was educated in the same public school system as study participants and was raised in the same city. However, I was raised in a middle class, urban, neighborhood with residents who were primarily White and upper-middle class. Based on these facts, my school and community experiences were much different than those of the study participants. Nevertheless, I am a member of an ethnic minority group and I have faced some exposure to stressors associated with urban life simply on the basis of membership in this minority group.

I believe my experiences influenced the interpretations of data and as a result, I coded data with research assistants and engaged in member checking. Member checking is a process in which data are analyzed by researchers and then shared with research participants to obtain their perceptions of the interpretations made based on data analyses. The purpose of conducting data analysis with a group and conducting a member checking session was to decrease the likelihood that my personal biases and assumptions would dominate interpretations. For the present study, member-checking procedures involved presenting the results of the study to parent, teacher, staff, and student focus group participants and the advisory board in a general meeting. During this presentation, I asked individuals to provide feedback about the validity of study results.

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<u>Setting</u>

The units of analysis for this study were groups of students, teachers and staff members, and parents at an urban public elementary school located on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. Students, parents, teachers and staff members from the identified school were selected to compose the groups in this study due to the school's involvement in the development of a coping intervention for low-income urban African American adolescents. This school was selected because it is located in a community that is highly reflective of low income, urban settings. Ninety-nine and a half percent of students at this school are low income (as indicated by free or reduced lunch program participation) and 100% of students are African American (Chicago Public Schools, School Report Card, 2009). In 2009, standardized test results indicated that 41% of students at this school met state standards in reading performance and 41% of students met state standards in math performance. The feeder high school for the school, is 97.7% low income and 99.8% African American. In 2009, the dropout rate for this high school (14%) was almost twice as high as the district rate (8%) and four times as high as the state rate (3.5%) (Chicago Public Schools, School Report Card, 2009). Standardized test results indicate that, in 2009, 4% of students at the high school met state standards in reading and math performance (Chicago Public Schools, School Report Card, 2009).

Parents from another elementary school were later recruited for study participation. The second school is also a Chicago Public school located on the South Side of the city. The demographic composition of the school is 98.5%

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African American, 1.3% Hispanic and 98.3% low income (as indicated by free or

reduced lunch program participation). In 2009, standardized test results indicate

that 46.5% of students at this school met state standards in reading performance

and 61.3% of students met state standards in math performance (Chicago Public

Schools, School Report Card, 2009). The feeder high school for students at this

school has a demographic composition that is 69.4% African American, 23.4%

Hispanic and 98.4% low income (as indicated by free or reduced lunch program

participation). Standardized test results from 2009 indicate that 6.4% of students

met or exceeded state standards in reading and 3.2% of students met or exceeded

state standards in math performance (Chicago Public Schools, School Report

Card, 2009).

The neighborhood in which most of the adolescent participants live and

where the elementary schools and feeder high schools are located is in the center

of a large Midwestern city. The neighborhood is 97.8% African American. In

2000, the median household income of residents was $27,727 (U.S. Census 2000).

Thirty-one percent of residents live below the poverty line. Currently, the

neighborhood has the third highest murder rate in the entire city, although it has

recently experienced a 3.2% drop in murder during the year this study was

conducted (Chicago Area Policing Strategies, Chicago Police Department). As

part of urban renewal programs, the neighborhood recently became the home of a

re-developed community college and a large housing development sponsored by a

local church.

Research Participants

<u>Sampling</u>

Combinations of sampling techniques were employed for this study. Students, teachers, and parents were sampled utilizing homogenous sampling which involves sampling participants who are similar in a number of ways or share certain characteristics such as gender, race, or occupation (Krueger, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Homogenous sampling was used in this study in the following way: initially all student and teacher participants were affiliated with the selected school to some extent. With the exception of teachers, all participants resided in low income, urban, predominately African American communities.

Due to difficulty obtaining a sufficient number of parent participants from the primary partner school for the study, I employed convenience sampling to obtain additional participants. Convenience sampling techniques enable a researcher to recruit participants based on an individual's willingness to volunteer. As I informed people around the school about the study, I was approached by the administrator of an after school program who was a parent at another school in the Englewood community. The administrator indicated that other parents in the community might be interested in participating in the focus groups. With the permission of the school principal and my dissertation chair, the parent and I contacted parents from the school identified by the parent.

<u>Case Selection</u>

<u>Adolescents.</u>

In order to recruit adolescents, I presented the study to the 7th and 8th grade students during their lunch period or classroom prep period (see Appendix for

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verbal recruitment script). Adolescents were given flyers, consent, assent and permission forms to take home for themselves and their parents (in case parents were also interested in participating). Those adolescents who returned completed consent, assent and permission forms were invited to participate in the study.

Nineteen 7th and 8th grade students at the originally selected school participated in the study. The mean age of participants was 13.1 years ($SD= 0.73$). The gender of students was almost equal with nine males and 10 females participating in the study. All adolescent participants endorsed being African American. Seven of the students were in the 7th grade and twelve students were in the 8th grade. Adolescents in the seventh and eighth grades were invited to participate because they represent an adolescent group in preparation for the transition between elementary school and high school. Based on their age and grade, they may experience heightened levels of stressors associated with adolescence. Additionally, these adolescents may be mature enough to identify coping strategies that are applicable to a number of different stressors.

Four, single gender focus groups, with four to six different participants, were conducted. In the first focus group there were five male participants (two 7th graders, three 8th graders), in the second focus group there were four male participants (two 7th graders, two 8th graders), in the third focus group there were six female participants (two 7th graders, four 8th graders), and in the fourth group there were four female participants (one 7th grader, three 8th graders). Single gender groups were conducted to allow for possible differences in experiences and maturation that may be related to gender (though this was not a research

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hypothesis).

<u>Parents.</u>

Once permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Public

School Research Review Board (RRB), I recruited parents by sending recruitment

flyers home with students after speaking to them about the study. The flyers

provided contact information of the researcher (email address and phone number).

Attempts were made to contact parents by phone, if their children indicated that

their parent might be interested in participating. Parents of children who received

parental permission and consent to participate also were recruited by making

phone calls to those parents to inform them about the opportunity for parent

participation. The parent advocate at that school also made phone calls to parents

at the additional school. Even though the parents from the additional school did

not have children who attended the selected school, they lived in the same

community. Additionally, their children attended a school that was

demographically similar to the selected school.

Fifteen parents participated in the study. Fifty percent of the parents were

ages 31-41, 21% (3 participants) of parent group participants were 20-30 years

old, and 21% (3 participants) of parent group participants were 42-52 years old.

Only one male participated in the parent focus groups. The majority of parent

group participants (78.6%) indicated they were raising their biological children

while three parent group participants (21.4%) indicated they were raising

grandchildren and one parent indicated raising an adopted child.

There were five parents in the first focus group (100% female), five

parents in the second focus group (100% female), and five parents in the third

focus group (one male, four females). The majority of parents identified as

African American, with one parent indicating mixed racial background. Three of

the parents who participated in focus groups were from the alternative school and

twelve parents were parents of children who attended the originally identified

school.

   <u>Teachers and Staff.</u>

   School staff members were selected for recruitment based on

recommendations from the school principal. Faculty and staff were also recruited

during a school meeting following a presentation of the goals of the study and

recruited participants. Homogenous sampling was utilized to identify teachers and

staff members who taught 7th or 8th grade in the past two years or who worked

closely with 7th or 8th graders in the past two years. Homogenous sampling

ensured that teachers and staff members had the shared experience of working

with children in the age range targeted by this project, which may increase their

ability to provide accurate information about coping for these youth.

   Eight teachers and staff members at the selected school consented to

participate. Two separate focus groups were conducted with four teachers and

staff members per group. Teachers and staff focus groups had smaller numbers of

participants than other groups because there were fewer teachers and staff

members available than students and parents. Two separate groups were

conducted to provide more data.

   Seven teachers (87.5%) and one counselor (12.5%) participated in the

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teacher/staff focus groups. Three teachers were the homeroom teachers of a 7th or 8th grade class within the past two years while seven of the teachers had worked with 7th or 8th grade classes over the past two years in some other capacity (i.e. computer classes, after school programs, tutoring, etc.). Seventy-five percent of the teachers were African American and 25% of the teachers were Caucasian. All of the teachers indicated they taught at the identified school for three years or less; however, there was a large range in the number of years the teachers taught in any school system (from three months to 29 years).

In the first teacher/staff focus group there were four participants (two males, two females). Two of the members of this group were European American and two members of the group were African American. In the second teacher group there were four participants, all of whom were female and African American.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Characteristic	N	%	Characteristic	N	%
Adolescent Gender			Parent Gender		
Female	10	52.6	Female	14	93
Adolescent Grade			Parent Age		
7th Grade	7	36.8	20-30	3	21
8th Grade	12	63.2	31-41		50
			42-52	3	21
School Staff Position			School Staff Gender		
Teachers	7	87.5	Female	6	75
Counselors	1	12.5			
School Staff Ethnicity					
African American	6	75			
Caucasian	2	25			

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Procedure

A multiple-category focus group design was employed to collect data on 7th and 8th grade students, parents, and teachers. A multiple category focus group design is one in which focus groups are conducted with different audiences, so that comparisons can be made between categories and within categories (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Multiple category designs are often completed sequentially since the order in which focus groups are collected may be related to the goals of the study and may contribute to the amount of data generated. Conducting groups sequentially allowed for information generated in one group to influence what happened in the next focus group. For example, in the student focus groups, students discussed community locations that were safe or unsafe, supportive or unsupportive. In the parent focus groups, parents were asked specific questions about community locations identified by the students, in the previously held student focus groups.

Prior to conducting focus groups, co-investigators on the larger grant (Kathryn E. Grant Ph.D., Patrick Tolan, Ph.D., Noni Gaylord-Harden, Ph.D., & David DuBois, Ph.D.) provided feedback on the proposed focus group questions. Feedback from the co-investigators ensured that focus group questions adequately addressed the research questions and larger study needs.

Focus groups were implemented in accordance with recommended procedures. Participation was voluntary and based on active, informed consent procedures. Each group took one to two hours to complete, with an optional 15 minute break in the middle (DuBois, Lockherd, Reach, & Para, 2003). Focus

group participants were asked to block out 2 ½ hours for the focus groups so that paper and pencil measures could be completed prior to or after the group discussion. Each focus group participant was provided with a $50 Target or Best Buy gift card and a meal as an incentive and token of appreciation for participation in the focus group.

Focus groups were co-moderated with one undergraduate or graduate-level focus group assistant. The undergraduate and graduate-level focus group assistants were members of the Stress and Coping Lab at DePaul University. All focus groups were audio-taped to ensure that a maximum amount of data was captured and recorded. Notes were also taken to capture non-verbal data during the group administration. The focus group co-moderators took notes, and assisted with the distribution of materials and timekeeping during the actual focus group sessions. Assistants were trained in one session before the focus group administration to review the focus group protocols, provide instructions on how they could be most helpful during the group, and to address any questions or concerns they had. The focus groups were transcribed (verbatim) by a professional transcription service.

Focus groups were conducted at the identified school in a classroom designated as a community resource room. During focus groups, each focus group member was asked to come up with a pseudonym that was used to identify him or her instead of using actual names. This was done to protect the confidentiality of the research participants. Additionally, participants were instructed that they were not allowed to use any real names that could be used to identify people as a

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measure to maintain the privacy of others. Finally, focus group participants were

instructed that the discussion that occurred in the focus group was private and

should not be shared with others. I also informed all participants of my duty to

report should I become aware that any child was in danger of harming himself or

herself or others; or in the event that it was revealed that a child was being harmed

or neglected. Participants were asked to complete a debriefing form to ensure that

sensitive issues were addressed appropriately.

<u>Qualitative Data</u>

<u>Focus Group Protocol.</u>

The focus groups were structured with open-ended questions and probes

about coping for low income, urban minority adolescents (See Appendix A for

full interview protocol). Focus group protocols were separated into three parts

including an introduction, discussion, and closing segment. The introduction

segments included the following parts: 1.) Introduction and background, 2.)

Purpose of the focus group, 3.) Role of the researcher, assistant, and participants,

4.) Focus group participant instructions, 5.) Participant selection, 6.)

Confidentiality, 7.) Timing discussion. The discussion segment introduced the

discussion questions for the focus group participants that focused on 1.) Culture

and coping, 2.) Culturally specific coping mechanisms, 3.) Contextually based

coping mechanisms.

The exact protocol for the discussion segment of the focus groups

depended on the target audience. The discussion segment for students began with

students being asked to respond to specific questions related to culture, context,

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and how they cope with stress. The discussion segment for parents began with specific questions related to stress and how culture influences the coping strategies they model for their children for coping with stress. Parents also addressed contextual elements that they believed influence their children's ability to cope and the best ways to incorporate those elements into a broader coping intervention. The discussion segment of the teacher/staff focus groups began with members responding to questions about the types of stressors faced by students (academic, exposure to violence, etc.) and perceptions of the ways students cope with those stressors. Teachers and staff also discussed specific techniques they suggest to their students in order to improve students' coping skills. The closing segment for all groups addressed questions participants had and provided information about how participants could contact me with further questions.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was collected from students, parents, and teachers. A survey packet was administered to focus group participants. Completion of the measures took approximately 20 minutes.

Apparatus and Materials

Demographics.

Information was obtained regarding participants' age, grade, gender, and race and ethnicity. Questions designed to assess this information composed a demographic questionnaire.

Stressors.

*Multicultural Events Schedule for Adolescents (MESA) (*Gonzales *et al.,*

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1996). Students complete the Multicultural Events Schedule for Adolescents

(MESA) to assess the specific types of stressors they faced over the past year. The

MESA is based on previous scales developed at the Program for Prevention

Research in addition to the *Adolescent Perceived Events Scale* (Compas, 1987)

and the *Adolescent Life Events Checklist*, (Johnson & McCutcheon, 1982) and

validated through focus group research with 105 adolescents of multicultural

backgrounds who lived in urban environments (Gonzalez *et al.,* 1996).

Adolescents respond "Yes" or "No" to each item on the checklist based on their

experience of the event in the past year. The eight domains of life stress assessed

by the MESA include: Family Trouble / Change, Family Conflict, Peer Hassles /

Conflict, School Hassles, Economic Stress, Perceived Discrimination, Language

Conflicts, and Perceived Violence / Personal Victimization. Scores on the MESA

have been found to be related to conduct problems and depression for African

American, European American, English speaking Mexican American, and

Spanish speaking Mexican American adolescents (Gonzales *et al.,* 1996). Test

retest reliability of the MESA has been found to be .71 (Gonzales *et al.,* (1996).

  Racial Identity.

   Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI, Sellers *et al.,* 1998).

Parents completed the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) to

assess levels of African American racial identity. The MIBI consists of 56 items

that assess five areas of racial identity. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert

Scale that ranges from 1-Strongly Disagree to 7-Strongly Agree. The four areas of

racial identity assessed by the measure include centrality, salience, regard, and

ideology (Sellers *et al.,* 1998). Internal consistency for the scales ranged from alphas of .51 to .75 for a sample of young adults (Sellers *et al.,* 1998).

For the purposes of this study, the Centrality subscale items were administered. The Centrality subscale assesses the extent to which an individual normatively defines him or herself in terms of his or her racial group membership (Sellers *et al*., 1998). Centrality serves as an indicator of whether race is a core part of an individual's self-concept and also helps identify the hierarchies of different identities individuals employ when defining themselves. Some examples of items include, "My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people," and "I have a strong attachment to other Black people." There are a total of eight items on the scale. Scale scores are created by reverse coding negatively worded items and then averaging across all items within a particular scale (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997). Internal consistency for this sample was 0.69. For the purposes of this study, only parents completed this measure.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t, Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008*).* The MIBI-Teen assesses three areas of racial identity for teens including ideology, centrality, and regard. Construct validity and external validity have been established for samples of middle school and high school students (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the 3-item Centrality subscale was utilized (α= 0.63) (Scottham *et al.,* 2008). The MIBI-t Centrality items are responded to using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5) (Scottham *et al.,* 2008). These items include: ''I feel

close to other Black people'' and ''I have a strong sense of belonging to other

Black people," and "If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first

things that I would say is that I'm black." Higher scores on the centrality

subscales indicate that race plays a more significant role in an adolescent's self-

concept (Scottham *et al*., 2008; Sellers *et al*., 2006). Scale scores are created by

reverse coding negatively worded items and then averaging across all items

within a particular scale (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997).

Internal consistency for this sample was 0.64. Only adolescents completed this

measure.

      <u>Debriefing Form.</u>

      Focus group participants completed a debriefing form following the

conclusion of focus groups to ensure that sensitive topics or issues were addressed

appropriately and to help participants deal with issues that may have come up

during the group (See Appendix for full form). The form consists of seven

questions about group exercises, and comfort with discussion content. It also

provides the contact information of the researcher. In the event that students

indicated on the form that they needed additional support, the students were

referred to the school counselor. Additional referrals for psychological services

were provided as needed.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

      In the first phase of data analysis, research team members reviewed

transcripts to assess the accuracy of transcription. Since a professional company

in another state transcribed audiotapes, some pronunciations of words and

colloquial terms were misinterpreted and transcribed incorrectly. The data

analysis team read transcripts, made corrections to words that were misspelled,

and edited colloquial terms that were mistaken for other words. The ability to

make such edits was largely based on the context of larger groups of data (i.e. the

entire paragraph) and based on the reviewer's knowledge of focus group content.

Three out of five members of the data analyses team also served as focus group

co-facilitators and were present to make interpretations of focus group content in

unclear areas of the transcript.

 After transcripts were reviewed, five research assistants were assigned

two transcripts each for preliminary coding in Microsoft Word. There was some

overlap in coding particularly large transcripts (Teacher Focus Group #1 and

Parent Focus Group #1) since the transcripts reflected focus groups with almost

two hours of data. Coding larger transcripts more than once allowed the research

team to ensure that the transcripts were reviewed thoroughly.

The research team established content categories based on the research

questions. Establishing content categories provided a broader structure for

additional, more specific coding (Morgan & Krueger, 1998; DuBois, Lockerd,

Reach, & Parra, 2003). After establishing content codes, individual statements

were coded in relation to these previously established categories. Additionally,

more specific codes within categories were established as necessary, based on

individual statements from the focus groups.

Codes and the Exploratory Thematic Outline.

In qualitative analysis, codes, or labels for assigning meaning to data, are

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identified and connected to various pieces of data throughout the text (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). In order to accomplish this task, research assistants were

instructed to compile quotes from transcripts into a thematic outline. Assistants

were given examples of ways to code statements related to the research questions

and were asked to initially code data into broad themes based on the four research

questions. In order to ensure that data could be connected with the particular

group from which it came, information identifying the focus group source and

informant type were provided next to each statement (i.e. Teacher Group1 (TG1);

See Appendix C). Next, assistants established themes within those broad

categories based on the language used by study participants to describe stress,

coping, and intervention development suggestions. Finally, the research assistants

compiled an outline of the themes, and placed appropriate data into the outline

under each theme.

After research assistants completed thematic outlines individually, the

research team met to discuss the sub-themes that were established as part of each

broad theme (i.e. research questions). This discussion led to a consensus about

themes that overlapped or were disparate. Any themes that were repetitive or

overlapped were condensed. After reaching consensus, the outlines were

compiled into one document, similar to a codebook, which was used for further

analyses.

Card Sort.

In the second phase of data analysis the research team established inter-

rater reliability for the coding of individual statements according to the content

categories. To accomplish these steps, a card sort similar to the Attachment Q-sort used in developmental psychology research was conducted (AQS; Waters & Deane, 1985). Similar to the Q-sort this card sort consisted of a large number of cards with one statement from each focus group being placed on an individual card. A total of 150 statements were randomly selected from the nine focus groups transcripts. Each statement was assigned an identification number that was a combination of the focus group type and the order in which it was randomly selected. For instance, a statement with an identification number TG1-14 was identified as the 14th randomly selected statement from the first Teacher Focus Group. Each of the 150 statements was placed on separate index cards along with their identification numbers.

The research assistants were divided into pairs (two groups) and independently (within their pairs) assigned each card to categories based on study research questions. The cards were sorted twice. First the cards were sorted into broad general themes: Influence of Being African American on Coping, Influence of Low Income Urban Environment, Intervention Development, Parent and Teacher Perceptions. These broad themes were derived from research questions. After the cards were sorted into broad general categories, they were further sorted into specific categories within each broad category. These themes were developed based on the discussion of focus group participants. For the Influence of Being African American theme, cards were further sorted into five themes: Religion/Spirituality, Social Support/Interconnectedness, Prominent Figures/Cultural Heritage, and Focus on Problem or Emotion. For the Low

Income Urban Context theme, cards were sorted into four themes: Experiences or

Perceptions in Neighborhood, Coping with Neighborhood, Neighborhood Places,

and Relationships in Neighborhood. For the Intervention Development Theme

cards were sorted into four themes: Culture, Context, Activities, and Other

Suggestions. Finally, for the Parent Perceptions and Teacher Perceptions cards

were sorted into four themes: Culture, Context, Family, and Economics.

Categories were established prior to the card sort, after the preliminary outline

was established.

Coders were given sheets on which to write the identifying information for

each card under the appropriate theme. After each coding team coded all 150

statements and completed coding sheets, inter-rater reliability was established. To

establish inter-rater reliability another research assistant compared the card sort

sheets to determine the statements for which the pairs reached agreement or

disagreement. Each theme was assigned a number so that the data could be

entered into SPSS to calculate Cohen's kappa statistic for inter-rater reliability.

The Cohen's kappa coefficient for inter-rater reliability was .791 and was deemed

acceptable. For the cards on which there was disagreement, the research team

came to consensus about the most appropriate theme for the card. In some cases,

randomly selected statements were not relevant to any of the themes or research

questions and were not included in the sort.

Affinity Diagrams.

Quotes from the card sort were placed into coding charts called affinity

diagrams utilizing the affinity process. The affinity process is a variant of the Q-

sort procedure that has been used in previous focus group research (Brassard, 1989; Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998; DuBois, *et al.*, 2003). In the affinity process, several individuals work together to combine similar codes into larger codes and categories based on common themes in the data to create affinity diagrams (Brassard, 1989; DuBois *et al.*, 2003). Affinity diagrams are diagrams in which similar groupings of codes are joined together and arranged hierarchically (Brassard, 1989; DuBois *et al.*, 2003). These diagrams provide a succinct, visual representation of the data.
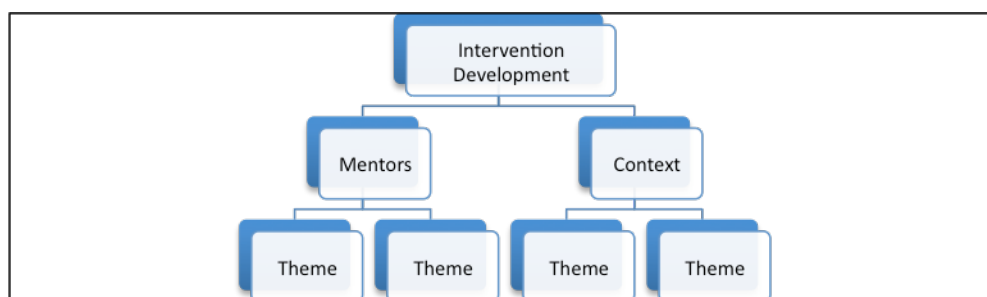
Figure 1. Example of an Affinity Diagram

One affinity diagram was created for each theme: Influence of African American Culture, Influence of Low Income Urban Environment, Parent and Teacher Perspectives, and Intervention Recommendations. Separate diagrams were completed for the Influence of African American Culture and Low Income Urban Environment themes to address adolescent perceptions separately from teacher and parent perceptions (which were combined). The purpose of creating separate diagrams for these themes was to distinguish adolescents' perspectives from adult perspectives since adolescents are the focus of the coping model (See Appendix C for affinity diagrams for each theme across subgroups with examples of quotes).

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CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

In the present study, quantitative data were analyzed for trends only, since power and reliability were limited by the small sample size (De Veaux, Velleman, & Bock, 2010). Descriptive statistics were utilized to understand stress levels, racial identity, and neighborhood variables.

Students.

Multicultural Events Schedule for Adolescents (MESA).

Means and Standard Deviations were calculated on the MESA, based on adolescents' self-report of stressors experienced in the past 6 months. The most frequently endorsed stressors were: "You had a serious problem with a teacher or principal," "A close family member died," "You saw a student who was discriminated against or treated badly," "You had something of value (valued over $5) stolen," "You had an argument or fight with a friend."

Students in the sample endorsed some stressors less frequently. For example, only 5.3% of the sample endorsed the statement, "You were pressured to do drugs or drink alcohol." Similarly, only 10% of the sample endorsed the statement, "You were pressured against your will to join a gang." Almost no students endorsed the statement, "You heard other people making jokes about your ethnic group or racial heritage."

Table 1.

Multicultural Events Schedule for Adolescents

Event	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percent Endorsed by Sample
Parent lost his/her job	1.21	.41	21.1%
You had a serious problem with a teacher or principal	1.68	.47	68.4%
You were threatened with a weapon	1.11	.32	10.5%
Your parents separated or divorced	1.31	.48	31.6%
You did poorly on an exam or school assignment	1.47	.51	47.4%
You were excluded from a group because of your race, ethnicity, or culture	1.05	.23	5.3%
A close family member was seriously ill or injured	1.44	.51	42.1%
Kids made fun of you because of the way you look	1.37	.50	36.8%
A teacher of principal criticized you in front of other students	1.68	2.27	15.8%
You were unfairly accused of something because of your race ethnicity	1.21	.42	21.1%
A close family member or friend died	1.68	.48	68.4%
You saw a student who was treated badly or discriminated against	1.58	.51	57.9%
You moved far away from family and friends	1.26	.45	26.3%
Your parent(s) remarried	1.05	.23	5.3%
You had something of value (valued over $5) stolen	1.58	.51	57.9%
You were pressured to do drugs or drink alcohol	1.05	.23	5.3%
You heard other people making jokes about your ethnic group or racial heritage	1.00	1	0
You were attacked by someone not in your family	1.21	.42	21.1%
You were pressured against your will to join a gang	1.11	.32	10.5%
Someone broke into your home or damaged it	1.26	.45	26.3%
Friends criticized you for hanging out with other groups	1.32	.48	31.6%
Someone threatened to beat you up	1.16	.37	15.8%
You were called a racial name that was a putdown.	1.42	.51	42.1%
You had an argument or fight with a friend	1.63	.50	63.2%
Someone put you down for practicing the traditions or customs of your race, ethnicity, culture, or religion	1.16	.37	15.8%
Other kids tried to fight with you	1.5	.51	47.4%
A close friend died	1.17	.38	15.8%

Note: N=19, 1=Yes, 2=No

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen Version (MIBI-t).

Means and standard deviations were calculated for students' endorsements of

statements on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). The

Centrality subscale assesses the extent to which an individual normatively

emphasizes his or her racial group membership as part of his/her overall self-

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concept (Scotham, Sellers, Nguyen, 2008). The measure was a 5-point scale. On

the item, "I feel close to other Black people," the Mean score for the sample was

4.36 (*SD* = 1.30) indicating that the students agreed strongly with this statement.

On the item, "I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people," the mean

score for the sample was 4.26 (*SD*=1.19) also indicating that the students agreed

with the statement. On the item, "If I were to describe myself to someone, one of

the first things that I would say is that I'm Black," the mean score for the sample

was 3.74 (*SD* = 1.82) indicating the students had more neutral responses related to

this statement.

Table 2.

MIBI-teen Means and Standard Deviations

MIBI-t Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
"I feel close to other Black people."	4.36	1.30
"I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people."	4.26	1.19
If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things I would say is that I'm Black."	3.73	1.82

Note: N=19, 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree

Parents.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity.

Parents were administered the Centrality Scale of the MIBI to assess their

racial identity. This measure uses a 7-point scale. The item endorsed by parents

with the most agreement was: "In general, being Black is an important part of my

self-image" *(M=6.23, SD=1.76).* The item endorsed by parents with the least

agreement was "My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people" *(M=4.23,*

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SD=2.38).

Table 3.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Parent Report)

MIBI Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself (reverse scored)	2.62	2.06
In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image	6.23	1.79
My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people	4.23	2.39
Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am (reverse scored)	3.54	2.88
I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people	5.69	1.70
I have a strong attachment to other Black people	5.92	1.12
Being Black is an important reflection of who I am	5.77	1.83
Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships (reverse scored)	3.46	1.98

Note: N=13, 1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree

Debriefing Form.

The debriefing form was given to all study participants following the focus

group. None of the study participants indicated significant distress.

Qualitative Results

Research Question 1: How does being African American shape youth's coping

strategies?

After thoroughly reading and categorizing focus group data, four broad

themes of culturally based coping strategies related to African American culture

were identified. The content areas related to the influence of being African

American on culture were labeled: Religion or Spirituality, Interconnectedness,

Elements of Cultural Heritage, and Focus on Emotions. The affinity diagram

representing these themes and quotes related to these themes is presented below.
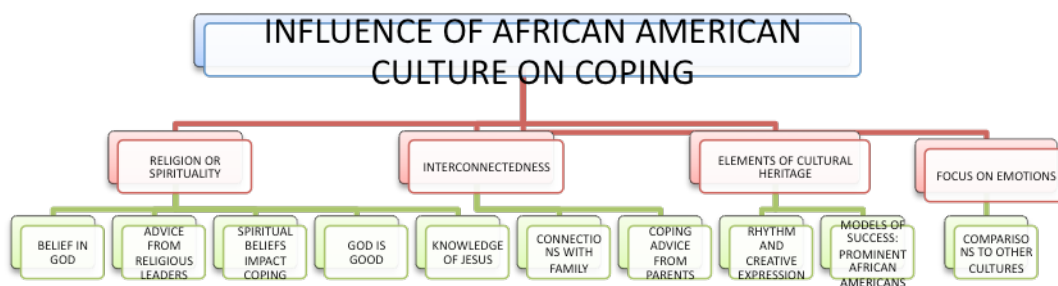
Figure 2. Affinity Diagram: Influence of African American Culture on Coping

Influence of African American Culture on Coping

    Religion or Spirituality.

    Students, parents and teachers were asked to consider the ways that religion or spirituality contributed to African American youth's coping. Responses to this question differed by group; however, there were some similarities, particularly for the parent and student subgroups. Students, parents, and teachers indicated that the following strategies had an impact on coping: belief in God, advice from religious leaders, applying spiritual beliefs, the belief that "God is good," and knowledge of Jesus.

        Belief in God.

    Participants indicated that believing in God was an important method for coping with stress. Belief in God was defined as the acknowledgement that there is "a God," or that a God exists. This belief in God was connected with the additional religious practices of reading the Bible or going to church. The following quotes provide examples of how the combination of a spiritual belief (belief in God) and religious practices (church attendance or reading the Bible) were viewed as protective against stress for these youth.

> *People always go to church, and pray to God and ask for blessing and stuff." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*
>
> *"Most people go to the church, most people read their Bible. It's a lot of different ways you get rid of stress by your belief in God." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

    Belief in God was linked to church attendance. Parents and adolescents indicated that adolescents attended church occasionally with their parents or with family members other than their parents.

> *"Well, actually, I'm not into Church and those things, but my kids attend. Well, all my kids went to St. Benedict, so they go to Church. I go sometimes, but they go with my sister*

every week…Um-hum. They've been baptized and everything.…" (Parent Group Member)

"My daughter goes to church when her grandma does…yeah my daughter prays." (Parent Group Member)

"Like sometimes, my Auntie goes to church and I go with her." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

"Because I sometimes go to church. I go to my grandma's house to go to church because ain't no near church around where we be living at, not a good one. So I be going over to my grandma's house then." (Male Adolescent Group Member)

Parents indicated that while they do not always attend church, they believe in God. Parents indicated that they were "God fearing," suggesting that spirituality is an important coping strategy.

"We don't go to church, but we — We don't all go to church, but we-I'm a God fearing woman." (Parent Group Member)

Some parents indicated they did not participate in some religious practices such as attending church. These parents also did not believe church attendance was necessary to learn coping skills. This belief seemed to be linked to some mistrust of religious figures. This mistrust, as explained by one parent, is linked to differences in socio-economic status and the suspicion that some religious figures have too many "worldly" possessions. Nevertheless, parents reported that mistrust in religious figures or establishments did not keep them from believing in God or engaging in spiritual activities.

"But, see, they don't disregard our – I believe in God. Okay. But I just don't trust pastors preaching on [inaudible]. [Inaudible] – my uncle got one of the biggest churches on the Westside, drive three or four Mercedes." (Parent Group Member)

Advice from religious leaders.

Adolescent participants agreed that obtaining advice from religious figures such as pastors could be helpful in dealing with stress. "Advice from religious leaders" was defined as adolescents seeking support from a pastor in order to

determine ways to deal with a stressful situation. Specifically, participants

indicated that they might talk to a pastor about when they are feeling angry.

> *"One time, I came in church and I was kind of angry, and the preacher had talked to me. He took his personal time to talk to me and told me that God won't put me in something I can't handle, and we talked about that. It helped me out." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

> *"Go to church. I sometimes talk to my pastor." (Male Adolescent Group Member)*

Spiritual Beliefs Impact Coping.

Focus group participants expressed the idea that spiritual beliefs or

practices are helpful for coping with stress. The theme, "Spiritual Beliefs Impact

Coping," was a theme derived from adolescent and parent group data linked to the

spiritual belief, "God won't never put you in a situation that you can't handle."

Participants suggested that this belief allowed them to understand that even

though negative things happen, God will protect the individual and enable him/her

to persevere. Two female adolescent focus group participants indicated that when

dealing with stressful situations, their belief in God was related to the idea that

God would protect them from situations that might be difficult to "handle." These

adolescents expressed the belief that besides protecting them from difficult

situations, God would not ever put them into stressful situations they could not

deal with.

> *"One way you can get out of stress with religion is you believe in God, you will probably think that things happen for a reason. And then when you look back, you will think it happened for a good reason and God won't never put you in a situation that you can't handle, that's too big for you. So that can help you out, too." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

> *"I'm use to seeing here, a lot of people saying, "God don't give you nothing that you can't handle," or something like that, and I think it's true, because if He feel that you can't handle this, He will not like give it to you, not put it on your plate. If He said we couldn't handle this conversation, we wouldn't be here. If I knew I couldn't handle this conversation, I would've just left out the door." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

<u>God is good.</u>

Another theme related to spiritual beliefs or practices was the idea that,

"God is good." "God is good," is defined as the belief that God provides the

things individuals need and is good. One parent indicated that giving thanks to

God and talking about how "good" God is with her children helped them to

remember the good things about life.

> *"So, I say you got to thank God. They are good. I say and God is good to you. He say, "You know what Cuz, you right." (Parent Group Member)*

Another conceptualization of the "goodness" of God was linked to the

belief that it was necessary to "fear God" and acknowledge that he is good. One

parent indicated that "fearing" or acknowledging the goodness of God was a

necessary belief to which her children should ascribe.

> *"I'm a very God fearing woman. And like I tell my kids, if you're not God fearing, you need to leave my home because first of all, I believe in him and believe me, he's good to me all the time." (Parent Group Member)*

Additionally, an adolescent participant indicated that expressing thanks to

God for his goodness was an important way of keeping life circumstances in

perspective.

> *"Yeah, like before I eat I pray for my food. Thank God for giving me this food because people my age don't have food, have clothes on their back. I just thank God for everything he just do for me." (Male Adolescent Group Member)*

<u>Knowledge of Jesus.</u>

Parents stated that having a, "Knowledge of Jesus," was an important

coping strategy for dealing with conflict. The sub-theme "Knowledge of Jesus,"

reflects a socialization message communicated by parents to their children. The

message suggests that when others treat an individual poorly, their responses to

that treatment should reflect the practices of Jesus or be morally superior (e.g.

turn the other cheek). Parents indicated that knowledge of how Jesus Christ would

respond in such situations was important.

> *"I tell my daughter, you shouldn't care what people say because they talked about Jesus Christ, and he died for us all. You ain't no better than him. Let people talk. People can say what they want. I say, I don't care."(Parent Group Member)*

The question, "What would Jesus do?" was another factor that arose when

participants were asked to consider the ways religion or spirituality could help

them deal with stress.

> *"So now, I tell him, every time he asks me something he says, mom, I don't want to talk to this boy because he did this in class. I'm like, "What would Jesus do? Would he turn his back on you and not speak to you because you did something?" He was like, yeah, you're right. Always think what would Jesus do in the situation. Like, you're gonna do something wrong, walk into a store and hmm, I'm gonna steal, what would Jesus do? He's watching. What would he do? So he's like, okay. I just try to make him keep thinking of that." (Parent Group Member)*

In general, teachers held very different views of the religious or spiritual

coping. One teacher voiced the opinion that religion was not necessarily the best

way to change students' behaviors or teach coping skills. This teacher cited

growing up with his/her religious experiences as the source of the belief that

religion might not be important

> *"I grew up in the most religious of families and went to religious middle school and religious college – that's not it. Religion is not the best way to change someone's actions." (Teacher Group Member)*

Interconnectedness.

Connections with family.

Adolescent and parent group participants indicated that strong ties to

family were important sources of support for coping. The sub-theme

"Connections with Family" was defined as talking with family members for

advice about ways to cope with stressors or life in general. Parents indicated they

talked to their adolescents to learn more about how their adolescents cope with

situations.

> *"We talk every day before they go to bed, we talking. What's going on, how was school, what's on your mind? I pay attention to my kids. I'm attentive to my kids. I know the way they move, they react. If they – I know when something is wrong." (Parent Group Member)*

Parents expressed apprehension that if they did not talk to their

adolescents, the adolescents might experience negative situations or make bad

choices.

> *"It's the minute you let up on them, something's going on and something's going wrong, somewhere, and I just be on them. I just talk. And I tell them, ya'll may look at me like I'm crazy talking until I'm blue in the face, but when it's too late, you better hope and pray that it don't be too late that you hear me. They hear me and I know my kids hear me." (Parent Group Member)*

Adolescents also indicated that getting advice from family members was

important when dealing with stressful situations. One adolescent indicated that

she and her mother engaged in role-plays in order to deal with stressful situations.

> *"Me and my mom, we sit down and just talk about stuff. We just talk about what I do today in school like that… If it happened in school, she will say, go back and play what happened. So me and her just talk and we'll just be acting stuff out and stuff." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Another adolescent indicated that talking to his family member provided

the opportunity to vent about the situation and then laugh about it.

> *"Like when we have family reunions and stuff, we all sit down and talk. Like when I had things that I think he should know, we go to his house, we talk about it, he gives me his [inaudible] and ideas and stuff what he think about it. Then we, like he said, we just crack jokes about it, and then next day act like it never happened." (Male Adolescent Group Member)*

Participants also discussed relying on extended family members for love

and support. Adolescent focus group participants talked at length about the role of

female extended family members, especially aunts and grandmothers.

> *"...But she is like the best grandma, because when my mother was pregnant she had to stop working, because she was so low... She couldn't balance anything during her whole pregnancy, and my grandma she bought us everything, and way even before that. We was wearing uniforms. She was like a real good grandma. Any single thing we want: shoes, coat – she would just get it…"(Female Adolescent Group Member)*

According to the adolescents these family members provided financial support, took them to church, or were good people to talk to for advice.

> "...So I just ask them, and my auntie, I ask her when I know that I need something, and my momma can't get it at that time, which it be random, but I just ask my auntie." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

> "My grandma… she like, "Anything you want, just ask me for it." So I was like, if I want my phone bill paid, she'd give it to me. If I want clothes, she'd give it to me. Anything I want, she'll give it to me." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

Parent group participants differed in their opinions of turning to extended family members for support, sometimes due to strained family relations. Most parent group participants indicated that family members were not always good sources of support.

> "Well, it all depends on your family. If you get along with your family like our family… because one family member will disrupt the whole situation." (Parent Group Member)

A number of parents in one focus group indicated that family relationships were often impaired. The parent's in this group suggested that familial discord was a problem related to African American culture. Parent's cited family division as the source of this discord.

> "Yeah, that's a problem in our community. That's a problem in the African American culture with our families being segregated and divided. This family don't want to mingle with this family, this first cousin don't want to see that first cousin." (Parent Group Member)

Coping advice from parents.

When asked about specific types of coping advice they receive from their parents, adolescents indicated that they were taught to speak their minds when something bothered them. "Speaking their minds," would best be described as talking to others about their feelings and thoughts to alleviate stress.

> "Speak your mind. Talk to someone about it, because it's not good to keep stress on your chest." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

Additionally, adolescents indicated they were instructed to think for themselves and avoid being easily influenced by peers.

"Be a leader not a follower." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

Adolescents also indicated that coping advice from parents included forgiving others. They indicated that they were taught that it is best to avoid holding grudges and try to ignore in certain situations if possible.

"Not holding a grudge." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

" Ignore…[It works] most of the time." (Male Adolescent Group Member)

Elements of Cultural Heritage

Rhythm & Creative Expression.

Parents and adolescents indicated that musical forms of expression are an important part of the African American cultural experience. Parents defined rhythm as "rhyming with the beat." Parents indicated that rhyming and rhythm were important aspects of African American culture.

"That's part of our culture. Rhyming with the beat and the rhythm. We love that. Yes, it is a cultural thing."(Parent Group Member)

Adolescents attributed the cultural significance of music to the ability of music to improve mood and lessen the negative effects of stress. Adolescents also indicated that listening to Hip Hop music was particularly helpful because it was not sad.

"Some music it can make you sad, if you sad. It can make you cry, make you real sad. Sometimes, if I'm sad, Hip-Hop I'll listen to, because all that sad, little love stuff, make you wanna cry, and make you even sadder." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

Adolescents indicated that dancing or singing provided a distraction from troubling issues. Besides serving distractive purposes, music also provided an active outlet for adolescents to express themselves through dance or song.

> *"If they feel like they got something on their chest and they don't want to talk about it, try dancing, or singing." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

> *"Like when you teach somebody how to dance, it's like they feel the same way you feel when you dance. You probably teach them something that they haven't learned." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Some parents voiced concerns about the content of Hip Hop music (i.e. cursing); however, they acknowledged that adolescents depended on music for sources of inspiration. One parent indicated that some adolescents utilize music to cope because they can relate to the lyrics and others admire the musicians.

> *"I can think of one, but it's not positive. Like, the music, but it's like, the music is not all that good because every song you listen to has got cursing in it, but that's what kids really lean on. Like I said, my brother, he listens to music when he's down, as well as me too, but I like R&B music. I don't like rap. That's what these kids lean on as – I don't want to say inspiration, but that's what they use…Well, maybe the lyrics. Not so much the bad lyrics, but just – like, some kids want to be rappers, and it's like they listen to it and they have their favorite artist. Like, my brother, he loves TI and he likes his lyrics, so when he's upset or stressed out, that's who he listens to, and when he plays the game, he listens to that too." (Parent Group Member)*

In addition to helping adolescents deal with stress by serving as a distraction, adolescents indicated that the content of some songs provided messages of hope related to the problems they faced. Adolescents indicated that it was helpful to know that other people may have experienced similar problems.

> *"It's like there's always gonna be a song that can relate to your problem...so you can pick a song and just listen to it and you can understand that you're not the only person going through the same thing what you going through" (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

While parents perceived that the content of some hip hop music was negative, adolescents believed that Hip Hop music could serve as a source of pride. This source of pride was especially important for adolescents when comparing themselves to people from other cultural backgrounds.

> *"We have R&B and a lot of other culture, they listen to our music and they dance like us, they do hip hop and I think they look up to us. And I love my culture." (Female Adolescent Group Member).*

Models of Success: Prominent African Americans.

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According to participants, famous African Americans serve as sources of motivation and models of success, especially Hip Hop artists. The theme "Models of Success: Prominent African Americans," is defined as utilizing individuals from a similar cultural background who have achieved fame as models of coping or resilience. Adolescents indicated that it was helpful to identify famous African Americans models of success when dealing with stressful situations.

> *"One thing I know that there are famous people that are African American, so I know that since they did it, I can do it and everybody else could do it." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

In addition to dealing with stressful situations, teachers suggested these models also demonstrated the importance of obtaining an education. One teacher indicated that adolescents could learn a lot about the importance of education and dealing with stress if they knew more about their favorite musician's backgrounds rather than just listening to their music.

> *"Yeah, motivation but even with the rappers – the influences – some of the kids don't know that Master P has a Master's degree or Lil Wayne has a Bachelor's degree – they just look at their rapping – if you look at the successful businessman in this industry, the guys who are actually making the real money, has an education." (Teacher Group Member)*

Adolescents referenced historical figures from the Civil Rights movement and other African American inventors as individuals to emulate when dealing with stress. The adolescents indicated that these figures were important models because they overcame great obstacles and achieved success.

> *"I'm thinking about – when I get stress, I think about the inventor –{Facilitator 1: Who? Oh, the invention that George Washington Carver made?} Participant 2:Yeah.Participant 2: "I think about how he struggled to get into college and learn and stuff, and I think about that, how he struggled and stuff. And I just – I don't really like – if somebody do something to me, I think about that. I think about how African Americans in business and people that fought for justice and stuff like that, and I just think about that and don't really retaliate or – what?"(Male Adolescent Group Member)*

Adolescents seemed to express the opinion that handling conflict in

nonviolent ways was especially important skill modeled by Civil Rights leaders.

In all four focus groups, adolescents compared the messages of Martin Luther

King, Jr. and Malcolm X and cited other historical African Americans as

influential.

> *"See, the way you deal with things these days, you're supposed to deal with them the way Martin Luther King was trying to deal with them, not the way Malcolm X was. Because he was going towards like they do something to you, you do it back, violence type of stuff. Martin Luther King, he was trying to do peace, and that's what you gotta do these days."(Male Adolescent Group Member)*

Some of the parent group participants, however, believed that adolescents

had a lack of respect for the issues and struggles of previous generations of

African Americans in the United States.

> *"But at the same time, we have to think about our African American roots and what all these people went through the struggle for because it's like, if you think about it, look at the kids nowadays, they're just spitting on all the things that we had, you know and we fought for." (Parent Group Member)*

Other parents indicated that they believed that in order to cope with stress,

adolescents needed to learn more about their cultural heritage in school. One

parent stated that she recognized a difference in the way Black History month was

celebrated in schools. This parent suggested that a failure to continue to honor

African American history may negatively impact the development of coping

skills. Almost in agreement with this view, one adolescent indicated that she did

not know if the historical significance of struggles of African Americans were still

viewed as important or worth the trouble that prominent figures went through.

> *"Sometimes I be thinking Malcolm X and Rosa Parks – it was kinda a waste of time if you think about it, because most of time on the bus, most black people they be fighting to get to the back of the bus – the very back. They be really fighting to sit at the back of the bus – the very back. So I be looking like, wasn't no sense in them doing all that boycott." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Member)*

Emotion-Focused Coping Responses

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<u>Comparisons to other cultures.</u>

Participants indicated that based on how African Americans express emotions they deal with stress differently compared to other cultural groups. Focus group participants indicated that the use of emotion-focused strategies may be related to African American's experience as members of a minority group, and further that African Americans may experience more stress than members of other racial groups. African Americans may also cope with stress differently than members of other racial groups as a result. In particular, participants indicated that African Americans are more likely to use emotion- focused coping strategies that involve laughing or crying.

In the following quote, an adolescent focus group member indicates that emotion-focused coping responses such as crying may serve dual purposes. Initially, the response of crying may be related to an immediate event or stressor. However, the adolescent indicates that crying is also related to thoughts of future or past stressors that may be compounded by the impact of a recent or immediate stressor. In terms of the nature of the stressor, the adolescent compares the absence of financial resources when referring to African Americans and exhausting financial resources when referring to members of other groups.

> *"Maybe because like when my mom and sister be crying, they be crying for more than what just happened. They be thinking about like when Christmas stuff will come around. Some people's momma be crying because they ain't got the money for their kids, but other parents, they be crying, because they spent too much money on they kids, and then…"(Female Adolescent Group Member).*

One adolescent indicated that African Americans experienced more stress than individuals of other races because of high death rates and crime in their communities. This adolescent indicated that compared to European Americans,

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African Americans "worry," in order to deal with harsh stressors over which they

have no control. Under such circumstances, emotion-focused strategies may be

the only coping mechanisms available in a harsh environment where active

problem solving is dangerous or impossible.

> *"I think because black people – I think they think they have more stress because there are so many, there's more black people dying than black people worried about their kids dying than white people. You don't gotta worry about – the white people don't gotta worry about their kids being in gangs and stuff, getting killed, and shot up, and beat to death, and stuff like that. Then, on the other hand, a black person gotta think about all that. It's a majority of the boys. So, the black people, they gotta worry about where their son be, and who they're with, and what they doing, and this, and that. At one point in time, it becomes stressful." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Participants identified neighborhood stressors such as shootings. Some of

the adolescents reported that these issues were difficult to deal with and that they

used emotion-focused strategies such as crying in order to deal with such stress.

While crying could be viewed as an emotional response, it may also serve a

coping function in that it may result in adolescents gaining the support of parents

or other individuals when they are in need. For instance, in the quote below an

adolescent indicates that her parent attempts to comfort her in response to her

crying.

> *"I don't like to see stuff like that, so I just cry. Like it was a big fight in back of my house … That's when I saw it – people shooting each other. So I started crying, and that's when my daddy started hugging me and stuff. So it's like, when I see stuff like that, I cry…"(Female Adolescent Group Member)*

In another quote, an adolescent indicated that African Americans utilize

aggression or violence as an active coping response. In this quote the adolescent

doesn't acknowledge the role of context in contributing to this behavior.

> *"Because most African Americans, we – I would say we kinda violent. I would say that. And other people, other cultures, they probably won't fight it out. If we have a problem with somebody else in our culture, we'll fight or we got gang bangers and all that, and other cultures, they don't do that."(Female Adolescent Group Member)*

One parent indicated that aggressive responses may be more appropriately

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attributed to neighborhood characteristics.

> *"You have some children that deal with it in the manner, you know, they'll brush it off, but then you have some children that don't know how to deal with it when they come in that environment where their peers are making fun of them and then have to act out back, you know, shoving, pushing, fighting or name calling or doing something that's just gonna plain old get them kicked out of school or their different measures that they take." (Parent Group Member)*

Another parent explains a situation in which she instructed her child to use

aggression for self-defense:

> *"I mean, he was having major issues at **X School**[1] with other students because he's real bright and his mom being there all the time; he was pegged as a mama's boy because I'm there all the time so they won't mess with him on that level. He had to take people's BS, eat it basically, so you know, I told him – and honestly, I was wrong and I had to learn this because it got to the point where I'm like, okay, they can say what they want, but let them touch you. Then, you earn your suspension. That's what I used to tell him, earn your suspension. Because I knew they would suspend him, so if they swing on you – because CPS policy is duck and dodge. Well, what if you can't duck and dodge? You gonna let somebody just hit you? No, earn your suspension."(Parent Group Member)*

Research Question 2: How does living in a low income, urban environment shape

low income, urban African American youths' coping?

Adolescents, parents, and teachers indicated that living in a low income,

urban environment shaped adolescents coping in a number of ways. Participants

indicated that "Experiences or Perceptions of Neighborhood," "Relationships in

the Neighborhood," and access to "Neighborhood Places," each influenced the

ways adolescents coped with different aspects of their environment. The next

theme "Experiences of Perceptions of Neighborhood," was based on participants'

primary response that they experienced their neighborhood as "Unsafe." In terms

of their experience of "Relationships in Neighborhood," participants indicated

that their relationships with neighbors were either supportive or unsupportive. For

the "Neighborhood Places" theme, a theme of limited safe places emerged.

Additionally, participants identified specific strategies that were linked with

"Coping with Neighborhood." The theme "Coping with Neighborhood" consisted

of the categories "Survival" and "Adaptation."
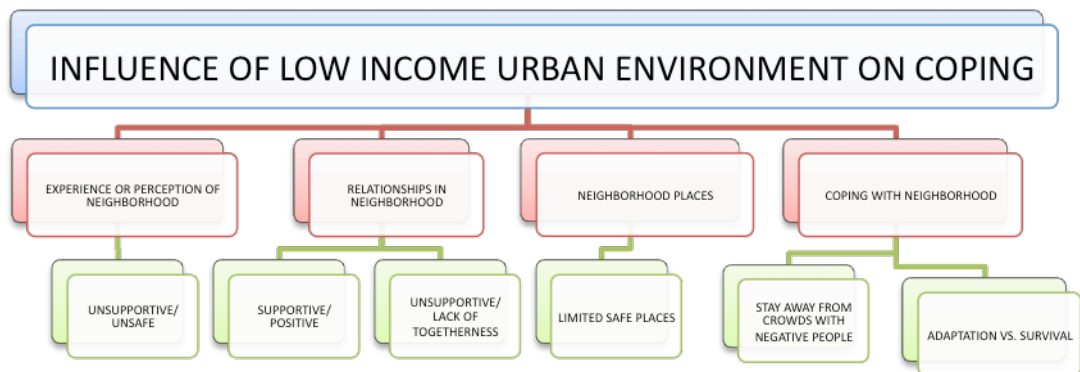
Figure 3. Affinity Diagram: Influence of Low Income Urban Environment on

Coping

Influence of Low Income Urban Environment on Coping

Experiences in or Perceptions of Neighborhood

Unsupportive/ Unsafe Neighborhood.

Participants indicated that their experience of the neighborhood as an

unsafe place was the direct result of community violence. Teachers and parents

expressed the opinion that adolescents in the community were over exposed to

traumatic stressors. As a result of their exposure, the adolescents' responses to the

stressors were flat or emotionless.

> *"I think they've seen an awful lot because some of the students that I've had contact with that are in 6th, 7th and 8th grade – they can tell me things that I wouldn't have imagined ever seen or going through. For instance – this is a couple of years ago – we had a writing assignment. The kids came in and – most of the time when they write, they're writing about experiences on the way to school and they talked about walking up on a guy that was lying in the street that had been shot. But they talk about it with no emotions because they're so used to it. I'm in awe – "What? What happened? Were there police?" And they say, "Oh, no. He was just laying there. The kids were pointing." They're so nonchalant about it because they've seen so much." (Teacher Group Member)*

Participants also expressed the view that the neighborhood was unsafe due

to potential victimization by pedophilia and rape. In almost every adolescent

focus group and in the majority of parent focus groups, participants expressed

concerns about these issues. One parent indicated that she did not allow her

children to play outside for fear that they would be victimized.

> *"Being outside…Mine don't go outside either, but it's just the things -…But you can't go outside the way you used to be able to go outside. You can't send your kids out there. Now, you gotta watch your kids from pedophiles in the neighborhood." (Parent Group Member)*

Some participants told stories about family members or friends who were

victimized in these ways. The following participant indicated that it was unsafe

for children to be outside alone after dark.

"My auntie, she had got raped. My grandma had told her so many times it's not good for you to be walking the streets at dark by yourself, and she never wanted to listen to my grandma and she always wanted to be grown and do what she wanted to do." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

Participants indicated that vacant buildings were often sites of such acts

and indicated that the number of convicted child predators living in the

neighborhood was extremely high. They also stated that the summer months were

particularly dangerous.

"Male 6 "In the summertime that's when everybody come outside, and some homeless people being walking around, and everybody trying to steal." -Male 8; "And most of the part, rapists." -Male 7: "Rapers because ain't no school..." (Male Adolescent Group Members)

Participants reported that in order to avoid danger, females had to be

watched at all times and could not be allowed to walk alone.

"Like you can't even send your kid, like a little girl, to the store and come back with nothing wrong with her. Somebody tried to do something..."(Male Adolescent Group Member)

In general, focus group members experienced the community as chaotic

due to high levels of violence and crime. Parents indicated that they were afraid to

allow their children to play outside and often kept them in their homes for

protection. Adolescents indicated that the community was often noisy and unsafe

and different than a "good neighborhood."

*"It's everywhere. People running [**inaudible**], running through lots, running through allies, and it's like, if the police are chasing them that's why they [**inaudible**] because the police shoot one way, the kids that might have the basketball out there playing – that's why I tell them to keep it at school. I be scared. My heart be pumping, you know. Police go one way, they be playing the ball, the ball go out there, the ball be going across the street, you look around, police cars just come out of nowhere." (Parent Group Member)*

"...When people be, late at night, when you're trying to get some peace and quiet and try to go sleep, they be outside arguing, shooting, drunk, talking. Like if you go to a good neighborhood you won't hear things. You won't even hear the noise like that. It'd be all quiet." (Male Adolescent Group Member)

Relationships in Neighborhood

Supportive/ Positive relationships.

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An adolescent focus group participant described an individual that represented a positive or supportive relationship in the community. Although the adolescent indicated that, "there's nothing good around here," he was able to identify a person who models what supportive community members should do.

> *"Because there really is a lot of violence around this neighborhood and there's nothing good around here. But it's this one person that I know, he clean up the community. He's – his name Paul. He an old man. He like 90, 80-something. And he walks around and picks up trash and stuff from around here. And that's the only good thing, I think, about this community. Other than that, it's all violence." (Male Adolescent Group Member).*

A parent group participant described the instructions she gave her children on how to be supportive to individuals suffering from drug addictions. Parent group participants indicated that sometimes adolescents would make fun of adults in the community suffering from drug and alcohol abuse. Parents indicated it was important to help adolescents develop empathy when interacting with individuals with such impairments and use the interactions as learning opportunities. In addition to serving as learning opportunities for behaviors to avoid, the interactions may also provide opportunities for the adolescents to behave in a supportive and non-judgmental manner.

> *"You don't tell her this, she's on drugs or she on crack. Just tell her she's in a situation that she can't deal with right now. You don't laugh, because that's not funny. That could be you; it could be your mother. It could be anybody in your family. Don't use the situation to make fun of the situation to make fun of the situation. Use the situation to learn from the situation." (Parent Group Member)*

Another adolescent responded to a question about whether other adults who worked in the community but did not live in the community, could serve as sources of support to the youth. The adolescent indicated that other adults who work in the community had tried to support the youth, but the youth, "go back and do the same thing." The adolescent believed that other adults who work in the

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community would not want to serve as sources of support to the youth because the

youth failed to change negative behaviors.

> *"Because people like police officers, they work every day. People got to go to work and stuff... I feel that if they – I think they won't do it because they feel like even if we do do this, they gonna go back and do the same thing because they always prove them wrong. Even when they try to do little stuff for us, they don't prove them wrong. So I feel that they're not gonna keep on repeating themselves." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Unsupportive/ Lack of togetherness.

In terms of their relationships with neighbors, focus group participants

indicated that the community lacked supportive relationships. This lack of

"togetherness," was associated with parents and adolescents believing neighbors

might betray their trust.

> *"...But because society is so messed up, I can't trust Kim to watch my – watch over my kids while I'm watching this graveyard shift because she'll be the backstabbing one to call social service on me the minute I get – the minute she gets mad at me. There's no togetherness." (Parent Group Member)*

Adolescents also indicated that they were mistrustful of neighbors or friends in

the community because they were concerned that people would steal from them.

> *"Like my momma said, she's like, "You gotta be careful who you let in your house." She's like, "Don't let your best friend come in the house, because they gonna tell they friend, and they gonna break in your house, take your Wii, take your games. So you gotta be careful who you bring into your house." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

In addition to feeling unsupported by fellow community members, parent group

participants indicated that the police were also unsupportive. Parents indicated

that police did not take them seriously and felt as if racism contributed to police

officers unwillingness to provide support.

> *"Police think everything's a joke. If you tell them somebody – they looking at you like they crazy, see what I'm saying. It's like, I don't know if they prejudice up in the west side, but it's everywhere still, but I don't know if they're prejudice or what. They take everything as a joke." (Parent Group Member)*

Teacher group participants indicated the community does not work together to

accomplish common goals.

"Their communities are not working together." (Teacher Group Member)

Neighborhood Places

Limited Places.

Parent and teacher focus group participants voiced concern about the absence of community organizations or safe spaces for youth. Parents indicated that agencies which once provided extracurricular activities and social services for youth were no longer in the community.

> *"Yeah. The majority of them closed because I've been dealing with the Boys and Girls Club for, oh, for years. My kids have been going, yeah, and –...And see, they used to go – after they leave from here, some of them, or whatever, they used to go to North Englewood...Yeah, until, like, 6:00 p.m., you know. Yeah, but –...Um-hum, they had a football team –...Basketball team. They took first place at basketball, yeah. They had softball, they had everything, yeah." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"Their community is not – there's not a place where they can go and say I feel comfortable here. This is my safe place." (Teacher Group Member)*

Although the numbers of safe spaces in their communities are limited, adolescents utilize the available resources in their communities: "The Center" (an after school program affiliated with the Englewood United Methodist Church) and the local library.

> *Facilitator 1: So, do you all have any place in your neighborhood where you go for fun? Participant 1 (Male Adolescent Group Member): The center   Facilitator 1: What can you do at the center? Participant 3 (Male Adolescent Group Member): Play basketball. Participant 3 (Male Adolescent Group Member): And watch movie. Participant 1 (Male Adolescent Group Member): And you can get on the computer.*

> *Participant 1 (Male Adolescent Group Member): Yeah. We got the library. We got this – Participant 3 (Male Adolescent Group Member): – But you gotta have a book in front of you.*

Some parents voiced concerns about allowing their adolescents to go to the library due to safety issues and seemed to prefer "The Center" as a safe community space.

"Well, my kids go to the center sometimes…I let my daughters go. Sometimes they have a program there for girls, and then my oldest son, he goes in there sometimes and plays basketball, yeah." (Parent Group Member)

*Participant 2: "Be careful with them going to the library, they be shooting…Right here, **x Branch**."*
Participant 2: "Well, my kids don't go to the library."
Participant 1: "I don't let my daughter go either.
Participant 4: "They don't go unless I go.
Participant 5: "My brother doesn't go either." (Parent Group Members)

Coping with Neighborhood Stress.

<u>Stay away from crowds and negative people.</u>

In order to deal with the stressors they experience in their daily lives,

focus group participants indicated that adolescents had to learn to avoid negative

situations in their community. Parents suggested that adolescents stay away from

crowds to avoid potential gang violence.

"It's not just deaths, just tragic death. When you said, like, in the communities and around the school, it results back to gang violence, you know, the gang banging. The – stay away from the crowd." (Parent Group Member)

"One time in my old school, the substitute teacher told us if it's a crowd that's about to fight or whatever, she said walk away from them because it ain't doing nothing but leading you into a bad future." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

Adolescents indicated their parents told them the best ways to cope with

the neighborhood were to make it out of the community by completing their

education. Additionally, adolescents indicated that parents instructed them to stay

away from individuals who might get them into trouble or not have their best

interests in mind.

"My parents tell me to] Go to school. Even though you came from Englewood, go to school so they won't think you're dumb, because a lot of time, you come out of Englewood, they think you're not smart or anything like that. Try to get away from anybody that you think would do harm to you to would pull you along with them. And choose my friends better. That's it, I guess." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

<u>Adaptation versus Survival.</u>

Teacher group participants expressed the opinion that adolescents had to

adapt to their surroundings in ways that were necessary for everyday functioning

and for survival purposes. Teachers seemed to disagree about whether or not the

adolescents were successfully adapting to their surroundings or whether their

behavior was linked to basic survival skills. One teacher seemed to believe that

when attempting to cope with uncontrollable stressors, the adolescents in this

community behaved in ways that supported their survival. The teacher indicated

these students made decisions about when to "eat, to sleep," and "moving from

house to house." One teacher indicated that students are adept at handling such

situations without making their difficulties known to teachers or other adults.

Another teacher indicated that students adapt to their surroundings by imitating

the negative behaviors of peers in order to fit in or to get attention. Although the

teacher indicated that this behavior was negative and not coping, they also

indicated that adolescents may believe that this behavior will help them obtain

peer support.

> *"Yes. So, I don't see them coping. I don't see them coming up with a positive solution. I see them adapting to live, adapting to survive, or just adapting to be like others around them." (Teacher Group Member)*
>
> *"I'm talking about where you have to struggle to live. "Do I go out? When do I go out – to eat, to sleep? Am I moving from house to house?" You probably have kids who don't have a stable home and we don't even know about it because they don't have an address. They're surviving. The clothes on their backs – the few that they have – they have on from Monday through Friday – Saturday and Sunday, oh well. Parents struggling – if the parents are there. But adapting – my thing of adapting is – "I got this. I can't get that. So I'll just get this." (Teacher Group Member)*
>
> *"Well, I'm using adaptation in the actual meaning of the word – figuring out how to do with what you – adaptation doesn't necessarily has a positive connotation – like you were using coping as a positive way to deal with what you have to deal with. Adaptation is seeing that a student seeing that another student makes fun of them when they're good so they stop being good. That's adaptation. I don't – I wasn't saying adaptation in what they should be choosing to do." (Teacher Group Member)*

Teachers indicated that due to the nature of their surroundings, adolescents

struggled to differentiate appropriate responses for dealing with situations in

school and in the community. Teachers also indicated that adolescents tended to

rely on "physical" responses to deal with provocation or stress.

> *"Exactly. And regardless of that, getting back to what were you were saying – the way that they cope with their stress in a school environment is what we can see. But it's very much how they cope with it outside of school, too. They don't seem to draw a line of what's acceptable here vs. somewhere else – but it's in a very physical manner."*
> *(Teacher Group Member)*

Research Question 3: What are adolescents' perceptions of the coping needs of

urban, low income, African American youth?

Adolescents' perceptions of coping needs for low income, urban African

American youth were assessed. Adolescents' perspectives are especially

important because they are the individuals for whom coping interventions have

been developed. However, their unique perspectives have not traditionally been

included during intervention development. It is especially important to understand

adolescents' perspectives of their needs when attempting to provide a source of

support (through intervention) that will be relevant for them. Themes related to

coping needs of low income, urban African American adolescents from their

perspective included: "Think About The Consequences First," "Go To School To

Overcome Stereotypes About You Based On Your Neighborhood," "Choose

Friends Better," "Learn To Talk To Grown Ups," "Walk Away/Ignore," "Get Rid

Of Stress Through Activities."
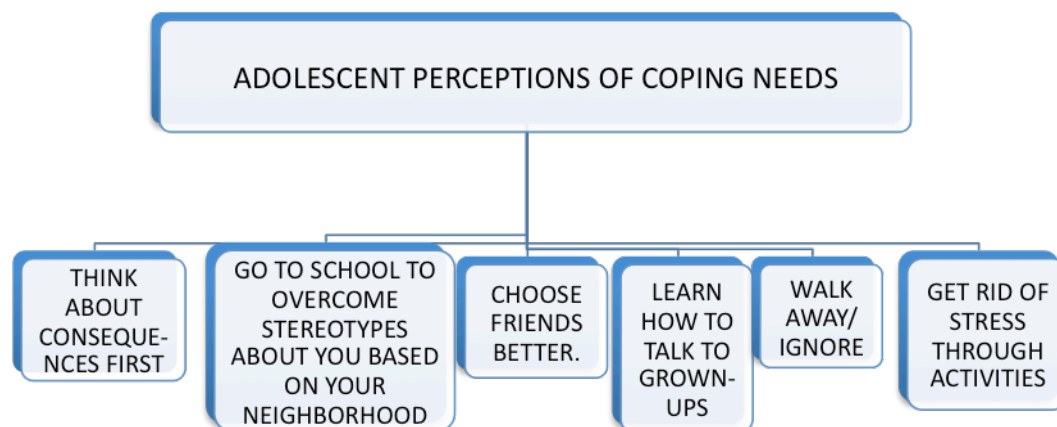
Figure 4. Affinity Diagram: Adolescent Perceptions of Coping Needs

Adolescent Perceptions of Coping Needs

Think about consequences first.

Adolescent participants indicated they sometimes experienced difficulty problem solving effectively when in situations with peers or adults. One adolescent suggested that adolescents learn to think about consequences before acting in a way that could result in a negative consequence. Adolescents suggested that they could benefit from learning ways to think before acting.

> *"You don't think about the consequences until it happens. You just want to get your way and want to prove other people wrong and do you. And you never think about what's gonna happen after you do it. So when you do do it, you don't think about it until it happens, and that's when you start thinking about I shouldn't have did that. Why didn't I think about it when I first was about to do it?"* (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

Go to school to overcome stereotypes based on your neighborhood.

Adolescent participants suggested that low income, urban African American youth should take advantage of educational opportunities in order to overcome stereotypes based on the context in which they live. Participants

suggested that "going to school" would allow adolescents to defy misconceptions

of them based on socio-economic status and neighborhood of origin.

> *"Go to school. Even though you came from Englewood, go to school so they won't think you're dumb, because a lot of time, you come out of Englewood, they think you're not smart or anything like that."   (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

Choose friends better.

Adolescents also suggested that making good decisions about social

networks and peers was an important strategy for low income, urban adolescents

to learn to cope with stressors. Adolescents suggested that it is important to

distinguish between people who are supportive and those who "would do harm,"

to avoid negative consequences.

> *"Try to get away from anybody that you think would do harm to you to would pull you along with them. And choose my friends better. That's it, I guess." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

Learn how to talk to grown-ups.

Adolescents indicated that it is important to learn how to communicate

effectively with adults. In both quotes presented below, adolescents state adults

expect adolescents to speak respectfully. The adolescents suggest it is best to talk

about their problems with adults even though it may be difficult in stressful

situations. They suggested that doing so would keep adolescents from allowing

problems to "build up" and allow for emotional expression. They suggested that

talking to an adult to obtain advice about problem solving and prevention is also

important since adults are capable of listening.

> *"No, you can't say certain things, or certain ways,' and stuff like that. Like some kids – an older person want you to say something a certain way, but the child wanna say it another way, so they just keep it in, and it just keep on building up, and building up. I feel that they need a class where you could just say whatever you need to say, however you wanna say it, so it won't build up on you." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

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> *"Well, when you talk to a grownup, talking back, that don't work. Going to sleep, that don't work because that makes it seem like I lost. I don't like losing the battle. And then just sitting and letting them talk to you don't work, so just do what you gotta do. Then just let all the stress get off of your chest." (Male Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

<u>Walk away.</u>

 Participants indicated that learning to walk away or ignore a problem was an important strategy to learn.

> *"Walk away from them, or tell an adult, or let them know about the problem, and she'll tell me how to solve it or prevent it from happening." (Male Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

<u>Activities to get rid of stress.</u>

Adolescents also suggested it would be important for participants to learn specific behavioral techniques to manage stress. One adolescent discussed a behavioral strategy for managing stress that she learned from an afterschool program.

> *"Like at one of my Centers, we did this thing about stress, and they told us to get a plastic bag, put some glass in it, and just beat on it. That really helped because I feel that we got away stress, we broke the glass." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

Self-expression through writing was identified as an important strategy for adolescents to learn to cope with stress. Participants suggested writing problems down as a form of emotional expression. Adolescents suggested specific forms of writing such as journaling or writing poetry were suggested as coping strategies.

> *"Tell them – you ever seen that movie, Freedom Writers? When they write down their feelings in a book. They write what they think – write their stress down in the book, why they're so stressed out." (Male Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

> *"Sometimes I write like a poetry, because I love it. I'll do that, or like I'll go in my room, and just fall asleep while I think of good stuff, but most of the time I just like to write it out like in my journal. It's like a diary and it helps." (Male Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

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Another adolescent suggested an important coping strategy to learn is to use music or dance to distract yourself from stressors temporarily. The adolescent indicates that eventually it is better to "say it," or talk about the problem.

> *If they feel like they got something on their chest. If they don't wanna talk about it, try dancing, or singing, or any other thing, and if that's it, I think you have to just come up and say it eventually." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)*

Research Question 3 (continued): What are parents' and teachers' perceptions of the coping needs of urban, low income, African American youth?

Parent and teacher perceptions of low income, urban African American youth's coping needs were assessed separately. These subgroup responses are presented separately because they were originally conceptualized as being distinct from adolescent's perspectives. Parents and teachers perspectives may provide additional information about adolescents needs that may not necessarily be the same as adolescents perspectives. Themes from parent and teacher responses were compiled into two major categories: "Coping Strategies Exhibited by Adolescents" and "Important Coping Strategies for Adolescents to Learn." Within the,"Coping Strategies Exhibited by Adolescents" themes, responses were categorized as either Postive or Negative coping strategies. Under the,"Important Coping Strategies for Adolescents to Learn" theme, responses were categorized as related to "Culture," "Context," and "Family." Affinity diagrams for each subgroup are presented separately.

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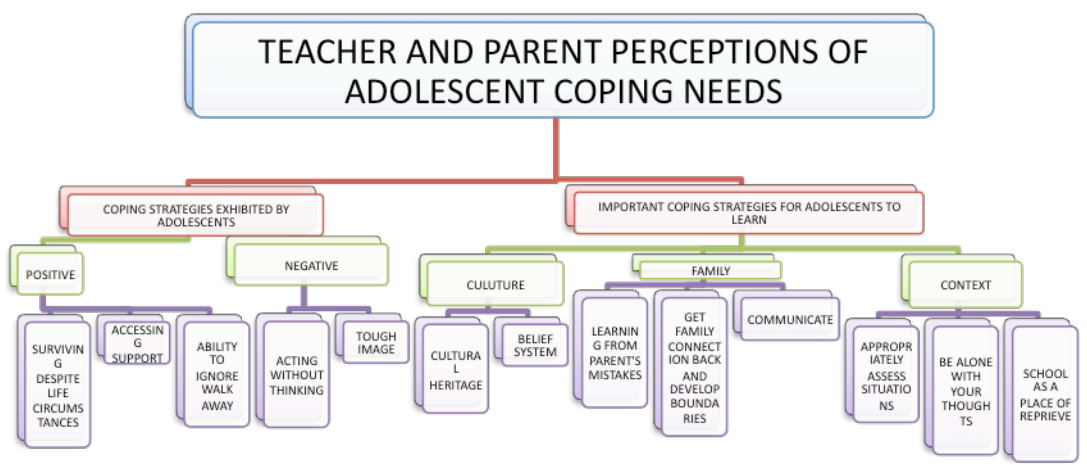
Figure 5. Affinity Diagram: Teacher and Parent Perceptions of
Adolescent Coping Needs

Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Adolescent Coping Needs

Positive Coping Strategies Exhibited by Adolescents.

Surviving despite life circumstances.

Both parent and teacher focus group participants indicated that low income, urban African American adolescents dealt with significant stressors based on their home and community lives. "Surviving despite life circumstances," was defined according to parents and teachers as their belief that the adolescents were resilient or had the ability to be resilient in the face of severe stressors. As mentioned previously, one teacher indicated that these adolescents were able to meet their own basic needs without relying on adults for support, because in some cases they had no other choice. A parent indicated that despite negativity in the community, adolescents could still experience success. Success was equated with obtaining an advanced education. Additionally, the parent indicated that adolescents ability to succeed was fostered when their families held high expectations of them.

> *My two sons, my niece, and my nephew went to Englewood. All of them are in college now, so – and they know, everybody around here, you could deal with these people, hi, whatever, you know, but you know what you have to do too, and they know what we expect out of our household. You know, so there ain't no such thing as, you know, you got caught up in this area. Nah, you have to stay on them, you know, and that's what we did. My son graduates in May."(Parent Group Member)*

Accessing support.

Accessing support was another theme defined as adolescents' ability to gain access to resources whether or not they had parents who were able to help them access such resources. The following teacher quote references the fact that many students were able to function adequately in the school environment, even though their home lives were troubled. In some instances, students were able to

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express their needs to teachers and gain access to additional support.

> *But he came to me about that and he wanted to talk to the old counselor that was here about that. He's a decent child. I would never have known that this was going on at home from his behavior in school because he's a great student of mine." (Teacher Group Member)*

Ability to ignore or walk away.

Parents and teachers indicated that when given specific instructions, adolescents demonstrated the ability to ignore problematic situations or simply walk away.

> *"I think like in my classroom, we have independent problem solving strategies. And one is to ignore. One is to ask the person to stop. One is to remove yourself from the situation or move away, things like that. I've seen them demonstrate that after it is drilled in them."(Teacher Group Member)*

Over time, adolescents may develop a level of sophistication or maturity when coping with stressors involving interpersonal conflict that allows them to walk away from conflict. Even though fighting was once the rule, it can become the exception for these youth.

> *With people and study, now he's like, he'll walk away from a situation instead of reacting. For real, since sixh grade I was coming up to the school every day because he was whooping somebody and he'd be like, "Mom, they hit me first."(Parent Group Member)*

Negative Coping Strategies Exhibited by Adolescents.

Acting without thinking.

In terms of negative coping strategies exhibited by low income, urban African American adolescents, parents and teachers indicated that adolescents tend to act without thinking. One teacher suggested that this impulsive behavior often gets the adolescents into trouble or bad situations. Some indicated that impulsive behavior or acting out could be the manifestation of issues related to an adolescent's self-esteem. One parent indicated that her child was had difficulty in school and was being suspended for negative behavior. The parent learned that

the child was actually dealing with questions about his biological mother and

issues related to identity development.

> *"Sometimes you are so active you don't stop and think. That's why our children have a lot of problems because they don't stop and think about what they're doing."(Teacher Group Member)*

> *"He's adopted. He's in that stage where he's trying to find out who is birth mother is and why she give me up and all that... He just got supsended from that school. He throwing paper, fight, and I'm like, he's trying- he tells me all the time, he's just trying to find himself because he really dont know who he is."(Parent Group Member)*

Tough image.

Parents and teachers also indicated that adolescents sometimes attempt to

appear tough in order to fit in with peers.

> *"Adaptation is seeing that a student seeing that another student makes fun of them when they're good so they stop being good." (Teacher Group Member)*

According to one parent, this "tough image," results in adolescents disrespecting

adults.

> *"It's that image that someone put on - some of them put on that image to deal with-when they put on that image, they disrespect at you, you and you and now when you come back, you gots to walk like this." (Parent Group Member)*

Important Culturally Relevant Coping Strategies for Adolescents to Learn.

Cultural heritage.

Parents expressed the view that low income, urban African American

adolescents need to have accurate knowledge of their cultural "roots" and

heritage. Parents expressed concerns that adolescents lacked knowledge of their

culture of origin and held negative views as a result.

> *"Well, I try to teach my son and my daugter never to take anything for granted. My son, he's like African and, like he just went to Liberia this summer to meet some of his family with my daughter...she was scared to go because she thought that, like they're going to kill us... I wanted her to know that it's not like that. Don't believe everything that you see on TV." (Parent Group Member)*

One parent indicated that participation in events that bring about cultural

awareness and teach about the history of African Americans in the Unites States

is important.

> *"With these kids not being able to go back to their roots to understand what African American really mean. Black history month used to be so meaningful. Now it's almost, like, absent in the school. You very seldom hear of black history plays. I don't care if your kid is in 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th grade, it should get more deeper entail with them instead of asking them out of assembly program." (Parent Group Member)*

Belief System.

In response to focus group questions about culturally based coping

strategies relevant to these adolescents, teachers indicated developing self-respect

was more important than religion. Teachers indicated that students needed to first

develop a belief in themselves and then they would be able to apply religious

beliefs more appropriately.

> *"They need the teaching of that more than religion – religion will come with it. Everything comes with that inner self belief." (Teacher Group Member)*

Teachers indicated that religion provided the structure for developing a

belief system. In their opinion, such a belief system would help improve their

ability to cope with stress. Some of the quotes listed below were used to address

influences on coping; however, these quotes also represent different ideas related

to coping strategies adolescents could benefit from learning.

> *"Self-respect, definitely." (Teacher Group Member)*

> *We can't address it (religion). But I think that should be something that should be addressed. I think that you have to believe in something, and our kids don't believe in anything. You have to have some belief system." (Teacher Group Member)*

Important Coping Strategies for Adolescents to Learn: Family

Learn from parents' mistakes.

In terms of important coping strategies for adolescents to learn related to

their families, parents indicated they wanted their adolescents to learn from their

parent's mistakes. Parents expressed a sincere desire for their adolescents to

become successful adults. Part of this success included being financially stable

and having a career that would allow them to enjoy their late adulthood. Parents

also indicated that they discussed their struggles with their children in hopes their

children would make different or better decisions.

> *"I use my life. You don't want to have to be working two jobs, three jobs to try to put food on the table. You want to make sure that you start now. You want to be able to retire when you're 40 instead of you looking at your lifetime, oh, I gotta work until I'm 60 or 70 before I could take a break. No, you want to be 40, retire, and be living it up." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"You don't want to have to work, you don't want to struggle. When you see I can't pay a bill or the cable is off for a week or two, you don't want to have to live like that. You don't want to have to live from check to check and pray that you don't get laid off because if you get laid off then that's really messing up home. So what I do is, don't make my mistakes your mistakes. Some are like an open book..."(Parent Group Member)*

Get family connection back and develop boundaries.

Parents and teachers expressed concern that the "family connection,"

between adolescents and their parents needed to be improved. Parents indicated

that some parents lacked parenting skills or wanted to befriend their children

rather than parent them. One teacher agreed that parents failed to provide clear

boundaries for their children.

> *"Honestly, I feel like you have to get the family connect back because a lot of kids are not connected with their parents, or their parents want to be their friends. Some parents might need to learn how to be parents because they were never taught, so I think something that would be a very good component-and a lot of parents, they too ashamed to ask for help, but when it's offered they will take it." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"I think they're used to having no boundaries. I dont think their parents do."(Teacher Group Member)*

Communicate.

Parents and teachers agreed that communication skills were important

coping skills that adolescents should learn. Across focus groups, parents stressed

the importance of talking with their children, even when it seemed their children

were not listening. Parents indicated that talking with their children often

improved their own mood as well as their children's mood. Parents also believed

that communicating with their children would help them make good decisions and

avoid negative situations.

> *"It's like, when you listen to your kids and your grandkids … When you listen to your kids, it seems like that just takes it all away." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"Like I say, we talk to our kids. My kids listen. Kids gonna be kids. If I tell my son, he know right from wrong." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"It's the minute you let up on them, something's going on and something's going wrong, somewhere, and I just be on them. I just talk. And I tell them, ya'll may look at me like I'm crazy talking until I'm blue in the face, but when it's too late, you better hope and pray that it don't be too late that you hear me. They hear me and I know my kids hear me." (Parent Group Member)*

Further expressing the importance of communication, teachers indicated

that parents should receive specific instruction in coping so that they could assist

their adolescents with gaining such skills.

> *"First, I think the parents need to know how to deal with it{stress}. If the parents know how to deal with it then it can be communicated." (Teacher Group Member)*

<u>Important Contextually Relevant Coping Strategies for Adolescents to Learn.</u>

<u>Appropriately assess situations.</u>

The theme "Appropriately assess situations," was related to adolescent's

ability to determine situation congruent coping responses. Teachers in both

groups indicated that low income, urban African American adolescents exhibited

difficulty determining the severity or complexity of stressors. According to the

teachers, adolescents responses to stressors were often extreme or situation

incongruent. In developing coping skills, teachers indicated it would be important

for adolescents to learn to match specific stressors with specific coping responses.

> *"Like our kids need to be taught how to do, they need to be taught to. I don't think they differentiate between situations. I think everything is zero to 100 for them. I think that if they get something they don't like...they go off." (Teacher Group Member)*

> *"Identifying the level of complexity of the issues. Everything is not a big issue." (Teacher Group Member)*

As an example parents offered similar themes, one parent shared that her daughter took the blame for something she was not responsible for without considering talking to her mother about the event. In this instance, the parent believed that the adolescent responded to the situation without appropriately assessing the situation.

> *"Yeah, my daughter was accused of writing on the bathroom wall here in the school, and the officer and one of the teachers here interrogated her into confessing. I don't think that was right, so I said something to the principal, but it was like the teacher kept on telling her, you might as well confess, you might well confess. You didn't see her do it; don't accuse her of anything… It was, like, she started crying, and she's like, I told them I did it because I didn't want to get suspended. It's like, you don't ever confess to something that you didn't do; you get railroaded that way. Don't do that." (Parent Group Member)*

Another concern of teachers was that adolescents were unable to identify the issues that were causing them distress. The teacher indicated that adolescent respond to other stressors with inappropriate intensity because they have not identified the source of their feelings.

> *" I think it would help for them to be able to recognize what it is that is stressing them. A lot of times they lash out at the things that aren't even the root of the issue. If they could just recognize the true root of what's making them upset or what's making them feel the way that they're feeling. Identify the stressor."(Teacher Group Member)*

Be alone with your thoughts.

Teachers suggested adolescents learn different forms of self-expression to cope with stress. One suggestion was that adolescents learn to meditate or "be alone with" their thoughts. One teacher indicated that "meditation" might be "far-fetched for the demographic" because from her perspective, the adolescents had not been exposed to meditation.

MODEL OF CULTURAL AND CONTEXUAL COPING

"This might be far-fetched for the demographic to deal with but it helped me a lot – meditation – sit still, be by yourself, be alone with your thoughts – being with yourself. Being in a place of peace – sometimes you are so active you don't stop and think. (Teacher Group Member)

"Learning how to express themselves – talk about it, write about it – if you can't talk to me about it, write it down. Have those journals. (Teacher Group Member)

School as a place of reprieve.

The theme "School as a place of reprieve," was a strategy teachers suggested adolescents should utilize if conditions in their homes are chaotic or inconsistent. The school was identified as a setting that could serve as a safe space for escaping negative situations at home or gaining additional support. Teachers indicated that the function of the school setting for most students is to serve as a place of consistency.

"It's almost like this (school) is the place that she comes to that is consistent. So it's a normal day for her here. I'm not sure what it would be like when she has to go home and be part of the situation, but here it's almost like a reprieve."(Teacher Group Member)

Research Question 4: How can a culturally specific coping intervention best address the needs of low income, urban African American youth? What aspects of culture and/or context should be included to make such a program relevant for these youth?

Participants provided feedback about proposed program components including mentorship and protective settings. They also made suggestions about intervention structure, intervention participants, and types of activities that could teach coping skills. Participants also contributed feedback related to relationship building between mentors and intervention participants, and made strong recommendations for including a parent component of the intervention.

MODEL OF CULTURAL AND CONTEXUAL COPING
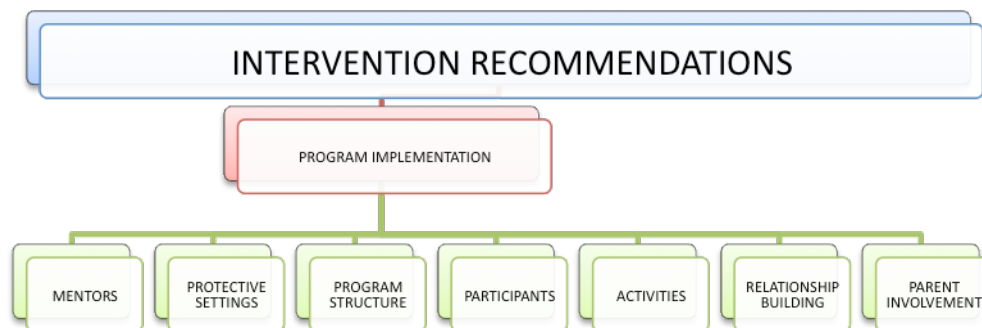
Figure 6. Affinity Diagram: Intervention Recommendations

Intervention Recommendations

Mentors.

Adolescent focus group participants indicated that mentors should be able to relate to the adolescents and should try to understand adolescents in a non-judgmental manner. Participants suggested that mentors should be individuals who were able to overcome similar problems or stressors.

> *"A person that's fun, understand what you're saying don't try to put you down or saying things to offend you, understand what you're saying." (Male Adolescent Group Member).*

> *"Somebody that's been already through the situation and know a lot about life and went through so much and has personal problems and deal with things like that." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Parents also indicated that adolescents should be able to connect to and confide in their mentors. They suggested that being able to confide in mentors would enhance the mentorship relationship and provide an outlet for the youth.

> *"I say and I think that you need to get people that can connect to them. Someone that might have been in situations."(Parent Group Member).*

> *"Some parents don't care or don't have time, but they know that person that's their mentor is somebody that might care about them, somebody to confide to, somebody that can teach them something, somebody that's making money." (Parent Group Member)*

In order for mentors to understand the youth and be able to relate to the youth, teachers suggested that mentors have some knowledge of the community. Parents and teachers indicated that they would like successful individuals from the community to serve as mentors. In the event that mentors were not from the community, they believed it would be important to expose the mentors to the community.

> *"I also think that maybe if they – whoever the mentors are, that they relate to the community, like they know what it's like." (Teacher Group Member)*

Participants made a number of suggestions about the demographic

characteristics of mentors. Teachers and adolescents suggested having older

students mentor younger students because students may relate to each other more

than students would relate to an adult. Another suggestion was that older students

(i.e. high school students) receive an adult or collegiate level mentor and that the

older students serve as mentors to elementary or high school students.

> *"Like elementary school kids relate with high school, so if you put a high school with them, with the elementary kids, they'll relate more, especially if it's a girl and they're going through the same thing, like they have a boyfriend, they have a boyfriend, things like that."(Female Adolescent Group Member).*

> *"It would be wonderful to have a self-sustaining where they touch down first in 2nd grade and maybe if you get to the point where you have a 7th grader talking to a 2nd and 3rd grader about their actions because that's 7th grader has made it all the way through the program – that would be more self-sustaining, especially because they would have connections with kids their own age and role models they would see everyday." (Teacher Group Member)*

Parents expressed concern about the lack of a male presence in the lives of

many adolescents and suggested that male mentors be available to such youth.

> *"The best is men because most of them ain't got no father in they home, and most of the father's are locked up." (Parent Group Member)*

<u>Protective Settings.</u>

Participant's perceptions of the best protective settings in the community

were similar across groups. Teachers indicated that due to the lack of clubs for

youth in the community, youth had few safe places to access. As a result, youth

were often on the streets without supervision. As mentioned previously,

adolescents suggested "The Center" located within the United Methodist Church

(near their school) might serve as a protective setting. Adolescents indicated that

the neighborhood high school campus might provide a protective setting for

youth. The campus was formerly the location of the community's Boys and Girls

Club (which closed months prior to data collection). In the event that there were

insufficient protective settings in the community, focus group participants

suggested utilizing centers in neighboring communities.

> *"They need the boy's club – some place for them to go. They've closed down the little gyms – the little houses where they had the activities. The kids have no outlet but the street!" (Teacher Group Member)*

> *"I think at a center they can focus more besides school because everybody doesn't focus well at school, so it would be better to do it outside."(Parent Group Member)*

> *"You go to Englewood (High School). Englewood don't work out – the Center's only open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, so you just have your program on Fridays or maybe Wednesday. Fridays is the start of the weekend. And if it really don't work how you want it to work in Englewood, try Hyde Park neighborhood, something like that." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

<u>Program Structure.</u>

In terms of the overall structure of the program, exposure to a variety of

activities and places was important to participants. Teachers indicated that

adolescents needed opportunities to develop new skills and self-discipline through

"outlets" such as sports or extracurricular activities. They also indicated that

adolescents could benefit from exposure to neighborhoods and communities

different from their own. Such exposure might also be paired with goal setting

related to high school and college attendance. One parent suggested collaborating

with local businesses to help adolescents gain career related experience and learn

to set goals related to future careers.

> *"I think an outlet – if we're talking about outlets – I coach wrestling now. When my kids are on the match – I know they have it rough. I coach at X High School – my kids – that's automatics to them. It's an outlet. It's something to do besides being on the street – practices and the matches are 4:00 to 6:00. And then when they're doing it, it's freedom from everything else. They learn discipline, they learn the technique, and they learn to handle themselves. It's freedom from everything." (Teacher Group Member)*

> *"I just know there's a fear of the unknown. That's why they need to get out and experience things because they just don't have the opportunity to do so where they're at right now." (Teacher Group Member)*

> *"I would address, if possible, goal-setting in an applicable way for them. People talk at them all the time about goals but they don't really understand goal-setting and how your actions should be geared towards making those goals. Every single one of our kids would*

say one of their goals is to get to high school. But what do you need to do to get to high school?" (Teacher Group Member)

"Since you're targeting kids in these group areas, get them interested in having jobs right away when they graduate eighth grade, right away. When you get employed right away from grammar school and you keep a job all the way through high school, you're gonna keep a job for the rest of your life... I would say they should partner up with a business, a company, so there's a lot of people there that they can grab a kid, show them what they do...that can make that child strive to want to do that or do something in that field."(Parent Group Member)

Adolescents suggested that participants receive something similar to "pull out" services from their mentors during or after school. These "pull outs" would give students the opportunity to, "shine," or have the full attention of an adult in whom they could confide.

"Okay, say for instance all one program. Like certain hours of the day, you pull that student out –...– even if it's in school, or during after school. Like a lot of people get into it with each other at the school too. So you pull that student out, and then that's when it's time for them to shine. So they say whatever they gotta do, and then you ask somebody, what makes them get all the stuff off your mind? You all play that game, and see if it works."(Female Adolescent Group Member).

Related to teaching specific coping skills, some adolescents and parents suggested that the program operate similar to gender specific, rites of passage programs.

"Like a man to man project, like for me being truthful to him and he being truthful to me."(Male Adolescent Group Member).

Privacy and confidentiality were of particular importance to adolescents. One student suggested that if the intervention occurred in a group format, people should agree to maintain confidentiality of the group. Male adolescents expressed concern about teasing if group confidentiality was broken and indicated that might keep them from participating.

"I'd have this program work, like how you say, whatever goes in the group stays in the group because [inaudible] should go out this group because whoever wanted to know they should have participated in this group, and we should just talk about privacy and talk. Just speak our mind what happened at school today. How was your day at school? Like if you got any personal things at home, you can just speak to the mentor. Don't be afraid to share your thoughts. Or like what he just said, what happens should stay in a

group because well like if someone – for instance, if he wasn't in a group, and I told him something, that person will be like, "You are lame, boy. What you doing in that group? That ain't nothing for you." And then they'll make you feel sad, then you'll be like, "No, I don't wanna be in that group either." And then it'll make you not wanna come back." (Male Adolescent Group Member)

Participants.

Across groups, there were varieties of opinions about the age of intervention participants. Most participants agreed that the intervention should focus on elementary school aged children in the 3rd-8th grades. Some adolescents suggested gearing the program towards 7th-8th graders since they might face more stressors related to community violence.

"I say start with the younger kids, because with us being older, we should know how to pen our mouths and say something, if something wrong. The younger kids they be scared to say stuff like if something happening at home to them...We will come up and say something, especially to your friend."(Female Adolescent Group Member)

"I would say third through eighth because don't leave the younger children out. They may be stressed more than the other grades." (Parent Group Member)

"I said 7th and 8th because since we like are going to high school where there is gonna be a lot of changes in our life, where we gonna be going through the shooting, and stuff more violence. So we should do the coping." (Female Adolescent Group Member)

In terms of the behavioral characteristics of participants, parents suggested targeting adolescents without behavioral problems. Selecting participants without behavioral concerns was important to parents because they believed that the behavior of such adolescents might prove problematic in a group setting.

"Okay, the non-aggressive kids. The kids that are – you know, like, get the principal – the principal should know who the kids that need the help is the one that's not gonna be, like, starting – you know, like, bad behavior kid." (Parent Group Member)

Activities.

In terms of activities that could be used to teach coping skills to adolescents, participants suggested that activities be engaging and active. One teacher suggested that participants develop a video that could be used to teach

coping skills to other students.

> "*Make it a play, make it a rap – things like that. They love to see themselves... Whatever it is, involve them in something like a video. If we're conversing like now, we're taping it and that way you can watch it and they can add to it and say, "Well, how did we cope with this problem." Or, they can do a commercial and then watch the commercial. They could do commercials for coping for the school."(Teacher Group Member)*

> "*I think I see a lot of people doing – okay, say for instance they in a program, like you all doing like a skit, or a performance, or something. Like a student have something happen at home, and then they brought it to school. I think you all should like do something like that, they had a whole bunch of stress walking in to school, but when they get to school they wanna go alone. Then a teacher or somebody confronts them like, "What's wrong with you," and they don't wanna say nothing. Then they start doing all type of fun activities, and people go around in circles, like telling them they have stress, and, "This is what I did," and they should try it, and maybe it'll help them get it out." (Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Adolescent focus group participants also suggested that students participate in an

assembly with a coping skills instructor. In the assembly students would talk

about stressors and perhaps learn to deal with stress without, "taking it out on

other people."

> "*I think because there's a reason why people act the way they act, so they should bring the person to our school, and we could have like all like what we have now. Just have like a big old assembly, and people that could help people with they problems, because there's a lot of people that have stress, and they take it out on other people. That's why people fight and argue every day."(Female Adolescent Group Member)*

Parents indicated that being in a group setting where they could listen to other

students talk about stress might help students who were less willing to talk, "come

out of themselves," or share their own concerns.

> "*Because if they listen to other kids talk and see that they have problems, they might come out themselves, you know, and then sometimes, you want to keep a secret, you can go one-on-one, or ask him or something."(Parent Group Member)*

Relationship building.

Participants indicated that relationship building would be an especially

important part of the mentor-adolescent relationship. One parent indicated

relationship building was more important than program location or coping skills

instruction. Parents and teachers indicated adolescents would not feel comfortable

with mentors unless they had the opportunity to get to know the mentors and

develop a sense of trust with them. The school principal informed me that

relationship building was important because many of the adolescents were

accustomed to adults from outside organizations providing services for a brief

time and then leaving after a short period of time.

> *"It's not so much about the location; it's about building a relationship."(Parent Group Member)*

> *"Probably prior to coping, you're going to need team building. You're going to need a lot of team builders like where people get to know each other, a lot of sharing sessions and stuff like that because they're not going to feel comfortable with them (mentors) if you don't do that."(Teacher Group Member).*

> *"Don't make it where the kids will start getting into it, and then you all cut it off. That will mess them up." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"Okay, one place, solid relationship building, the same person. It needs to be consistent." (Parent Group Member)*

> *"Right and they need that consistency, somebody that's going to come around. And they're going to see it. And they're not here just a little while and then they're gone." (Teacher Group Member)*

Parent involvement.

Although it was not originally presented as a part of the coping

intervention, parents and teachers strongly suggested incorporating a parent

component into the intervention. Parents and teachers suggested that the parent

component should at least incorporate some type of resources or information for

parents. According to participants, a parent component would allow parents to

develop coping skills and address stress. Adolescent's coping skill training could

be further enhanced and supported if their parents are also knowledgeable about

the types of skills that might be utilized to deal with stress.

> *"I think they should have a small informational and then maybe an informational session, where you could be like a resource for the parents. It needs to be resourceful so they*

> *know that if they do want to receive some type of stress training or coping, that it is available and where they can get it."(Teacher Group Member)*

> *"Do a family evaluation. I don't think it should be just geared towards the child because the child learns things from home in the street life, so I think it should be a family focus. A way to bring back the family to learn how to deal because parents have a hard time coping with different issues" (Parent Group Member)*

Strategies for Validating Findings

In the parent member-checking group, affinity diagrams with quotes representing each sub-theme were presented to four parent group members (3 females, 1 male) (See Appendix D for Affinity Diagrams with Quotes). Two parents voiced concern over one statement included in the affinity diagrams, with which they did not agree. The parents expressed their concerns that the statement and felt it was not a good representation of messages they give to their children about coping with stress. The group reviewed the entire statement and it was decided that the statement could be misinterpreted if context for the statement was not provided. I agreed to make sure that the entire statement was presented in order to decrease the chance that the statement would be misinterpreted. The statement being referred to is presented below and parts of the data over which there was much discussion are underlined. Parents were concerned that the message would be interpreted as them teaching their children to fight. Parents indicated the message they try to portray to their children to cope with conflict is to avoid fighting.

> "He had to take people's BS, eat it basically, so you know, I told him – and honestly, I was wrong and I had to learn this because it got to the point where I'm like, okay, they can say what they want, but let them touch you. Then, you earn your suspension. That's what I used to tell him, earn your suspension. Because I knew they would suspend him, so if they swing on you – because CPS policy is duck and dodge. Well, what if you can't duck and dodge? You gonna let somebody just hit you? No, earn your suspension but then I had to go back and think about that because then I'm telling him that's how you resolve all your issues is by letting somebody hit you first and then you can do whatever you want. No, sometimes you've got to be the bigger person and walk away."(Parent

Group Participant)

A member checking session was scheduled with teachers; however, they were unable to participate due to a scheduling conflict. I asked two of the teachers (1 male and 1 female) to review and provide feedback about the affinity diagrams that depicted teacher's perceptions of adolescents' needs. The teacher's reviewed the documents and indicated that they did not have suggestions for clarifying information or for interpretation.

Data Triangulation: Quantitative and Qualitative Data

In this mixed methods study, an attempt was made to enhance the quality of data by collecting qualitative and quantitative data and then using both sets of findings to understand coping for this population through triangulation. Triangulation of data sources allows researchers to seek convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods and with reference to theory (Creswell, 2003). Data was triangulated by comparing data from focus groups and surveys to gain a better understanding of culturally and contextually relevant coping.

African American Culture

Spirituality and Religion

In focus groups, adolescents and parents indicated that their children attended church with family members, even if the parents did not attend church. In survey data, 53% of adolescents (N=10) indicated they attended church sometimes (a couple times per month), while 16% (N=3) reported they almost never attended church. One adolescent reported attending church all the time and three adolescents did not respond to the question. In parent focus groups the majority of parents indicated they did not attend church frequently; however, they

indicated it was important for their children to attend church. This finding

suggests religiosity is important for parents, although parents' religiosity did not

necessarily result in parents' church attendance. This finding, similar to the

findings from another study in which there was a lack of a linear relationship

between church attendance and religiosity for African American adults, suggested

that frequency of church attendance was not an indicator of religiosity for African

American adults (Colbert, Jefferson, Gallo, & Davis, 2008). The finding from this

study in addition to the finding from pre-existing literature suggests that African

American adults may express religious beliefs to their children and require their

children to participate in religious activities even if the parents do not participate

in such activities.

Cultural Heritage

Parents and adolescents were administered the Multidimensional

Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). On the MIBI, parents and adolescents

reported that their African American cultural identity was important to their

overall conceptualization of self. In focus groups, adolescents and parents further

expressed the importance of their African American cultural identity as it related

to pride in the accomplishments of prominent African Americans.

On the teen version of the inventory, adolescents reported feeling close to

other Black people, and having a strong sense of belonging to other Black people.

The sense of belonging and closeness adolescents feel to other African Americans

indicates that they identify strongly with other African Americans. In their

descriptions of culturally relevant coping strategies, adolescents indicated pride in

being African American and expressed the belief that it was necessary to be proud

of being African American. Contrary to the messages of racism they may be

exposed to in larger mainstream society, these youth conceptualize their race as a

source of pride.

Parents' responses on the MIBI were similar to those of adolescents in

some ways. Parents indicated that being Black was an important part of their self-

image and reported a strong attachment to other Black people. Parents also

reported that being Black contributed to their self-esteem, was an important part

of their identity, and indicated a strong sense of belonging to other Black people.

It should be noted that the MIBI data obtained in this study may reflect a

simplistic view of the adolescents' racial identity. On the MIBI-t, adolescents

indicated they agreed less with the statement that if they were to describe

themselves to others one of the first things they would say is they are Black. In

other words, while adolescents identify strongly with being African American and

with other African Americans, their membership in this ethnicity is not the only

part of their identity that matters. Adolescents may also conceptualize themselves

in terms of individually based factors related to their strengths and abilities that

exist separate from their ethnicity.

Low Income, Urban Context

Neighborhood Experiences

Compared to reports from youth in other low income, urban settings,

adolescents in this sample did not report experiencing some stressors that have

been associated with this neighborhood context (Tolan *et al.,* 1997; Grant *et al.,*

2000; Kliewer *et al.,* 2006). For example, in the this study, only 5.3% of the

sample endorsed the statement, "You were pressured to do drugs or drink

alcohol" additionally, only 10% of the sample endorsed the statement, "You were

pressured against your will to join a gang."

<u>Coping Model</u>

Commonalities from the separate affinity diagrams were merged to form a culturally relevant, contextually based model of coping for low income, urban, African American youth. The model is inclusive of the views of adolescents, parents, and teachers. The model illustrates the fact that contextual and cultural elements contribute to coping for low income, urban African American youth.
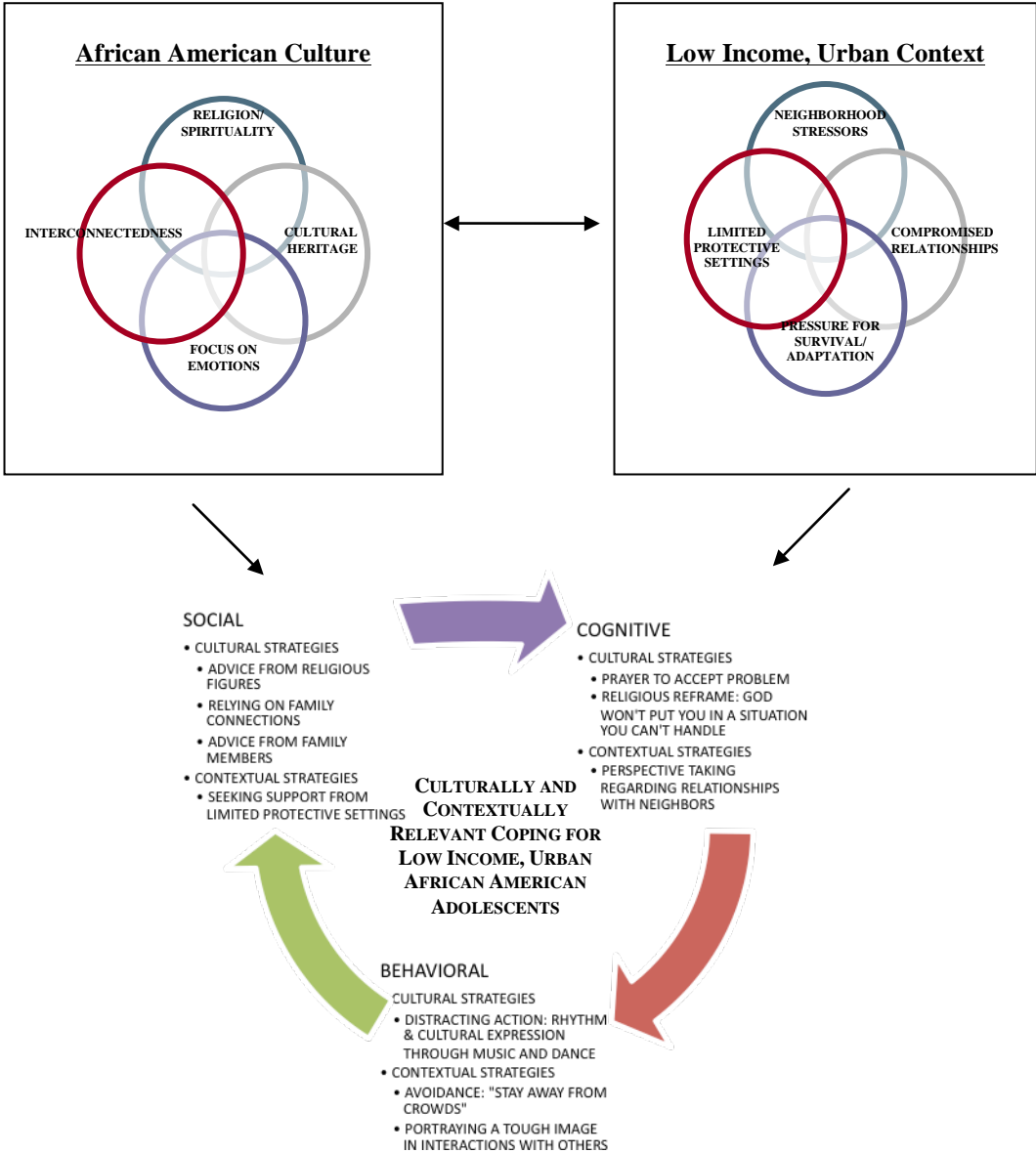
Figure 7. Conceptual Coping Model

Culturally and contextually relevant coping for low income, urban African American adolescents is influenced by African American culture and by living in a low income urban environment. Contextually and culturally relevant coping mechanisms for these youth include cognitive, behavioral, and social mechanisms. Cognitively based strategies linked to culture included prayer to accept a problem and religious reframes such as "God won't put you in a situation you can't handle." Adolescents and parents indicated they reframed stressors and life in general by considering such situations in the context of relevant spiritual beliefs. Prayer was identified as a strategy utilized to change feelings about a problem or to find ways to deal effectively with the problem. A contextually linked cognitive strategy was perspective taking relative to relationships with people in the neighborhood. One parent indicated she instructed her children not to laugh at individuals in the community who were addicted to drugs, but to consider the fact that drug addiction could happen to anyone.

Culturally and contextually relevant coping strategies were also behavioral in nature. Participants described creative expression through dance, song, or music as a distracting action that could be employed to cope with stress. In order to cope with the context in which they lived, strategies such as staying "away from crowds," and negative people were employed by adolescents to avoid negative situations. Another contextually relevant behavioral strategy identified was portraying a tough image. This strategy enables adolescents to avoid conflict with peers and to protect themselves from community stressors.

Participants also endorsed strategies linked to seeking social support. The

cultural practice of seeking advice from religious leaders was reflective of

expression of emotions to others and information seeking from others.

Information seeking from others was also an important part of coping related to

interconnectedness. Adolescents and parents indicated relying on family

connections and seeking advice from family members were strategies utilized

often by youth. Seeking support from any available protective settings was

another contextually relevant coping strategy identified in the model.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

In this mixed methods study, nine focus groups were conducted with students, parents, and teachers to assess the culturally and contextually relevant strategies that low income, urban African American adolescents use to cope with stress. Several gaps in the literature were addressed within this study using focus group methodology supplemented by survey data. First, the research identified specific cultural and contextual influences on coping. Second, the research identified specific cultural and contextual coping strategies relevant for low income, urban youth that were cognitive, behavioral and social in nature. Third, the research integrated culturally and contextually relevant influences on coping with culturally and contextually relevant coping strategies to develop a conceptual model of coping for these youth. In order to enhance model development, multiple informant groups were accessed and included not only adolescent and parent perspectives, but also teacher perspectives. Best practices for intervention development were developed based on those multiple perspectives. Finally, the study sought to advance the state of the coping literature through the use of a mixed methods approach, which triangulated qualitative and quantitative data with pre-existing theory to develop a model of coping.

Influence of Culture and Context on Coping

Influence of Culture on Coping

Focus group results suggested that religion and spirituality, interconnectedness, focus on emotions, and cultural heritage were elements of

African American culture that impacted youth's coping strategies. These findings

are consistent with prior theoretical conceptualizations of cultural influences on

coping and empirical research on religion and spirituality in the lives of African

American youth. It further extends these findings by demonstrating ways in

which low-income urban African American youth apply spiritual and religious

coping in the context of urban poverty.

Religion and Spirituality.

Adolescent and parent participants indicated that spirituality was an

important cultural factor that could also influence coping. Spiritually based

coping strategies included relying on spiritual beliefs and prayer. Such teachings

are aligned with a belief system in which a higher spiritual power is loving and

protective. Additionally, participants espoused the belief that "God" would never

give them more stress than they could deal with and the belief that "God" is good.

Such beliefs may allow individuals to reframe harsh uncontrollable stressors when

there is no explanation for the cause of the stress or no immediate solution to the

problem. These findings are consistent with prior theory suggesting that African

cultures hold a world-view which bases spirituality on beliefs in a higher being

(Jones, 2003). This particular belief may also be salient for low income, urban

African American youth because the belief has been modeled and taught to them,

but also because it has strong historical ties. As members of a marginalized group,

these youth and parents may often find themselves in situations they are unable to

change. As a result, individuals may reframe situations that seem extremely

negative or harsh by considering their belief that a higher power would not try to

harm them.

Interconnectedness.

Interconnectedness was another element of African American culture that was identified as positively influencing coping. Participants primarily reported connections in terms of their ability to communicate with and seek advice from family members. Parents indicated they believed it was important to talk to their children so that their children could learn from their mistakes and learn to make good choices. Adolescents reported often talking to their parents or other family members about their problems and problem-solved through role-playing activities. These findings are similar to findings from other research, which suggests that in stressful situations, reliance on family members for support was particularly important for African American youth (Daley *et al.,* 1995; Constantine *et al.,* 2002).

In addition to themes that fit with existing theory on culturally based coping strategies, several new themes emerged that are not part of existing models. Each of these will be described below with reference to any relevant literature. They will also be described with reference to implications for the development of a more comprehensive coping model for low income, urban African American youth.

Focus on Emotions.

In the current study, emotion-focused responses were identified as related to African American culture and influencing coping. Adolescent focus group participants' ascribed emotion-focused responses to their culture and contrasted

them with strategies used by other cultural groups. In the psychological literature,

African Americans have been cited as relying more heavily on emotion focused

coping strategies including utilizing relational aggression, physical aggression,

and rumination (Tolan *et al.,* 2002). Emotional responses in this study were linked

to rumination about past and current stressors. Adolescents suggested that African

Americans dealt with higher levels of stress than members of other groups.

Adolescents seemed to believe that since African Americans dealt with more

stress, they worried more. This finding is consistent with findings from a recent

study, which found that African American adolescents' use of expressed emotion

and rumination were related to higher levels of stress (Grant & Apling, 2008).

Another interpretation of this theme could be linked to evidence of internalized

racism. Adolescents suggested they coped with stress differently than members of

other groups and utilized more aggressive tactics because they were African

American. This negative perception is an example of the "adolescent's private

regard" for their racial group membership. It is particularly noteworthy because

research suggests that adolescents with negative private regard may not be

buffered from the effects of depression, perceived stress, and have lower levels of

psychological well-being (Sellers et al., 2006).

Cultural Heritage.

Parents and adolescents indicated that the historical cultural legacy of

African Americans could also positively influence adolescents' coping repertoire.

This is consistent with previous literature, which suggests that having an

appreciation of African American cultural legacy may improve an adolescent's

behavior and ability to cope (Stevenson, 2007; Thomas et al., 2009). The

importance of African American cultural heritage for adolescent participants and

their parents is also consistent with the Triple Quandry theory of the African

American experience (Boykin, 1986). This theoretical model asserts that African

American culture is multifaceted and deficiency approaches to understanding

black culture are misguided due to their inability to acknowledge the strengths of

African American culture (Boykin, 1986). In this study, parents and adolescents

were able to identify strengths, even if they held some views of their culture that

may have been tainted by negative societal portrayals of African Americans

(Jones, 1983, Boykin, 1986).

Results suggested that adolescent participants' conceptualized their racial

identity as a source of pride despite messages of racism from mainstream society.

This finding may be linked to the socialization messages youth receive about their

cultural identity (Boykin, 1986). Such pride despite negative societal messages is

especially important since it has implications for coping and psychological

adjustment. According to the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems

Theory (PVEST), the adoption of healthy racial beliefs is a foundation for coping

for African American youth (Sellers et al., 2006; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann,

1997). One study of racial identity and psychological adjustment for African

American youth found that having positive attitudes about African Americans and

being African American was associated with more positive psychological

functioning (Sellers et al., 2006).

Additionally, similarities observed in parents' and adolescents' reports of

racial identity suggest that parents have provided their children with positive

messages of racial socialization related to belonging to the African American

ethnic group (Stevenson et al., 2002). Additionally, parents' suggestion that

elements of African American cultural heritage be included in the coping

intervention further reflects the importance they ascribe to their culture.

Adolescents indicated that being cognizant of the historical stressors faced by

African Americans as members of an oppressed minority group could serve as a

source of motivation for coping with current stressors. These findings are

consistent with prior theory which suggests that African American parents may

socialize their children to hold such beliefs through messages consistent with

Cultural Legacy Appreciation (Stevenson, 2005; Stevenson, 2007). Such beliefs

have been connected with positive regard or esteem for being African American

(Sellers et al., 2006).

Findings also suggested that parents and teachers believe it is important

for adolescents to emulate the educational behaviors of the pop icons of whom

they emulate. These pop icon models of success provide hope for the youth,

through showing that success is possible despite negative circumstances seem

possible. Additionally, these role models may provide a reference for the most

appropriate ways to cope with stress and to interact with others in general.

Knowing that a successful person has overcome the same obstacle faced by the

adolescent may help the adolescent reframe negative experiences and develop

more hopeful thoughts about the future (Pride, 2007; Dyson, 2007). This concept

is most closely linked to findings in the literature related to Cultural Legacy

Appreciation messages sent by African American parents to their children

(Stevenson, 2005; Stevenson, 2007). Specifically, in a study of racial socialization

messages for African American youth, regardless of income level or

neighborhood type, youth reported receiving messages from their parents to cope

with stress using such strategies (Stevenson, 2005).

> Influence of Context on Coping

Focus group and survey results suggested that neighborhood stressors,

pressure for survival versus adaptation, limited protective settings and

compromised relationships were elements of a low income, urban context that

impacted youth's coping strategies. These findings were similar and different to

findings from previous studies. Each of these themes is discussed below.

> > Neighborhood Stressors.

During focus groups, adolescents reported dealing with a number of

stressors as the result of living in a low income, urban context; however, on the

MESA participants reported fewer stressors. One interpretation of this finding

could be that these adolescents under-reported their exposure. Adolescents may

have under-reported due to desensitization to such events or may have preferred

not to endorse such exposure for other reasons. It is also possible that the stressors

identified in previous studies are less common in this community than they are

perceived to be. For example, it is possible that in this community adolescents

may not be approached to join gangs, but there still may be pressure to join. For

example, there may not be as much need for gangs to actively recruit if

membership brings status, protection, sense of belonging, or sources of income.

According to results from the MESA, the most frequently endorsed stressors faced by the adolescents within the past six months prior to data collection included the death of a close family member, seeing another student treated badly or discriminated against, having something of value stolen, and having an argument or fight with a friend. Each of these stressors have implications for adaption and survival. As a result of facing such stressors, it is possible that living in a low income, urban environment had a primarily negative impact on coping for these youth.

<p align="center">Pressure for <u>Survival versus Adaptation.</u></p>

Participants indicated that strategies such as use of physical aggression and presenting with a tough image were utilized for adaptation and survival purposes in their community and school. In terms of adaptation, a tough image was sometimes necessary to gain peer support or approval. Teachers and parents similarly indicated that adolescent's "aggressive" behavior was sometimes linked to the need to appear "tough" to peers. In terms of survival, adolescents and parents indicated physical aggression was sometimes necessary to ensure self-protection against bullying or victimization by gangs. Indeed another interpretation by teachers and parents of adolescents' need to display a "tough" image is that such an image may be necessary for self protection in the context of their community. Previous literature also suggests that presenting a tough image enables adoelscents to avoid victimizations. For example, in the neighborhoods participants live in, there are high rates of gang activity and drug trafficking. Neighborhood discord may foster situations in which aggression is necessary for

self-protection (Sullivan, Helms, Kliewer & Goodman, 2010). When experiencing

difficulty controlling such negative emotional reactions to these situations,

adolescents indicated that they sometimes resorted to physical aggression or

relational aggression towards peers or authority figures. In one study, Sullivan

and colleagues reported that relational aggression and reluctance or refusal to

express emotions were coping strategies utilized by youth in an urban setting in

order to build social status (Sullivan et al., 2010). This need to build social status

may be directly linked to avoiding victimization and is important for self

protection.

Findings suggested that the impact of living in a low income, urban

environment was negative, especially in terms of adolescents' self-perceptions.

For instance, adolescent focus group members reported that African Americans

were "more aggressive" than individuals from other cultures. This perception

suggests that these adolescents mistake contextual influences for cultural or racial

influences. In the context of their neighborhood, adolescents may be required to

utilize certain coping mechanisms to protect themselves that are applicable in the

setting in which they live, but may not apply adaptively in other settings,

regardless of their race. Due to the fact that these adolescents are often restricted

to their own community, have little exposure to other communities with greater

access to resources, and have little exposure to people of other cultural

backgrounds, they may attribute negative characteristics to race, solely. This lack

of exposure may contribute to some of the negative attributions adolescents held

about their racial group (e.g. African Americans are more "aggressive" than other

groups) (Stevenson, 2005).

Limited Protective Settings.

As a result of limited protective settings in their communities, adolescents'

neighborhood context represents an area of their lives in which they may need the

most support or largest repertoire of coping strategies in order to succeed and

survive. Many of the adolescent and parent participants discussed having

traumatic life experiences that were directly linked to living in an impoverished

community with few resources and high crime. Participants also indicated they

had limited access to protective settings in the community and that many of the

organizations that once provided services to the community were no longer there.

The closing of these resources resulted from lack of funding and community

deterioration (Robinson-English, Chicago Sun-Times, October 5, 2007). Despite

having a limited number of protective settings, adolescents and parents indicated

that some local churches served this function and provided social outlets for

adolescents.

Adolescents also reported experiencing their community as dangerous and

unsupportive. For example, adolescents discussed fear of rape for adolescent girls.

Additionally, adolescents reported having few supportive relationships in the

community. One adolescent reported that an older man in the community who

picked up trash was the most supportive person in the neighborhood. Later, this

adolescent expressed hopelessness in a statement indicating that even if

community members tried to do good things, the bad things (i.e. drugs, gang

activity) seemed to overpower their attempts.

Compromised Relationships.

In addition to reporting experiencing their community as unsupportive, participants indicated could not trust their neighbors or people outside their families due to chaotic neighborhood characteristics (high crime) and lack of "togetherness." Parents also expressed feelings of mistrust towards neighbors and voiced the fear that neighbors or friends might try to steal their possessions. In a neighborhood characterized by violence and crime, people may be unsure of whom to trust. Participants may have been unable to identify sources of support in the neighborhood because of this mistrust. This is similar to other research on African American adolescent male's perceptions of their community resources, which found that adolescents had negative attitudes towards their communities based on negative experiences in their communities (Cunningham, 1999). These findings are especially important since research suggests that neighborhood characteristics can influence family functioning and the use of coping strategies parents suggest for African American adolescents (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000; Stevenson, 2005).

Racism was another influential element that contributed to the influence of contextual factors. Originally racism was conceptualized in this study as influencing the cultural experience of African American adolescents and thereby impacting their coping repertoire and use of specific skills. However, adolescents and parents discussed racism in ways not originally expected in this study. Participants described the experience of racism in the community context, which is reflected in the literature as "environmental racism," and has been cited as

having negative implications for ineffective coping and increased stress exposure

(Kochman, 1992; Beale-Spencer, 2001). Indeed, parents indicated that it seemed

the police did not take community members seriously. Parents also indicated that

living in certain communities in certain areas of the city (i.e. African American

neighborhoods) meant slow response time from police in the event of emergency.

This experience of racism is particularly salient and relevant to coping because it

deals with one of the basic purposes of coping, finding ways to feel safe by

seeking support. This unexpected finding from the parent group suggests that

community members perceive that seeking support is a limited option because of

both racial and contextual factors.

Adolescent participants also discussed racism in the context of being

customers in stores in their neighborhoods. Adolescents indicated they were often

followed in stores and accused of stealing. This is of particular importance for two

reasons. First, adolescents in this study lived in a neighborhood that was

predominantly, if not entirely, African American. As a result, the only individuals

outside of their racial group with whom they interacted on a daily basis were

merchants and storeowners. This lack of interaction with individuals of other

ethnicity has particular implications for understanding the role of racism on a

broader systemic level (Beale Spencer, 2001). Even though the community is an

African American community, the people who own businesses and provide

services in the community are not from the community and are not African

American. Thus, it could be particularly disheartening to live in a context that is

impoverished, and where the only contact with non-African Americans is with

those who have some wealth or influence. Second, on a more individual level,

having the experience of being followed in a store and attributing that to one's

race could be equally as disheartening and could have negative implications for

self-esteem.

<u>Multiple Perspectives</u>

One goal of the study was to incorporate the perspectives of multiple

informant groups to guide the development of a coping intervention for low

income, urban African American youth. Adolescent, parent and teacher

perspectives of adolescents' coping needs and best practices for intervention

development were obtained. These perspectives were consistent with cognitive,

behavioral and social factors, some of which have been previously established in

the literature, and others unique to this population. Perspectives of the three

informant groups will be presented together in a cognitive, behavioral, and social

coping framework.

<u>Culturally and Contextually Relevant Cognitive Coping Strategies</u>

<u>Cognitive Coping Strategies</u>

Adolescents indicated that they could benefit from learning to think about

consequences before acting. Adolescents expressed concern that it was sometimes

difficult to control negative emotions, and as a result, they acted impulsively

without considering ways to deal with a problem or accessing coping skills.

Adolescents' tendency to act impulsively may be linked to having few coping

resources they can access when confronting stress or feeling upset. This finding

supports the findings of research, which suggests that adolescents be taught a

variety of coping strategies in order to increase the likelihood they will be able to cope (Gaylord-Harden *et al.,* 2010). For low income, urban youth, cognitive coping strategies such as positive repraisal and evaluating long-term outcome or results of actions have been established as particularly important for dealing with stressors unique to this context (Brady, Gorman-Smith, Henry & Tolan, 2008).

Adolescent participants also indicated that it is important that adolescents learn to cope with stereotypes about them based on race or their neighborhood of origin by pursuing education or "going to school." Adolescents' belief that education can provide a means of achieving success or overcoming negative stereotypes could be directly linked to messages provided by their parents. This is similar to findings from an exploratory study in which authors found that educational involvement for African American adolescents is influenced by social and cultural factors and enables youth to demonstrate resilience in urban settings (Miller & Macintosh, 1999).

Teachers also indicated that adolescents could utilize school as a coping resource. Teachers suggested that adolescents could benefit from conceptualizing school as a safe place where they can have respite from chaotic conditions in their homes or communities and seek social support. Although students may initially have difficulty identifying with school in this way, it might be helpful for them to consider school and receiving an education as a means of escaping negative conditions. Seeking out school as a place of reprieve is also influenced by adolescents' perceptions of the safety and warmth of the school (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1999). The primary school identified in this study was one that seemed to

invite parents and community members to be involved and is probably

experienced as a safe community space.

In focus groups, teachers expressed concerns that adolescents had

difficulty determining when to respond to a stressor and when to ignore it. The

ability to distinguish between stressors is necessary for the appropriate application

and pairing of specific coping strategies with specific stressors. For example, on

the MESA, adolescents endorsed experiencing a number of harsh, uncontrollable

stressors related to community violence. Focus group participants suggested it

was important to avoid situations that, in their contextual experience, were

uncontrollable and could result in violence (i.e. "stay away from crowds."). This

use of an avoidance strategy is more appropriate than an active strategy such as

approaching the situation (i.e. approaching the situation to gather information and

find out what's happening). This is consistent with previous literature, which

suggests that active coping strategies can be inappropriate for children and

adolescents living in low income, urban environments due to the increased

possibility of victimization or danger (Clarke *et al.,* 2006; Gaylord-Harden *et al.,*

2008). These findings suggest that one important strategy that should be

incorporated into the intervention is teaching adolescents to distinguish between

uncontrollable and controllable stressors.

Culturally and Contextually Relevant Behavioral Coping Strategies

Adolescents also indicated that they could benefit from learning specific

physical activities that would allow them to release negative emotions to cope

with stress. The purpose of such physical activities or techniques is to enable the

adolescents to physically release negative emotional responses onto neutral

objects. This physical release allows the adolescent to potentially rid themselves

of the negative emotion, even if only temporarily. For example, adolescent focus

group participants described participating in structured activities in which they

were taught to squeeze a ball as hard as they could to get rid of angry feelings.

The physical release of negative emotions has been cited in the literature as an

effective coping strategy for adolescents (Ayers, Sandler, West, Roosa, 1996).

This coping strategy may also be particularly helpful for adolescents because it

allows them to deal with negative feelings without getting into trouble. Whereas

strategies linked to the physical release of emotions may only provide temporary

relief, such techniques may be appropriate in circumstances in which it is difficult

for an adolescent to talk about a particular stressor or express feelings related to

the stressor.

Culturally and Contextually Relevant Social Coping Strategies

Adolescents indicated they could benefit from learning to choose friends

who are pro-social, reflecting the importance of social support in coping for these

youth. Adolescents in this study indicated that making bad choices about friends

could result in getting into trouble due to interacting with negatively influencing

peers. Participants' indication that careful selection of peers is important and

related to previous findings suggesting that socially destructive behavior in urban

communities is linked to negative peer associations (Crane, 1991; Leventhal &

Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Rankin & Quane, 2002). This is also relevant since many

youth mental health and academic outcome of youth have been linked to exposure

to negatively influencing peers (Quane & Ranking, 1998; Crane, 1991; Rankin & Quane, 2002).

Learning to communicate with adults was another important socially related coping mechanisms suggested by adolescents in this sample. Adolescents also expressed concern that when they are angry, it is sometimes difficult to talk to adults because that form of emotional behavior may lead to expressing themselves in ways that are unacceptable to the adult. Adolescents indicated it was good to be able to talk to adults as a means of gaining support. This is important because research suggests that positive relationships with supportive adults, especially supportive parents, can protect adolescents from the effects of stressors (Rankin & Quane, 2002).

Adolescents and parents identified social support in religious settings as an important element of culture that positively influences coping responses. For example, the general idea that church served as a place for learning how to interact with others and how to deal with stressful situations was identified across the parent and student subgroups. Participants also indicated that church attendance with family members and seeking advice from religious leaders were significant coping strategies. These aspects of church involvement could be conceptualized as a means of garnering social support from family members or community members who also attend church. For example, religious figures were identified as individuals who have the potential to model and teach adolescents to develop new ways of thinking about stressful situations. Church attendance may also link adolescents to other youth and provide an indirect source of support for

parents through church programming (e.g. church school, youth groups, etc.). For adolescent focus group participants that attended church, being able to seek support from religious figures such as pastors was important. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests that religion and church involvement have historically served as a major support for African Americans (Chapman & Steger, 2010; Lewis-Coles & Constantine, 2006; McCabe, Clark, Barnett, 1999).

The Inclusion of Teacher Perspectives

One goal of the study was to incorporate teacher perspectives of adolescent coping needs as this was lacking in the current coping literature. Teachers indicated that adolescents needed to learn self-discipline, self-respect, and goal setting skills. Teachers perceptions of these African American adolescents as lacking respect, lacking self discipline and having difficulty controlling their anger is similar to discussions found in other literature which suggests that teachers of African American youth tend to at times overly report such behavior (Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, Zamel, 2009; Epstein, March, Conners, & Jackson, 1998; Ferguson, 2000; Roderick, 2003). In one study of teacher's perceptions of African American males' aggressive, oppositional and defiant behaviors, researchers found that teachers tended to rate students with higher racial socialization beliefs and cultural legacy appreciation beliefs as less unruly (Thomas *et al.,* 2009). It is possible that the self-discipline, self-respect, and goal setting skills identified by teachers in this sample as good coping skills for adolescents to learn could be taught through cultural legacy appreciation (i.e. Prominent Models of Success) (Stevenson, 2007; Thomas *et al.,* 2009).

<u>Culturally and Contextually Relevant Coping Intervention Recommendations</u>

Findings from the focus groups and from the quantitative measures revealed important contextual aspects that should be incorporated into coping interventions for these youth.

<u>Protective Settings.</u>

One important contextually relevant factor to consider is access to protective settings, though participants noted these are limited in number or nonexistent in their neighborhoods. Protective community settings should be identified or developed so that adolescents can readily and easily access social support. In addition to being a place where coping interventions could be implemented, participants suggested utilizing neighborhood schools and churches. Of the places that were protective, one community church was identified. The church currently provides an after school "Center" where the youth use computers, obtain employment, and play sports. The reliance on this particular church may be linked to the fact that this organization is one of the only places in the community where adolescents can have social interactions and participate in extracurricular activities outside of school.

<u>Prosocial Outlets.</u>

Participants indicated that coping interventions could best address the needs of youth by providing them with prosocial outlets that could enable them to learn new skills and develop discipline. Participants also suggested developing partnerships with community businesses for additional resources and experiences. As noted in the focus groups, programs that include a focus on protective settings

for low income, urban youth in communities with few protective settings may

have to forge partnerships with protective settings in other communities.

Additionally, teachers and parents indicated the intervention should incorporate

activities that would allow the youth to be exposed to careers, other cultures, and

other communities.

Parent Involvement.

Teacher and parent focus group members strongly recommended that a

parent component be added to the intervention and provided specific goals for that

new component. This finding is important because research on the efficacy of

coping skill programs suggests that in order to result in positive changes,

programs must attempt to minimize stress in the child or adolescents environment

and promote social support (Clarke, 2006; Sandler, 2001; Weissberg *et al*., 1991).

Parent or family involvement might be a good way to impact the child and family

context by teaching the same coping skills the adolescents learn. Program

participation could also provide a means for improving social support between

parents and adolescents through collaborative activities and psycho education.

Mentoring.

Participants were asked to provide their opinions about incorporating

mentorship into the coping intervention. Participants indicated they would like to

have individuals from the community, who have achieved success, serve as

mentors. In the event that mentors from outside the community were recruited,

participants were adamant that mentors be exposed to the community and have

knowledge about it before forming relationships with intervention participants.

Participants also indicated that relationships between mentors and participants would take time and effort to build and should be maintained over long periods of time. This is especially important since research suggests that mentoring relationships during adolescents characterized by closeness in relationships with mentors and the formation of strong emotional bonds with mentors predicts favorable mental health outcome for adolescents (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005).

For the present study, the principal investigators proposed intervention components and requested participants' feedback about those components. Participants indicated a number of ways these components could be adapted to increase their relevance for low income, urban African American adolescents.

Implications for Research

In this study, interpretations were based on adolescent, parent and teacher perceptions generated through open-ended questions and enhanced by open dialogue. This qualitative approach allows researchers to avoid imposing their own perspectives of what coping needs might be, and instead obtain such information from the individuals with whom they seek to work. To date, the coping intervention literature has focused exclusively on utilizing measures and instruments derived from research on other samples of adolescents in order to understand the nature of coping. This research relies solely on the report of this unique sample to better understand their experience in the context of race, socioeconomic status, and urban environment. This study provides a conceptualization of coping that is based on the unique perspectives of low income, urban African American adolescents, parents and teachers in the same

community. Through a phenomenological qualitative approach the unique perspectives of participants were elucidated and conclusions were drawn based on their voices and experiences. As a result of this approach, this study's findings represent a more in-depth understanding of the links between culture, context and coping, compared to research solely suing a quantitative approach.

This study also contributes a method of establishing inter-rater reliability for the interpretation of focus group data. The card sort used in this study was a method established by the researcher to ensure that teams of raters were able to independently categorize specific pieces of texts into thematic areas with consistency. This procedure increased the likelihood that data were interpreted with consistency.

Limitations

Due to the fact that there is often substantial within group variance for ethnic minority groups, the generalizability of this study's findings to African American adolescents who are not low income, or to low income, urban adolescents who are not African American may be difficult. When adaptations are made for specific cultural groups, it is difficult to generalize to ethnic minority groups who may have dissimilar experiences (Lau 2006). This study is also limited in that it will not be able to answer questions related to intervention efficacy or effectiveness for this population.

Another limitation of this method is that the views of all adolescents may not be represented by the views of the participants sampled. Even with in this select group, some of the participants selected to participate in the member

checking had views that differed from the focus group participants not involved in the member checking process. For example, parents expressed differences in their views of the best ways to cope with conflict in terms of engaging in avoidant or active strategies. Parents' differences in opinion may be linked to the fact that African American youth have to employ a variety of strategies to deal with the stressors they face, as suggested by current literature on stress and coping for these youth (Gaylord-Harden, Cunningham, Holmbeck & Grant, 2010).

A sampling limitation of the study is related to difficulty recruiting parents from the originally identified school. Although most of the parent participants were from the originally identified school, parents from a neighboring school were invited to participate when it became difficult to recruit parents at the original school. One reason it may have been difficult to recruit parents is that some parents indicated they were not interested due to conflicts with their work schedules. Another reason it may have been difficult to recruit parents could be related to the fact that the originally identified school would be closed by the public school system at the end of the year. Parents may have felt less connected to the school and may have been hesitant to participate in a research study at the school as a result. Many of the parents from the original school were contacted directly by the school principal. The principal was in her first year as principal and may have also been less connected to a wide range of parents. During recruitment, some students indicated that after sharing information with their parents, their parents were simply not interested in participating.

Finally, some of the focus group questions may have influenced study

findings. These focus group questions were linked to previous literature and the expectations of the researcher. As a result, it is possible that some hypotheses could have been presented in addition to research questions. For instance, in the focus group questions, specific questions about religion were included in the portion of the focus groups that focused on culture. These questions were posed to focus group participants based on previous theoretical conceptualizations of African American culture that religion. In terms of the theoretical basis of the current study, such questions are usually not a part of research based totally on socially constructed knowledge claims.

Few gender differences were observed in adolescents' report of the specific types of coping strategies they could benefit from learning. Based on previous findings in the literature, gender differences in coping have been identified. The lack of findings in this study may have been the result of the fact that focus group questions were not gender specific. The study may have benefitted from research questions or focus group questions linked to gender.

Conclusion

Coping interventions for low income, urban African American adolescents should teach adolescents both culturally and contextually relevant coping skills. Culturally relevant strategies are important in terms of their ability to foster positive beliefs about racial and ethnic group membership. This is especially important for African American youth, who as members of a historically underrepresented and oppressed minority group may receive negative messages about their race or ethnicity. Building these adolescents capacity to cope with a

variety of stressors from a cultural perspective may further reinforce and foster the development of a healthy racial identity. Contextually relevant coping strategies are especially important for incorporation in such interventions due to the nature of stressors for these youth. Low income, urban youth are at disproportionately high risk for victimization as the result of living in impoverished communities with high rates of crime and lack of economic resources. It is important that adolescents learn coping strategies that will enable them to deal with such stressors in ways that will hopefully result in some success. It is also important that coping interventions teach adolescents to match specific stressors with specific coping mechanisms that have cultural and contextual links.

The coping model developed in this study posits that coping for low income, urban African American youth has both cultural and contextual components. These components include factors that influence coping and factors that can be utilized as coping strategies. Finally, the cultural and contextual copings mechanisms identified by the participants of this study are cognitive, behavioral and social in nature and can be applied to address controllable and uncontrollable stress.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to develop a culturally and contextually relevant model of coping for low income, urban, African American adolescents. The mixed methods study utilized socially constructed knowledge claims to understand the experience of study participants. Data were collected concurrently from a sample of adolescents, parents and teachers at an elementary school in a large Midwestern city. Data were triangulated to develop the model and inform intervention development.

Results based on quantitative measures of racial identity suggested that adolescents in this sample had positive regard for their ethnic identity as African American. Adolescents and parents reported that being African American was a central part of their identity. Results based on measures of exposure to stressors suggest that youth in this sample encountered a number of harsh, uncontrollable stressors linked to the context in which they lived. Similarly, focus group responses tended to focus on coping related to contextual elements as opposed to culturally based strategies. It seems that youth in this sample may deal with more stressors linked to context than culture, although youth did report experiencing some culturally related stressors (i.e. racism, and racism leads to context).

Focus group results suggest that culturally relevant and contextually relevant strategies are important for low income, urban African American adolescents. Aspects of culturally relevant coping are multifaceted. Specifically, culturally relevant coping strategies for African American youth include religion

and spirituality, interconnectedness, knowledge of cultural heritage, and emotion

focused strategies. Participants indicated that participation in religious activities

such as prayer and church attendance, and reframing situations based on religious

or spiritual knowledge were important ways of coping. Additionally, maintaining

relationships with family members, and relying on family members for advice and

support were identified as important coping strategies linked to

interconnectedness. Participants also indicated that possessing knowledge of

African American cultural heritage was important. Such knowledge could serve

as a source of hope for adolescents based on historical accomplishments of

African Americans despite harsh circumstances.

Contextually relevant coping strategies for low income urban, African

American youth are influenced by experiences in the community and relationships

in the community. Participants indicated that they often experienced their

communities as unsafe. Participants expressed some mistrust of their neighbors

and indicated that there were few people doing good things. However,

participants indicated that protective settings in the community such as churches

with afterschool programs served as places where they could access support and

make social connections.

The model presented in this dissertation contributes to the field a lens

through which adolescents' use of culturally and contextually relevant coping

strategies can be understood. Most importantly the purpose of the model's

development was to inform the development of a coping intervention for low

income, urban African American youth by identifying aspects of culture and

context that play important roles in coping. These elements should be

incorporated in coping skills development programs for these youth.

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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Prepare all relevant materials for participants in a folder—e.g., agenda, student assent forms—2 copies for each student so each can keep one, and advisory board interest form. Prepare all other relevant materials/equipment per checklist for informational interviews. Ask students as they enter the room if they are in 7ᵗʰ or 8ᵗʰ grade. If there are any who are not in the 7ᵗʰ or 8ᵗʰ grade, let them know the group is for 7ᵗʰ and 8ᵗʰ graders, thank them for their time and tell them they may be able to help out in another way at a later date. Follow the same procedures for any students who had not previously turned in their parental consent form (i.e., ask for the form as they enter; if they do not have the form, let them know they cannot participate today but may be able to help out later in some other way).

I. INTRODUCTION (*15 minutes/ total elapsed time 15 minutes*)
Hello everyone. My name is Kristin Carothers and this is (Assistant Moderator), and Assistant 2). I am getting my Ph. D. in clinical psychology at DePaul University. I will facilitate today's discussion about helping people your age deal with stress in their everyday lives.
At some point in Introduction, it might be good to share a bit more information about yourself—examples: where you are from originally, your interests relating to this research-- as an "ice breaker."

Coping Intervention Background
I want to start by briefly talking about the research project that is the reason for this focus group. We are trying to develop a coping program for African American people your age who live in Chicago and other big cities that will help them learn ways to deal with stress and to succeed in school. Coping is anything people do to deal with stress. We are hoping to help people your age identify and use the best strategies for dealing with all the different types of stress they face, and we want to connect them with mentors who will support them as they learn to use these strategies. Last but not least, we want to think about ways to connect people your age with places where they can get help and use the strategies and have fun. We are very interested in your ideas about how we can make the program both helpful and fun.

Participant Selection
You might be interested to know how you were invited to participate in today's meeting. You were invited to participate because you are a student at a school within the X school. We are specifically interested in talking to students from this school since we will eventually run our program in your school and with other students who attend schools like this one.

Purpose of the Focus Group
To help us develop the program I was just telling you about, we would like to know what you and other people your age, parents and teachers think African

American people your age need to learn to deal with stress in their schools, homes, and neighborhoods in order to be successful in school and life.

One of the main goals of this focus group is to learn how culture and your surroundings affect that way you and other African American people your age deal with stress. Can anybody tell me what culture is? Culture is the beliefs and values and traditions of your community or family. For example, the holidays you celebrate, your religion, your values, the traditions your family passes down, what your family thinks is important, the way you dress, and the music you listen to could all be examples of your culture. Everyone in America shares some things related to American culture, but there might also be things that are specific to African American culture. We want to know what your ideas are about the ways in which African American culture might affect coping with stress.

We're also very interested in how your surroundings affect the way you cope. There might be things about your culture that tell you to cope one way, but you don't think you can do that because of the way things are in your neighborhood or because of what people around you would do if you tried it. So, we also want to know your ideas about how your surroundings, your school, your friends, associates, acquaintances, and other people around you might affect how you and other people your age cope with stress. In other words, what might help you most in coping with stress?

I will lead nine focus groups with at least two groups of parents, two groups of teachers, and four groups of students to get some ideas about what our program should be like. Information from this group will be combined with information collected from those other groups. We will then use all the information to develop a coping program for people your age and then determine if it can help.

Consent
Ask assistant to distribute consent forms.
Before we begin, we need to get your written agreement to participate in this focus group as part of our research. As noted on the form I am passing out, participation is voluntary–this means that you do not have to be a part of this group if you don't want to and it is fine for you not to answer any questions if you don't want to and also you can stop being in the group at any time.

Confidentiality
Before we read over the consent form, there are a couple things on it that I want to point out. The first is confidentiality. Confidentiality means that anything shared in this group will not be shared outside of this group. We will not use your real names or any other information to identify you when we write up the results of these focus group discussions. As researchers, we will maintain confidentiality of the information that you provide. This means that no one, including your parents and teachers, will be told about your answers. The only exceptions to this are if you tell us that you are in danger because of a medical condition that no one

knows about or because you are planning to hurt yourself or someone else or if you tell us that you or someone else under age has been abused or had their basic human needs neglected. If you share those types of information with us, we will need to tell people about it so that you (or other under age people) can be protected and kept safe. Aside from those types of information, any information you share with us today will only be shared with research assistants so that they can help me analyze and understand the things that are said here today. As I mentioned before, we will combine the results from all the focus groups and will link the comments only to the type of group that made them. For example, we might say that a comment came from the parents groups or the students groups.

One of the risks of participating in this research is a loss of confidentiality of what is said during the focus group because it is possible that someone in the group may repeat what is said outside the group. In order to try to prevent this from happening, one of our first group rules will be that we agree that <u>what is said in the focus group stays in the focus group</u>. More information about the rules of the focus group will be discussed later. Does anyone have any questions about this? *Askfor questions and answer them on a group basis in a time-efficient manner (at this time and throughout the introduction portion).*

<u>Tape Recording</u>
We will be tape-recording the focus groups, but this is only so that I can go back later and fill in my notes. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will be taking notes about general ideas that come up, but he/ she can't write fast enough to get everything you say down. So, the tape recorder will help us go back and fill in the blanks when we need to. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will not be writing down the actual names of anyone. You can check for that any time you like. You can also see that there will be some other helpers with us today, too *(<u>introduce each by first name</u>).* They are part of the research team and will respect your privacy just like <u>Assistant Moderator</u> and I will.

Read assent form aloud and answer any questions participants may have. Have students sign forms and turn them in. Ask assistant to ensure that she has a signed assent from everyone and that everyone has a copy of the assent form for his/ her records.
Assistant then numbers each completed assent form with correct participant Study ID# as well as position # from seating chart.

<u>Focus Group Guidelines and Rules</u>
There's one last thing I want to do before we get started with our discussion. And that is to go over a few things that will help make today's group a good experience for everyone. As you can see on the wall, we have come up with some "<u>Guidelines for Focus Group Participation</u>" that we would like everyone to follow.

Probably the most important one is that we need to agree that <u>what is said in the</u>

focus group stays in the focus group. Why do you think this important? *Make sure that the following points are covered: 1) sharing what someone else said in the group afterwards could make that person feel bad and 2) if people don't think that their comments will be kept private, they may not be willing to share some of the information that might be most important for us to know.*

Can everyone agree that what is said in the group stays in the group?
Ensure that everyone agrees to this rule. If someone does not agree with this rule, thank them for their time, tell them they can't be a part of this group, but invite them to be a part of the advisory board.

Even though we have agreed on this rule, there is a chance that someone in the group may talk about things that are said in the group outside the group. We can't control what you do once you leave here, but we hope you will honor the rules we have agreed on and remember that the things said here are private and should not be discussed with people outside the group.

As we discussed a minute ago, we want to keep things private in this group so that everyone feels comfortable enough to be really honest. We want everyone to share their thoughts and opinions.

Sometimes we may disagree but we want to create a safe space where we can agree to disagree respectfully. To make it a comfortable space for sharing, I would also ask that only <u>one person talks at a time</u>, and if you need to express a view that you wait until it is your turn. Is everyone okay with that?

Also, I would like for us to establish the rule that <u>we will not use real names to identify people</u>. You also don't need to ever tell us about your personal experiences if you don't want to–just your general opinions is O.K. Specific examples can be good but please leave out the actual full names of the people involved to respect their privacy.

A very important last one is to simply <u>tell as many of your ideas and opinions as possible</u>. There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions, so please don't be shy about telling us what you think. Do you have questions about these guidelines? If not, I think it's time to get started.

II. DISCUSSION ABOUT COPING, CULTURE, AND CONTEXT*(45 minutes/ total elapsed time 65 minutes)*

Questions
[Opening Activity}

All of you have probably been in stressful situations that were difficult to deal with. Before we talk about this as a group, pick a marker and piece of paper and write down something about a stressful situation that you've had to deal with and

one or two words that pop into your mind when you think about how you dealt with it.
Pause briefly to allow words to be written down.
Would anybody be willing to share what you wrote down?
For all questions, but especially this first question, try to elicit thoughts from each member of the group, but avoid "serial interviewing" (i.e., going around the circle and asking each participant in turn separately for her/ his views; this tends to create an overly formal atmosphere and can result in group members directing their responses to the moderator rather than the entire group)–instead, seek to engender a "true" group discussion, one that is both spontaneous and interactive.
[Begin Discussion Here:] Now let's talk a little bit about how people your age deal with stress. How do young people deal with stressful situations in their lives?

How did you learn to deal with stress? Who did you learn from?
In general, which ways of dealing with things seem to work well for you (and/ or for other people)?
In general, which ways of dealing with things seem not to work well for you (and/ or for other people)?

Can you tell us about a stressful situation that you dealt with that went well?
Can you tell us about a stressful situation that you dealt with that didn't go well?

What are the hardest things for you to deal with? Why are they the hardest?

Now let's talk about <u>race and culture</u>. Pick a marker and sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your culture as an African American. What are some important things about your culture that help you deal with stress? Just for fun, let's start by very, very quickly—in fact as quickly as we can--going around the group and hearing just one or two words that you wrote down about culture or race. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

Can you think of some ways that you could use those things to deal with stress…or teach those things to other people your age to help them deal with stress?
What specific experiences do African American or Black teenagers have to learn to deal with because of their race?

Are there ways in which being an African American affects how you deal with stress? If yes, how so?

Now let's talk about religion or spirituality.*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].*

Pick a marker and a sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your religion or spirituality as an African American. Religion might include being involved in an event that is related to your religious beliefs like going to church. Spirituality might be something you do on your own or without going some place special like praying…What are some important things about your religion or spirituality that help you deal with stress? Let's try to go as quickly as we can around the group hearing one or two of the words you wrote down about spirituality or religion. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

- **Discussion:** Has religion or spirituality been helpful to you in coping with stress?
    - o   If yes, how has it helped?
    - o   IF not, why has religion or spirituality not been helpful?

Now let's talk about your family or people who are like family to you.*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].*
Pick a marker and a sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your family or people who are like family to you. What are some important things about your family that help you deal with stress? Let's try to go as quickly as we can around the group hearing one or two of the words you wrote down about your family or people who are like family to you. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

- **Discussion:** Have family members or people who are like family been helpful to you in coping with stress?
    - o   If yes, how have they helped?
    - o   IF not, why haven't they been helpful?

Now let's talk about <u>your surroundings</u>, like your neighborhood, your school, the people you have to deal with…Pick a marker and sheet of paper and write down one or two words that describe your surroundings. Again, just for fun, let's start by very, very quickly—in fact as quickly as we can--going around the group and hearing just one or two words that you wrote down about your surroundings. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

What types of difficult things have you and your family experienced in the community you live in?

What do your parents or other adults tell you to do to deal with these things?

What do you actually do when you experience these things or when you're worried you are going to experience these things?

Are there ways in which your surroundings (like your neighborhood, family, school, other places you spend time, friends, acquaintances) affect how you deal

with stress? How do they affect the way you deal with stress?

Do you get different messages from different people and different places about how you should deal with stress? Who gives you which messages? How do you decide which ones to follow?

Are there ways of dealing with stress that you wish you didn't have to use but you feel like you have to because your surroundings make you? What types of things have to be done in your neighborhood?

Are there ways you'd like to cope with stress (because of what you believe is right, your religion, your culture, or your family) but you feel you can't because of what would happen if you tried?

Summary *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 70 minutes)*
Now Assistant Moderator is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.
Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add?

III COMPLETION OF SURVEY MEASURES AND BREAK*(20 minutes/total elapsed time 90 minutes)*
Ask assistants to pass out surveys (MESA & MIBI-teen) and pencils.
Before we take a break, I'd like you to fill out a few questionnaires about the types of stress you may have faced and your cultural identity to get you ready for the next part of our discussion.
The next part of our discussion will focus on developing a coping intervention.

Administer survey to group by reading both instructions and individual items aloud, pausing briefly to allow a response for each item. Important: avoid group discussion—explain that there will be lots more time for this later; also avoid answering questions at a group-level but instead rely on other team members to circulate and answer those individually.
Ask assistants to collect survey measures and pencils. If participants need more time or assistance completing the surveys, make sure they receive it during the break.

After you've finished your surveys, feel free to get up stretch, get some snacks, and go to the bathroom. We'll start up again in 5 minutes

Turn over tape in tape-recorder if needed.
Direct participants to the refreshment table and give directions to the restrooms as needed.
After 10 minutes, make sure everyone is back in the room.
O.K., if everyone would take a seat, we'll get going with the rest of the focus

group.

IV. DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED INTERVENTION *(20 minutes/ total elapsed time 110 minutes)*

Now I'm going to get your ideas about how to develop a program to help people your age deal with stress. First, I'm going to summarize the things you told me would be helpful. *Summarize participants responses related to effective coping strategies.*

What do you think would be the best way to help young people be able to do these things (or get these things in their lives)?

Now we're going to present the ideas we have for our program so far.
Present youth with summary sheet outlining the three primary components that will be part of the intervention.

So, there are three things that will be part of the program. The first is training in how best to cope with stress. The second is having a mentor. A mentor is someone who is older and more experienced, who provides support and guidance. And, the third is getting connected to a place that is supportive. It could be a Boys and Girls Club or a church or another organization in your community or nearby.

If you were going to put these three pieces together to make a program, how would you do it?

Would it be a good idea to have the mentors teach the young people how to cope? Why or why not?

Would it be a good idea to have a coping training at your school? Why or why not?

If there was a coping training at your school, would it be good for the mentors to come too, so that they can help the young people practice the coping? Why or why not?

Would it be a good idea for young people to learn the coping strategies at the supportive place we connect them to, like the Boys and Girls Club or a church or some other organization in their community or nearby? Why or why not?

If we did have young people learn the coping strategies at the supportive place, would it be better if they learned it as part of a training focused on coping or as part of a project that was focused on something else?

What are some places in your community or nearby that would be good places to get young people connected with? Would it work to learn coping strategies in those places?

If we went with the idea of teaching coping in a place where you could also complete some type of project, what kind of place or organization would be best? What kind of project would be best?

If we have mentors help young people with coping, would it be better if mentors just help when situations come up or should mentors teach young people ways of coping even before they know about their problems.

Now, I'm going to ask some more specific questions about the program.

Who should get to be in the program?

At what age or grade would it be helpful to start a program like this? *Depending on what they say, you may need to say something like: One thing we're thinking is that some of these ways to deal with problems are easier to understand and do when you're older, like in the 6th grade…What do you all think about that?*

Who should the mentors be? What should the mentors be like?

How long should the program last?
Would it be helpful if we spread it out or did a lot at one time?

Would it be better to spend time alone with a mentor or spend more time in groups with other people?

Would it help to practice the coping just with your mentor or with other young people or adults too?

<u>**Summary**</u> *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 115 minutes)*
Now <u>Assistant Moderator</u> is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.
Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add?

V. CLOSING *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 120 minutes)*
Ask assistants to pass out <u>Future Contact Interest Form</u>, receipt form, pen, and blank assent form for each participant to take home.
This is the end of the focus group. Thank you for your time! You've all done a really great job!
Be sure to get your gift cards before you leave and sign the receipt showing that you received them.
Thank youth and say goodbye, individually, if possible. Assistants should assume primary responsibility for logistics of youth leaving–handing out gift certificates after completion of payment form is verified, waiting as needed with youth outside, making sure each youth has a ride home, etc.

PARENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
Prepare all relevant materials for parents in a folder—e.g., agenda, parents consent form—2 copies, one to keep, and future contact interest form; prepare all other relevant materials/equipment per checklist for interviews.

INTRODUCTION*(15 minutes/total elapsed time 15 minutes)*
Hello everyone. My name is Kristin Carothers and this is (Assistant Moderator), and Assistant 2). I am getting my PhD. in clinical psychology at DePaul University. I will facilitate today's discussion about helping young people deal with stress in their everyday lives.
At some point in Introduction, it might be good to share a bit more information about yourself—examples: where you are from originally, your interests relating to this research-- as an "ice breaker."

Coping Intervention Background
I want to start by briefly talking about the research project that this focus group is a part of. We are trying to develop a coping program for African American adolescents in 7-8th grade who live in Chicago and other big cities that will help them learn ways to deal with stress and to succeed in school. Coping is anything people do to deal with stress. We are hoping to provide youth with the best strategies for dealing with all the different types of stress they face, and we want to connect them with mentors who will support them as they learn to use these strategies. Last but not least, we want to connect youth with places where they can learn more about dealing with stress and/ or organize with other people to changes the stress that affects them and/ or pursue their dreams and have fun. We are very interested in your ideas about how we can make the program both helpful and fun.

Participant Selection
You might be interested to know how you were invited to participate in today's meeting. All of you were invited because you are parents of children in the 7th or 8th grade at this school. We are extremely interested in parent's opinions on how African American teenagers deal with stress.

Purpose of the Focus Group
To help us develop the program I was just telling you about, we would like to know what students, parents and teachers think African American teenagers need to learn to deal with stress in their schools, homes, and neighborhoods in order to be successful in school and life.
One of the main goals of this focus group is to learn how culture and surroundings affect the way your child and other African American teenagers deal with stress. Culture is the beliefs and values and traditions of your community or family. For example, the holidays you celebrate, your religion, your values, the traditions your family passes down, what your family thinks is important, the way you dress, and the music you listen to could all be examples of your culture. Everyone in America shares some things related to American culture, but there might also be things that are specific to African American culture. We want to know what

your ideas are about the ways in which African American culture might affect how teenagers cope with stress.

We're also very interested in how your child's surroundings affect the ways they cope. There might be things about your culture that tell your child to cope one way, but your child might not think they can do that because of the way things are in your neighborhood or because of what people around them would do if they tried it. So, we also want to know your ideas about how your child's surroundings, their school, their friends, associates, acquaintances, and other people around them might affect how they and other teenagers cope with stress.

I will lead nine focus groups with at least two groups of parents, two groups of teachers, and four groups of students to get some ideas about what our program should be like. Information from this group will be combined with information collected from those other groups. We will then use all the information to develop a coping program for young people.

Consent
Ask assistant to distribute consent forms.
Before we begin, we need to get your written agreement to participate in this focus group as part of our research. As noted on the form I am passing out, participation is voluntary–this means that you do not have to be a part of this group if you don't want to and it is fine for you not to answer any questions if you don't want to and also you can stop being in the group at any time.

Confidentiality
Before we read over the consent form, there are a couple things on it that I want to point out. The first is confidentiality. Confidentiality means that anything shared in this group will not be shared outside of this group. We will not use your real names or any other information to identify you when we write up the results of these focus group discussions.

As researchers, we will maintain the confidentiality of the information that you provide. This means that no one, including your children and teachers, will be told about your answers. The only exceptions to this are if you tell us that your child is in danger because of a medical condition that no one knows about or because your child is planning to hurt themselves or someone else or if you tell us that your child or someone else under age has been abused or had their basic human needs neglected. If you share those types of information with us, we will need to tell people about it so that your child (or other under age people) can be protected and kept safe. Aside from those types of information, any information you share with us today will only be shared with research assistants so that they can help me analyze and understand the things that are said here today. As I mentioned before, we will combine the results from all the focus groups and will link the comments only to the type of group that made them. For example, we might say that a comment came from the parents groups or the students groups.

One of the risks of participating in this research is a loss of confidentiality of what is said during the focus group because it is possible that someone in the group may repeat what is said outside the group. In order to try to prevent this from happening, one of our first group rules will be that we agree that <u>what is said in the focus group stays in the focus group</u>. More information about the rules of the focus group will be discussed later. Does anyone have any questions about this?

Ask for questions and answer them on a group basis in a time-efficient manner (at this time and throughout the introduction portion).

<u>Tape Recording</u>
We will be tape-recording the focus groups, but this is only so that I can go back later and fill in my notes. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will be taking notes about general ideas that come up, but he/ she can't write fast enough to get everything you say down. So, the tape recorder will help us go back and fill in the blanks when we need to. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will not be writing down the actual names of anyone. You can check for that any time you like. You can also see that there will be some other helpers with us today, too *(<u>introduce each by first name</u>).* They are part of the research team and will respect your privacy just like <u>Assistant Moderator</u> and I will.

Read assent form aloud and answer any questions participants may have. Have parents sign forms and turn them in. Ask assistant to ensure that she has a signed assent from everyone and that everyone has a copy of the assent form for his/ her records.
Assistant then numbers each completed assent form with correct participant Study ID# as well as position # from seating chart.

<u>Focus Group Guidelines and Rules</u>
There's one last thing I want to do before we get started with our discussion. And that is to go over a few things that will help make today's group a good experience for everyone. As you can see on the wall, we have come up with some "<u>Guidelines for Focus Group Participation</u>" that we would like everyone to follow.

Probably the most important one is that we need to agree that <u>what is said in the focus group stays in the focus group</u>. This is important because *1) sharing what someone else said in the group afterwards could make that person feel bad and 2) if people don't think that their comments will be kept private, they may not be willing to share some of the information that might be most important for us to know.*

Can everyone agree to this?

Ensure that everyone agrees to this rule. If someone does not agree with this rule,

thank them for their time, tell them they can't be a part of this group, but invite them to be a part of the advisory board.

Even though we have agreed on this rule, there is a chance that someone in the group may talk about things that are said in the group outside the group. We can't control what you do once you leave here, but we hope you will honor the rules we have agreed on and remember that the things said here are private and should not be discussed with people outside the group.

As we discussed a minute ago, we want to keep things private in this group so that everyone feels comfortable enough to be really honest. We want everyone to share their thoughts and opinions.

Sometimes we may disagree but we want to create a safe space where we can agree to disagree respectfully. To make it a comfortable space for sharing, I would also ask that only one person talks at a time, and if you need to express a view that you wait until it is your turn. Is everyone okay with that?

Also, I would like for us to establish the rule that we will not use real names to identify people. You also don't need to ever tell us about your personal experiences if you don't want to–just your general opinions is O.K. Specific examples can be good but please leave out the actual full names of the people involved to respect their privacy.

A very important last one is to simply tell as many of your ideas and opinions as possible. There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions, so please don't be shy about telling us what you think. Do you have questions about these guidelines? If not, I think it's time to get started.

II. DISCUSSION ABOUT COPING, CULTURE, AND CONTEXT*(45 minutes/ total elapsed time 65 minutes)*

Questions
[Opening Activity].

All of your children have probably been in stressful situations that were difficult to deal with. Before we talk about this as a group, pick a marker and piece of paper and write down something about a stressful situation that your child had to deal with and one or two words that pop into your mind when you think about how your child dealt with it.
Pause briefly to allow words to be written down.

Would anybody be willing to share what you wrote down?
For all questions, but especially this first question, try to elicit thoughts from each member of the group, but avoid "serial interviewing" (i.e., going around the circle and asking each participant in turn separately for her/ his views; this tends

to create an overly formal atmosphere and can result in group members directing their responses to the moderator rather than the entire group)–instead, seek to engender a "true" group discussion, one that is both spontaneous and interactive.
Begin Discussion Here: Now let's talk a little bit about how your child or other teenagers deal with stress. How do your children deal with stressful situations in their lives?
How did your children learn to deal with stress? Who did they learn from?

In general, which ways of dealing with things seem to work well for your children (and/ or for other teenagers)?

In general, which ways of dealing with things seem not to work well for your children (and/ or for other teenagers)?

Can you tell us about a stressful situation that your child dealt with that went well?

Can you tell us about a stressful situation that your child dealt with that didn't go well?

What are the hardest things for your children to deal with? Why are they the hardest?

Now let's talk about race and culture. Pick a marker and sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your culture as an African American. What are some important things about your culture that help your child deal with stress? Just for fun, let's start by very, very quickly—in fact as quickly as we can--going around the group and hearing just one or two words that you wrote down about culture or race. Assistant Moderator will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

Can you think of some ways that your children could use those things to deal with stress…or ways we could teach those things to other teenagers to help them deal with stress?

What specific experiences do African American or Black teenagers have to learn to deal with because of their race?

Are there ways in which being an African American affects how your children deal with stress and if so, how?

Now let's talk about religion or spirituality. *[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].* Pick a marker and a sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your child's religion or spirituality as an African American. Religion might include being

involved in an event that is related to your religious beliefs like going to church. Spirituality might be something you do on your own or without going some place special like praying…What are some important things about your child's religion or spirituality that help them deal with stress? Let's try to go as quickly as we can around the group hearing one or two of the words you wrote down about spirituality or religion. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

- **Begin Discussion Here:** Have religion or spirituality been helpful to your child in coping with stress?
    - If yes, how has it helped?
    - If not, why have religion or spirituality not been helpful?

Now let's talk about your <u>family or people who are like family to your child</u>.*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].*Pick a marker and a sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your family or people who might be like family to your child. What are some important things about your family that help your child deal with stress? Let's try to go as quickly as we can around the group hearing one or two of the words you wrote down about your family or people who are like family to you. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

- **Begin Discussion Here:** Have family or people who are like family been helpful to your child in coping with stress?
    - If yes, how have they helped?
    - If not, why haven't they been helpful?

Now let's talk about <u>your surroundings</u>, like your child's neighborhood, your child's school, and the people your child has to deal with…*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].* Pick a marker and sheet of paper and write down one or two words that describe your surroundings. Again, just for fun, let's start by very, very quickly—in fact as quickly as we can--going around the group and hearing just one or two words that you wrote down about your child's surroundings. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

Begin Discussion Here: What types of difficult things have your child and your family experienced in the community you live in?

What do you as parents tell your children/teenagers to do to deal with these things?

What does your child actually do when they experience these things or when they're worried they are going to experience these things?

Are there ways in which your child's surroundings (like their neighborhood, family, school, other places they spend time, friends, acquaintances) affect how they deal with stress? How do they affect the way your child deals with stress?

Do your children get different messages from different people and different places about how they should deal with stress? Who gives them which messages? How do your children decide which ones to follow?

Are there ways of dealing with stress that you wish your child didn't have to use but your child feels like they have to because their surroundings make them?

Are there ways you'd like your child to cope with stress (because of what you believe is right, your religion, your culture, or your family) but you feel your child can't because of what would happen if they tried?

Summary *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 70 minutes)*
Now Assistant Moderator is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.
Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add?

III COMPLETION OF SURVEY MEASURES AND BREAK*(20 minutes/total elapsed time 90 minutes)*
Ask assistants to pass out surveys (MIBI) and pencils.

Before we take a break, I'd like you to fill out a few questionnaires about your cultural identity to get you ready for the next part of our discussion.

Administer survey to group by reading both instructions and individual items aloud, pausing briefly to allow a response for each item. Important: avoid group discussion—explain that there will be lots more time for this later; also avoid answering questions at a group-level but instead rely on other team members to circulate and answer those individually.

Ask assistants to collect survey measures and pencils. If participants need more time or assistance completing the surveys, make sure they receive it during the break.

After you've finished your surveys, feel free to get up stretch, get some snacks, and go to the bathroom. We'll start up again in 5 minutes

Turn over tape in tape-recorder if needed.

Direct participants to the refreshment table and give directions to the restrooms

as needed.
After 10 minutes, make sure everyone is back in the room.
O.K., if everyone would take a seat, we'll get going with the rest of the focus group.

IV. DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED INTERVENTION*(20 minutes/ total elapsed time 110 minutes)*

Now I'm going to get your ideas about how to develop a program to help young people deal with stress. First, I'm going to summarize the things you told me would be helpful. *Summarize participants responses related to effective coping strategies.*

What do you think would be the best way to help young people be able to do these things (or get these things in their lives)?

Now we're going to present the ideas we have for our program so far.
Present youth with summary sheet outlining the three primary components that will be part of the intervention.

Intervention Components:

So, there are three things that will be part of the program. The first is training in how best to cope with stress. The second is having a mentor. A mentor is someone who is older and more experienced, who provides support and guidance. And, the third is getting connected to a place that is supportive. It could be a Boys and Girls Club or a church or another organization in your community or nearby.

If you were going to put these three pieces together to make a program, how would you do it?

Would it be a good idea to have the mentors teach the young people how to cope? Why or why not?

Would it be a good idea to have a coping training at your school? Why or why not?

If there was a coping training at your child's school, would it be good for the mentors to come too, so that they can help the young people practice the coping? Why or why not?
Would it be a good idea for young people to learn the coping strategies at the supportive place we connect them to, like the Boys and Girls Club or a church or some other organization in their community or nearby? Why or why not?

If we did have young people learn the coping strategies at the supportive place, would it be better if they learned it as part of a training focused on coping or as part of a project that was focused on something else?

What are some places in your community or nearby that would be good places to get young people connected with? Would it work to learn coping strategies in those places?
If we went with the idea of teaching coping in a place where you could also complete some type of project, what kind of place or organization would be best? What kind of project would be best?

If we have mentors help young people with coping, would it be better if mentors just help when situations come up or should mentors teach young people ways of coping even before they know about their problems.

Now, I'm going to ask some more specific questions about the program.

Who should get to be in the program?

At what age or grade would it be helpful to start a program like this? *Depending on what they say, you may need to say something like: One thing we're thinking is that some of these ways to deal with problems are easier to understand and do when you're older, like in the 6th grade…What do you all think about that?*

Who should the mentors be? What should the mentors be like?

How long should the program last?
Would it be helpful if we spread it out or did a lot at one time?

Would it be better to spend time alone with a mentor or spend more time in groups with other people?

Would it help to practice the coping just with your mentor or with other young people or adults too?

Summary *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 115 minutes)*
Now <u>Assistant Moderator</u> is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.
Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add?

V. CLOSING *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 120 minutes)*

Ask assistants to pass out <u>Future Contact Interest Form</u>, receipt form, pen, and blank assent form for each participant to take home.

This is the end of the focus group. Thank you for your time! We really appreciate your willingness to talk with us and share your opinions and thoughts!
Be sure to get your gift cards before you leave and sign the receipt showing that you received them.

Thank youth and say goodbye, individually, if possible. Assistants should assume primary responsibility for logistics of parents leaving–handing out gift certificates after completion of payment form is verified, etc.

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Prepare all relevant materials for teachers in a folder—e.g., agenda, teacher consent form—2 copies, one to keep, and future contact interest form; prepare all other relevant materials/equipment per checklist for interviews.

INTRODUCTION*(15 minutes/total elapsed time 15 minutes)*
Hello everyone. My name is Kristin Carothers and this is (Assistant Moderator), and Assistant 2). I am getting my PhD. in clinical psychology at DePaul University. I will facilitate today's discussion about helping young people deal with stress in their everyday lives.
At some point in Introduction, it might be good to share a bit more information about yourself—examples: where you are from originally, your interests relating to this research-- as an "ice breaker."

Coping Intervention Background
I want to start by briefly talking about the research project that this focus group is a part of. We are trying to develop a coping program for African American adolescents in 6-8th grade who live in Chicago and other big cities that will help them learn ways to deal with stress and to succeed in school. Coping is anything people do to deal with stress. We are hoping to provide youth with the best strategies for dealing with all the different types of stress they face, and we want to connect them with mentors who will support them as they learn to use these strategies. Last but not least, we want to connect youth with places where they can learn more about dealing with stress and/ or organize with other people to change the stress that affects them and/ or pursue their dreams and have fun. We are very interested in your ideas about how we can make the program both helpful and fun.

Participant Selection
You might be interested to know how you were invited to participate in today's session. You were selected because you are teachers or staff members at this school who currently work with or have worked with 7th and 8th grade students in the past. We are extremely interested in the opinions of teachers and staff members who work with African American teenagers and have insight on how these teenagers deal with stress.

Purpose of the Focus Group
To help us develop the program I was just telling you about, we would like to know what adolescents, parents and teachers think African American adolescents need to learn to deal with stress in their schools, homes, and neighborhoods in order to be successful in school and life.
One of the main goals of this focus group is to learn how their culture and surroundings affect that way African American adolescents deal with stress. In terms of culture we are interested in the beliefs and values and traditions of African American adolescents' community or family. For example, the holidays they celebrate, their religion, their values, the traditions their family passes down, what their family thinks is important, the way they dress, and the music they listen

to could all be examples of their culture. Everyone in America shares some things related to American culture, but there might also be things that are specific to African American culture.

We want to know what your ideas are about the ways in which African American culture might affect how African American adolescents cope with stress.

We're also very interested in how their surroundings affect the way African American adolescents cope. There might be things about their culture that tell them to cope one way, but they may not actually cope that way because of the way things are in their neighborhoods or because of what people around them would do if they tried to use those coping strategies. So, we want to know, from teachers' perspectives, how African American adolescents who live in low income, urban environments are impacted by their surroundings, school, friends, associates, acquaintances, and other people. Specifically, we want to know how these surroundings or people impact how African American adolescents deal with stress.

I will lead nine focus groups with at least two groups of parents, two groups of teachers, and four groups of students to get some ideas about what our program should be like. Information from this group will be combined with information collected from those other groups. We will then use all the information to develop a coping program for African American adolescents.

Consent
Ask assistant to distribute consent forms.
Before we begin, we need to get your written agreement to participate in this focus group as part of our research. As noted on the form I am passing out, participation is voluntary–this means that you do not have to be a part of this group if you don't want to and it is fine for you not to answer any questions if you don't want to and also you can stop being in the group at any time.

Confidentiality
Before we read over the consent form, there are a couple things on it that I want to point out. The first is confidentiality. Confidentiality means that anything shared in this group will not be shared outside of this group. We will not use your real names or any other information to identify you when we write up the results of these focus group discussions.

As researchers, we will maintain the confidentiality of the information that you provide. This means that no one, including the principal, other staff, students, or parents will be told about your answers. The only exceptions to this are if you tell us that one of the students you work with is in danger because of a medical condition that no one knows about or because one of the students is planning to hurt themselves or someone else or if you tell us that one of the students or someone else under age has been abused or had their basic human needs

neglected. If you share those types of information with us, we will need to tell people about it so that the students (or other under age people) can be protected and kept safe. Aside from those types of information, any information you share with us today will only be shared with research assistants so that they can help me analyze and understand the things that are said here today. As I mentioned before, we will combine the results from all the focus groups and will link the comments only to the type of group that made them. For example, we might say that a comment came from the parents groups or the students groups.

One of the risks of participating in this research is a loss of confidentiality of what is said during the focus group because it is possible that someone in the group may repeat what is said outside the group. In order to try to prevent this from happening, one of our first group rules will be that we agree that <u>what is said in the focus group stays in the focus group</u>. More information about the rules of the focus groups will be discussed later. Does anyone have any questions about this? *Ask for questions and answer them on a group basis in a time-efficient manner (at this time and throughout the introduction portion).*

<u>Tape Recording</u>
We will be tape-recording the focus groups, but this is only so that I can go back later and fill in my notes. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will be taking notes about general ideas that come up, but he/ she can't write fast enough to get everything you say down. So, the tape recorder will help us go back and fill in the blanks when we need to. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will not be writing down the actual names of anyone. You can check for that any time you like. You can also see that there will be some other helpers with us today, too *(introduce each by first name).* They are part of the research team and will respect your privacy just like <u>Assistant Moderator</u> and I will.

Read assent form aloud and answer any questions participants may have.
Have teachers sign forms and turn them in. Ask assistant to ensure that she has a signed assent from everyone and that everyone has a copy of the assent form for his/ her records.
Assistant then numbers each completed assent form with correct participant Study ID# as well as position # from seating chart.

<u>Focus Group Guidelines and Rules</u>
There's one last thing I want to do before we get started with our discussion. And that is to go over a few things that will help make today's group a good experience for everyone. As you can see on the wall, we have come up with some "<u>Guidelines for Focus Group Participation</u>" that we would like everyone to follow.

Probably the most important one is that we need to agree that <u>what is said in the focus group stays in the focus group</u>. This is important because *1) sharing what someone else said in the group afterwards could make that person feel bad and 2)*

if people don't think that their comments will be kept private, they may not be willing to share some of the information that might be most important for us to know.

Can everyone agree to this?
Ensure that everyone agrees to this rule. If someone does not agree with this rule, thank them for their time, tell them they can't be a part of this group, but invite them to be a part of the advisory board.

Even though we have agreed on this rule, there is a chance that someone in the group may talk about things that are said in the group outside the group. We can't control what you do once you leave here, but we hope you will honor the rules we have agreed on and remember that the things said here are private and should not be discussed with people outside the group.

As we discussed a minute ago, we want to keep things private in this group so that everyone feels comfortable enough to be really honest. We want everyone to share their thoughts and opinions.

Sometimes we may disagree but we want to create a safe space where we can agree to disagree respectfully. To make it a comfortable space for sharing, I would also ask that only <u>one person talks at a time</u>, and if you need to express a view that you wait until it is your turn. Is everyone okay with that?

Also, I would like for us to establish the rule that <u>we will not use real names to identify people</u>. You also don't need to ever tell us about your personal experiences if you don't want to–just your general opinions is O.K. Specific examples can be good but please leave out the actual full names of the people involved to respect their privacy.

A very important last one is to simply <u>tell as many of your ideas and opinions as possible</u>. There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions, so please don't be shy about telling us what you think. Do you have questions about these guidelines? If not, I think it's time to get started.

II. DISCUSSION ABOUT COPING, CULTURE, AND CONTEXUAL*(40 minutes/ total elapsed time 60 minutes)*
Questions
[Opening Activity].

All of you have probably had students who have been in stressful situations that were difficult to deal with.*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].*Before we talk about this as a group, pick a marker and piece of paper and write down something about a stressful

situation that one or some of your students have had to deal with and one or two words that pop into your mind when you think about how they dealt with it. *Pause briefly to allow words to be written down.*

Would anybody be willing to share what you wrote down?
For all questions, but especially this first question, try to elicit thoughts from each member of the group, but avoid "serial interviewing" (i.e., going around the circle and asking each participant in turn separately for her/ his views; this tends to create an overly formal atmosphere and can result in group members directing their responses to the moderator rather than the entire group)–instead, seek to engender a "true" group discussion, one that is both spontaneous and interactive.

Begin Discussion Here: Now let's talk a little bit about how students deal with stress. How do the students you've worked with, especially those who are teenagers, deal with stressful situations in their lives?

How do you think students learn to deal with stress?

In general, which ways of dealing with things seem to work well for your students or other teenagers?

In general, which ways of dealing with things seem not to work well for your students or other teenagers?

Can you tell us about a stressful situation that your students or one of your students dealt with that went well?

Can you tell us about a stressful situation that your students or one of your students dealt with that didn't go well?

What are the hardest things for your students or other teenagers to deal with? Why are they the hardest?

Now let's talk about <u>race and culture</u>**.** ***[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].*** Pick a marker and sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your students' culture as African Americans. What are some important things about their culture that help them deal with stress? Just for fun, let's start by very, very quickly—in fact as quickly as we can--going around the group and hearing just one or two words that you wrote down about culture or race. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

Begin Discussion Here: Can you think of some ways that your students could use those things to deal with stress…or ways we could teach those things to students to help them deal with stress?

What specific experiences do African American or Black teenagers have to learn to deal with because of their race?

Are there ways in which being an African American affects how your students deal with stress, and if so, how?

Now let's talk about <u>religion or spirituality</u>.*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].* Pick a marker and a sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe the religion or spirituality of your students. Religion might include being involved in an event that is related to your religious beliefs like going to church. Spirituality might be something you do on your own or without going some place special like praying…What are some important things about your students religion or spirituality that help them deal with stress? Let's try to go as quickly as we can around the group hearing one or two of the words you wrote down about your students' spirituality or religion. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

- **Begin Discussion Here:** Have religion or spirituality been helpful to the students you work with in coping with stress?
  - If yes, how has it helped?
  - If not, why have religion or spirituality not been helpful?

Now let's talk about your <u>students' families or people who are like family to your students</u>.*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].* Pick a marker and a sheet of paper and write down one or two words that might describe your students' families. What are some important things about your students' families that help them deal with stress? Let's try to go as quickly as we can around the group hearing one or two of the words you wrote down about your students' family or people who are like family to your students. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

- **Begin Discussion Here:** Have your students' families or people who are like family to your students been helpful to your students in coping with stress?
  - If yes, how have they been helpful?
  - If not, why haven't they been helpful?

Now let's talk about <u>your students' surroundings</u>, like their neighborhood, their school, and the people they have to deal with…*[In the event that the group is slow to talk, use the following activity to guide discussion. If group seems like they are willing to talk, skip the activity and begin discussion].* Pick a marker and sheet of paper and write down one or two words that describe your students' surroundings. Again, just for fun, let's start by very, very quickly—in

fact as quickly as we can--going around the group and hearing just one or two words that you wrote down about your students' surroundings. <u>Assistant Moderator</u> will keep track of our time and see how quick we are.

Begin Discussion Here: What types of difficult things have your students' and their families experienced in the communities they live in?

What do your students' parents tell them to do to deal with these things?

What do you tell your students to do to deal with these things?

What do your students actually do when they experience these things or when they're worried they are going to experience these things?

Are there ways in which your students' surroundings (like their neighborhood, family, school, other places they spend time, friends, acquaintances) affect how your students deal with stress?

How do they affect the way students deal with stress?

Do your students get different messages from different people and different places about how they should deal with stress? Who gives students which messages? How do you think students decide which messages to follow?

Are there ways of dealing with stress that you wish your students didn't have to use but you feel like they have to because their surroundings require them to use those type of strategies?

Are there ways you'd like students to cope with stress *(because of what they have been taught is right, their religion, their culture, or their family)* but you feel students can't because of what would happen if they tried?

<u>**Summary**</u> *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 70 minutes)*
Now <u>Assistant Moderator</u> is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.

Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add?

<u>**III SURVEY COMPLETION AND BREAK**</u>*(10 minutes/total elapsed time 70 minutes)*
Ask assistants to pass out surveys and pencils.

Before we take a break, I'd like you to fill out a brief questionnaire.

Pass out surveys to group.

When teachers have completed surveys, ask assistants to collect survey measures and pencils.

After you've finished your surveys, feel free to get up stretch, get some snacks, and go to the bathroom. We'll start up again in 5 minutes

Turn over tape in tape-recorder if needed.
Direct participants to the refreshment table and give directions to the restrooms as needed.
After 5 minutes, make sure everyone is back in the room.

O.K., if everyone would take a seat, we'll get going with the rest of the focus group.

IV. DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED INTERVENTION-Culture and Context*(20 minutes/ total elapsed time 90 minutes)*

Next, we would like to talk with you about some possible elements we might include in a coping intervention for students.

What types of techniques do you think it would be important for your students to learn to deal with stress?

What aspects of African American culture would be important to incorporate into an intervention that would teach coping strategies to African American children and adolescents?

What will be important to include in order to address the surroundings in which your students live?

What are your concerns for your students in terms of them learning to deal with stress and difficult situations?

Summary *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 90 minutes)*
Now Assistant Moderator is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.

Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add?

IV. DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED INTERVENTION*(20 minutes/ total elapsed time 115 minutes)*

Now I'm going to get your ideas about how to develop a program to help young people deal with stress. First, I'm going to summarize the things you told me would be helpful. *Summarize participants responses related to effective coping strategies.*

What do you think would be the best way to help young people be able to do these things (or get these things in their lives)?

Now we're going to present the ideas we have for our program so far. *Present youth with summary sheet outlining the three primary components that will be part of the intervention.*

<u>Intervention Components:</u>
So, there are three things that will be part of the program. The first is training in how best to cope with stress. The second is having a mentor. A mentor is someone who is older and more experienced, who provides support and guidance. And, the third is getting connected to a place that is supportive. It could be a Boys and Girls Club or a church or another organization in your community or nearby.

If you were going to put these three pieces together to make a program, how would you do it?

Would it be a good idea to have the mentors teach the young people how to cope? Why or why not?

Would it be a good idea to have a coping training at your school? Why or why not?

If there was a coping training for young people at your school, would it be good for the mentors to come too, so that they can help the young people practice the coping? Why or why not?
Would it be a good idea for young people to learn the coping strategies at the supportive place we connect them to, like the Boys and Girls Club or a church or some other organization in their community or nearby? Why or why not?

If we did have young people learn the coping strategies at the supportive place, would it be better if they learned it as part of a training focused on coping or as part of a project that was focused on something else?

What are some places in your community or nearby that would be good places to get young people connected with? Would it work to learn coping strategies in those places?
If we went with the idea of teaching coping in a place where you could also complete some type of project, what kind of place or organization would be best? What kind of project would be best?

If we have mentors help young people with coping, would it be better if mentors just help when situations come up or should mentors teach young people ways of coping even before they know about their problems.

Now, I'm going to ask some more specific questions about the program.

Who should get to be in the program?

At what age or grade would it be helpful to start a program like this? *Depending on what they say, you may need to say something like: One thing we're thinking is that some of these ways to deal with problems are easier to understand and do when you're older, like in the 6th grade…What do you all think about that?*

Who should the mentors be? What should the mentors be like?

How long should the program last?
Would it be helpful if we spread it out or did a lot at one time?

Would it be better to spend time alone with a mentor or spend more time in groups with other people?

Would it help to practice the coping just with your mentor or with other young people or adults too?

Summary *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 115 minutes)*
Now Assistant Moderator is going to give us a brief summary of what she has heard the group saying so far and get your feedback.
Keep time and signal Assistant Moderator as necessary to avoid overly lengthy summary.
Does this sound right to you? Is there anything you want to change or add
V. CLOSING *(5 minutes/ total elapsed time 125 minutes)*
Ask assistants to pass out Future Contact Interest Form, receipt form, pen, and blank assent form for each teacher.
This is the end of the focus group. Thank you for your time! We really appreciate all of your feedback and comments!
Be sure to get your gift cards before you leave and sign the receipt showing that you received them.
Thank teachers and say goodbye, individually, if possible. Assistants should assume primary responsibility for logistics of youth leaving–handing out gift certificates after completion of payment form is verified.

APPENDIX B: MEASURES ADMINISTERED DURING FOCUS GROUPS

STUDENT QUESTIONS

Background Information

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your family.
1. My age is (check one):   ☐11   ☐12   ☐13   ☐14   ☐15
    ☐16

2. My birthday is: _____ month   _____ day _____ year

3. I am a: ☐   Male   ☐Female

4. I consider my racial/ ethnic group to be (you can check more than one):
    ☐ African American/Black   ☐ Latino (a) (Puerto Rican)
    ☐ American Indian/Native American   ☐ Latino(a) (Mexican)
    ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander   (please specify_____)
    ☐ Latino (a) (Other)(please specify ethnicity _____)
    ☐ Other (please specify) _____
    ☐ White/Caucasian
5. Were you born in the United States? ☐   Yes   ☐   No

    If you were NOT born in the Unites States, where were you born?
_____
6. How many activities do you participate in outside of school?
    ☐1   ☐2   ☐3   ☐4 or more
    Please list the names of your activities:
    _____
    _____
    _____
    Where do you go to participate in these activities?
    _____
    _____
    _____

**7. Is there an adult (age 18 or older) in your life who you go to for
    support and guidance? This person is <u>not</u> a parent or the person who
    raised you or a boy/girlfriend. This person is someone:**

a) you can count on to be there for you

b) who believes in you and cares deeply about you

c) who inspires you to do your best, and

d) who has really influenced what you do and the choices you make

Do you have one or more persons like this in your life?

☐ Yes   ☐ No, Not right now (Go to question 13)

8. Who are these important adults in your life? Don't write their name; just write their relationship to you. For example, write "my godfather; my aunt; my sister; my English teacher." You can name up to 5 people in your life. List them in order of importance in your life, from MOST important to LEAST important.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please answer the following questions about the <u>Important Adult #1</u> who you wrote down above:

9. Is this person a man or a woman?   ☐ Man   ☐ Woman

10. What is this person's age? _____

11. What is this person's race/ethnicity? (check all that are true)
☐ African American/Black   ☐ Latino(a) (Puerto Rican)
☐ American Indian/Native American   ☐ Latino(a) (Mexican)
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (please specify ethnicity _____)
☐ Latino(a) (Other) (please specify_____)
☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ White/Caucasian

12. What is your relationship with this person?
☐ Friend (remember the person must be 18 years of age or older)
☐ Pastor/Minister/Priest/Rabbi
☐ Grandparent
☐ Teacher
☐ Adult at School Other than Teacher (please specify:_____)
☐ Brother/Sister (remember the person must be 18 years of age or older)
☐ Cousin (remember the person must be 18 years of age or older)
☐ Aunt/Uncle
☐ Neighbor
☐ Other (please specify) _____

13. Do you attend a Church, Synagogue, Mosque, Kingdom Hall or other religious institution?

☐ Yes   ☐ No
If yes, how often do you go?
☐ All the time (Almost every week)
☐ Sometimes (A couple of times per month or on holidays)
☐ Almost never

FILL IN THE CIRCLE NEXT TO ALL THE PEOPLE <u>WHO LIVE AT HOME WITH YOU</u>

O   Mother   _____)
O   Father   O   Stepsister(s) (How many ____)
O   Stepmother   O   Niece(s) (How many _____)
O   Stepfather   O   Nephew(s) (How many _____)
O   Mother's   O   Grandmother(s) (How many

Boyfriend/Partner   ___)
O   Father's   O   Grandfather (s) (How many____)

Girlfriend/Partner   O   Aunt (s) (How many ____)
O   Foster Mother   O   Uncle (s) (How many ____)
O   Foster Father   O   Cousin(s) (How many____)
O   Brother(s) (How many   O   Other Relative(s) (How

_____)   many___)
O   Stepbrother(s) (How   O   Friend(s) (How many _____)

many____)
O   Sister(s) (How many

MESA-Short Form

DIRECTIONS: For the items listed below, please indicate whether each situation happened to you in the <u>past 3 months</u>.

	No	Yes
1. Your parent lost his/her job.	❏	❏
2. You had a serious problem with a teacher or principal.	❏	❏
3. You were threatened with a weapon.	❏	❏
4. Your parents separated or divorced.	❏	❏
5. You did poorly on an exam or school assignment.	❏	❏
6. You were excluded from a group because of your race, ethnicity, or culture.	❏	❏
7. A close family member was seriously ill or injured.	❏	❏
8. Kids made fun of you because of the way you look.	❏	❏
9. A teacher or principal criticized you in front of other students.	❏	❏
10. You were unfairly accused of something because of your race or ethnicity.	❏	❏
11. A close family member died.	❏	❏
12. You saw a student who was treated badly or discriminated against.	❏	❏
13. You moved far away from family and friends.	❏	❏
14. Your parent(s) remarried.	❏	❏
15. You had something of value (valued over $5) stolen.	❏	❏

16. You were pressured to do drugs or drink alcohol.	❏	❏
17. You heard other people making jokes about your ethnic or racial group.	❏	❏
18. You were attacked by someone not in your family.	❏	❏
19. You were pressured against your will to join a gang.	❏	❏
20. Someone broke into your home or damaged it.	❏	❏
21. Friends criticized you for hanging out with other groups.	❏	❏
22. Someone threatened to beat you up.	❏	❏
23. You were called a racial name that was a putdown.	❏	❏
24. You had an argument or fight with a friend.	❏	❏
25. Someone put you down for practicing the traditions or customs of your race, ethnicity, culture, or religion.	❏	❏
26. Other kids tried to fight with you.	❏	❏
27. A close friend died.	❏	❏

MIBI-t

Please read each statement and circle the number that matches what you think about the statement. Circle one number for each statement.

1. I feel close to other Black people.

   Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

   1   2   3   4   5

2. I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people.

   Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

   1   2   3   4   5

3. If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would

   say is that I'm Black.

   Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

   1   2   3   4   5

Debriefing Form

We are asking you to answer some brief questions about any reactions you may have had to our group exercise or discussions today. Staff from our research team will be available immediately afterwards to respond to any questions, concerns or reactions you may have. Some of you may not feel comfortable discussing this now, but may want to speak with one of us individually at a later time. Please circle either YES or NO to the following questions.

1. Were the group exercise and discussion easy to understand?
        YES   NO

2. Did participating in the group exercise or discussion upset you in any way?
        YES   NO

3. Did you feel interested during the group exercise and discussion?
        YES   NO

4. Did you have any thoughts or feelings that bothered you as you participated in the group exercise or discussion?
        YES   NO

5. Were you able to pay attention during the group exercise and discussion?
        YES   NO

6. Would you like to talk to someone about the feelings and thoughts you had during the discussion?
        YES   NO

7. Have you received any negative reactions from your peers about your participation in this discussion group?
        YES   NO

If you have any questions, concerns or thoughts about this experience, please contact Kristin Carothers, M.A. at 773-307-5572 (kcarothe@depaul.edu) or Dr. Kathryn E. Grant at 773-325-4241 (kgrant@depaul.edu). Your school counselor(s) are also available for you to talk with in case you have more questions or concerns. We thank you for your participation in our study.

PARENT/GUARDIAN QUESTIONS

Parent Background Information

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your family.
1. My age is (fill in one):

☐ 20-30 ☐ 31-41 ☐ 42-52 ☐ 53-63 ☐ 64-74 ☐
75 & Up

2. I am a: ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. I am raising:

☐ Biological Children ☐ Foster Children ☐ Adopted Children

☐ Grandchildren ☐ Other Relatives Children ☐ Friend's Children

4. I consider my racial group to be:

☐ African American/Black ☐ Latino (a) (Puerto Rican)
☐ American Indian/Native American ☐ Latino (a) (Mexican)
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (please specify ethnicity _____)
☐ Latino(a) (other – please specify _____)
☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ White/Caucasian

5. Were you born in the United States? ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. If you were NOT born in the Unites States, where were you born?
_____

7. How many activities does your child participate in outside of school?
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 or more
Please list the names of your child's activities:
_____
_____
_____
Where does your child go to participate in these activities?
_____
_____
_____

14. Is there an adult (age 18 or older) in your child's life who they go to for support and guidance? This person is <u>not</u> a parent or the person who raised your child or a boy/girlfriend. This person is someone:

a) your child can count on to be there for them

b) who believes in your child and cares deeply about your child

c) who inspires your child to do their best, and

d) who has really influenced what your child does and the choices

your child makes

Does your child have one or more persons like this in their life?

☐ Yes   ☐ No, Not right now (Go to question 13)

15. Who are these important adults in your child's life? Don't write their name; just write their relationship to your child. For example, write "his/her godfather; his/her aunt; his/her sister; his/her English teacher." You can name up to 5 people in your child's life. List them in order of importance in your child's life, from MOST important to LEAST important.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please answer the following questions about the <u>Important Adult #1</u> who you wrote down above:

16. Is this person a man or a woman?   ☐ Man   ☐ Woman

17. What is this person's age? _____

18. What is this person's race/ethnicity? (check all that are true)
☐ African American/Black   ☐ Latino(a) (Puerto Rican)
☐ American Indian/Native American   ☐ Latino(a) (Mexican)
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (please specify ethnicity _____)
☐ Latino (a) (Other) (please specify_____)
☐ Other (please specify) _____)
☐ White/Caucasian

19. What is your child's relationship with this person?

☐ Friend (remember the person must be 18 years of age or older)
☐ Pastor/Minister/Priest/Rabbi
☐ Grandparent
☐ Teacher

☐ Adult at School Other than Teacher (please
specify:_____)
☐ Brother/Sister (remember the person must be 18 years of age or older)
☐ Cousin (remember the person must be 18 years of age or older)
☐ Aunt/Uncle
☐ Neighbor
☐ Other (please specify) _____

20. Does your child attend a Church, Synagogue, Mosque, Kingdom Hall or other religious institution?

☐ Yes   ☐ No
If yes, how often does your child go?
☐ All the time (Almost every week)
☐ Sometimes (A couple of times per month or on holidays)
☐ Almost never

FILL IN THE CIRCLE NEXT TO ALL THE PEOPLE <u>WHO LIVE AT HOME WITH YOUR CHILD</u>.

- O Mother
- O Father
- O Stepmother
- O Stepfather
- O Mother's Boyfriend/Partner
- O Father's Girlfriend/Partner
- O Foster Mother
- O Foster Father
- O Brother(s) (How many _____)
- O Stepbrother(s) (How many _____)
- O Sister(s) (How many _____)
- O Stepsister(s) (How many _____)
- O Niece(s) (How many _____)
- O Nephew(s) (How many _____)
- O Grandmother(s) (How many ___)
- O Grandfather (s) (How many_____)
- O Aunt (s) (How many _____)
- O Uncle (s) (How many _____)
- O Cousin(s) (How many_____)
- O Other Relative(s) (How many___)
- O Friend(s) (How many _____)

MIBI

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.

    Strongly Disagree   Neutral   Agree
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Debriefing Form

We are asking you to answer some brief questions about any reactions you may have had to our group exercise or discussions today. Staff from our research team will be available immediately afterwards to respond to any questions, concerns or reactions you may have. Some of you may not feel comfortable discussing this now, but may want to speak with one of us individually at a later time. Please circle either YES or NO to the following questions.

1. Were the group exercise and discussion easy to understand?
      YES   NO

2. Did participating in the group exercise or discussion upset you in any way?
      YES   NO

3. Did you feel interested during the group exercise and discussion?
      YES   NO

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      YES   NO

5. Were you able to pay attention during the group exercise and discussion?
      YES   NO

6. Would you like to talk to someone about the feelings and thoughts you had during the discussion?
      YES   NO

7. Have you received any negative reactions from your peers about your participation in this discussion group?
      YES   NO

If you have any questions, concerns or thoughts about this experience, please contact Kristin Carothers, M.A. at 773-307-5572 (kcarothe@depaul.edu) or Dr. Kathryn E. Grant at 773-325-4241 (kgrant@depaul.edu). Your school counselor(s) are also available for you to talk with in case you have more questions or concerns. We thank you for your participation in our study.

TEACHER/STAFF QUESTIONS

Teacher Background Information

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your students.

1. My primary role at this school is:

   ☐ Teacher   ☐ Counselor   ☐ Social Worker   ☐ Other Staff Member

   ☐ Administration (Principal, Asst. Principal, Disciplinarian, etc.)

2. I am a: ☐   Male   ☐ Female

3. I have taught an 8th grade class in the past two years:

   ☐   Yes   ☐   No

4. I have worked with 8th graders in the past two years:

   ☐   Yes   ☐   No

5. I consider my racial group to be:

   ☐ African American/Black   ☐ Latino(a) (Puerto Rican)
   ☐ American Indian/Native American   ☐ Latino(a) (Mexican)
   ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (please specify ethnicity _____)
   ☐ Latino(a) (Other) (please specify_____)
   ☐ Other (please specify) _____
   ☐ White/Caucasian

6. How many years have you been a teacher or staff member at this school?_____

7. How many years have you been a teacher or staff member at any school? _____

Debriefing Form

We are asking you to answer some brief questions about any reactions you may have had to our group exercise or discussions today. Staff from our research team will be available immediately afterwards to respond to any questions, concerns or reactions you may have. Some of you may not feel comfortable discussing this now, but may want to speak with one of us individually at a later time. Please circle either YES or NO to the following questions.

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participated in the group exercise or discussion?
        YES   NO

5. Were you able to pay attention during the group exercise and
discussion?
        YES   NO

6. Would you like to talk to someone about the feelings and thoughts
you had during the discussion?
        YES   NO

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your participation in this discussion group?
        YES   NO

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APPENDIX C: Recruitment Flyer

<div style="border: 2px solid blue;">

HELPING YOUTH DEAL WITH STRESS

</div>

ATTENTION
7th & 8th Graders
Parents of 7th & 8th graders
Teachers & staff who work with 7th & 8th graders

PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUPS & GET $50 IN GIFT CARDS

DePaul University, Loyola University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago want you to help design a program to teach young people the best ways to deal with stress.

We will conduct Focus Groups at X Elementary School to learn from students, parents, and teachers the best ways to help young people deal with stress.

- **We will conduct groups after school**
  - **4 Groups with 7th&8th Graders**
  - **3 Groups with 7th&8th Grade Parents**
  - **2 Groups with 7th&8th Grade Teachers & Staff Members**
- **Groups will last 2 hours each**
- **Each person can participate in 1 group**
- **Participants will receive $50 in gift cards for participation**
- **7th&8th Grade Students must receive parental permission to participate**

Limited slots are available contact Kristin Carothers at DePaul University kcarothe@depaul.edu or 773-325-2038 or Dr. Kathryn E. Grant at DePaul Universitykgrant@depaul.edu or 773-325-4241

APPENDIX D: AFFINITY DIAGRAMS WITH QUOTES

INFLUENCE OF LOW INCOME, URBAN ENVIRONMENT ON COPING

EXPERIENCES IN OR PERCPTIONS OF NEIGHBORHOOD

RELATIONSHIPS IN NEIGHBORHOOD

NEIGHBORHOOD PLACES

COPING WITH NEIGHBORHOOD

Unsupportive/ Unsafe

Supportive/ Positive

Unsupportive

Limited Safe Places

Adaptation

Survival: Coping in ways you don't want to but have to

But you can't go outside the way you used to be able to go outside. You cant send your kids out there. Now, you gotta watch your kids from pedophiles in the neighborhood (PG).

...You don't tell her this, she's on drugs or she on crack. Just tell her she's in a situation that she can't deal with right now. You dont laugh, because that's not funny. That could be you, it could be your mother.. Use the situation to learn from the situation. (PG)

..Because my momma....she'll go grocery shopping and she'll get all of it for them. One time somebody broke inside our back door and they stole my borhter' s play station 2....My mommma she was kinda mad because all them kids around there she kinda cool with. She know the boy that did it but she just dropped the charges because she really liked him (FG).

Well my kids go to the center sometimes.. I let my daughters go. Sometimes they have a program there for girls and then my oldest son, he goes in there sometimes and plays basketball (PG).

One time in my old school, the substitute teacher told us if it's a crowd that's about to fight or whatever, she said walk away form them because it ain't doing nothing but leading you into a bad future (FG).

..Fighting, cursing because if we dont do one of these, they gonna keep on doin it, so why just keep on letting them do it? Why? Just let's resolve this (FG).

Like you can't even send your kid, like a little girl, to the store and come back with nothing worng with her. Somebody tried to do something, and dogs be loose all the time (MG).

If anything was to happen or if one of the girls was to have problems and you will come with your best friends or anybody at the school and they help you (FG).

At any school, at any poverty stricken area is the parent participation. We have NCLB LSC here. There's no paernts involved in that, and by us being on probation, the region is in charge of how money is spent now. Now, it's still, yet again, weak, no parents are up here, there's no parents on the committee (PG).

The center...play bsketball..and watch movie..and you can get on the computer. (BG).

So I don't see them coping. I don't see them coming up with a positive solution. I see them adapting to live, adapting to survive or just adapting to be like others around them. (TG)

You probably have kids who dont have a stable hme and we dont even know about it because they dont have an address.They're surviving. The clothes on their backs,- the few tat they have-they have on Monday through Friday-Saturday an Sunday, oh well. Parent struggling-if the parents are there. (TG)

I just know there's a fear of the unknown that's why they need to get out and experience things because they just dont have the opportunity to do so where they're at right now (TG).

You've got- and then for the people who try to do some good, they-it's like they can't overpower the bad. (BG)

Be careful with them going to the library, they be shooting...Right here X Branch. (PG)

It's not just deaths, just tragic death. When you said, like, in the communities and around the school, it results back to gang violence, you know, the gang banging. The - stay away from the crowds (PG).

I think sometimes, like you scared, so like it bring you stress, and like living in our area, sometimes certain people have to like carry razor blades and pocket knives and pepper spray and stuff just to keep safe, and like not from like grown men, girls too (FG).

ADOLESCENTS' PERECEPTIOSNS OF COPING NEEDS FOR LOW INCOME, URBAN AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS

THINK ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

"You don't think about the consequences until it happens. You just want to get your way and want to prove other people wrong and do you. And you never think about what's gonna happen after you do it. So when you do do it, you don't think about it until it happens, and that's when you start thinking about I shouldn't have did that. Why didn't I think about it when I first was about to do it?" (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

"Walk away from them, or tell an adult, or let them know about the problem, and she'll tell me how to solve it or prevent it from happening." (Male Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

GO TO SCHOOL

"Go to school. Even though you came from Englewood, go to school so they won't think you're dumb, because a lot of time, you come out of Englewood, they think you're not smart or anything like that." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

CHOOSE GOOD FRIEDNS

"Try to get away from anybody that you think would do harm to you to would pull you along with them. And choose my friends better. That's it, I guess." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

DEAL WITH STRESS

"Like at one of my Centers, we did this thing about stress, and they told us to get a plastic bag, put some glass in it, and just beat on it. That really helped because I feel that we got away stress, we broke the glass." (Female Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

"And I just said what I had to say to her, walked outside, sat on the porch for a little while, relaxed, took a couple deep breaths, thought about the situation, went in there – because in that situation, I knew I was wrong that time. So, I went in there, apologized." (Male Adolescent Focus Group Participant)

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF LOW INCOME URBAN ADOLESCENTS COPING NEEDS

COPING STRATEGIES EXHIBITED BY ADOLESCENTS

POSITIVE

"I'm talking about where you have to struggle to live. "Do I go out? When do I go out – to eat, to sleep? Am I moving from house to house?" You probably have kids who don't have a stable home and we don't even know about it because they don't have an address. They're surviving. The clothes on their backs – the few that they have – they have on from Monday through Friday – Saturday and Sunday, oh well. Parents struggling – if the parents are there. But adapting – my thing of adapting is – "I got this. I can't get that. So I'll just get this."

But he came to me about that and he wanted to talk to the old counselor that was here about that. He's a decent child. I would never have known that this was going on at home from his behavior in school because he's a great student of mine."

"I think like in my classroom, we have independent problem solving strategies. And one is to ignore. One is to ask the person to stop. One is to remove yourself from the situation or move away, things like that. I've seen them demonstrate that after it is drilled in them."

NEGATIVE

"This might be far-fetched for the demographic to deal with but it helped me a lot – meditation – sit still, be by yourself, be alone with your thoughts – being with yourself. Being in a place of peace – sometimes you are so active you don't stop and think. That's why our children have a lot of problems because they don't stop and think about what they're doing."

The kids are going through things, but at the same time when you try to help, they kind of latch on to you and they don't want to let go."

"I've heard – this boy, he's beating up another little boy. His mom came in the office. She's like, you know what? I just don't care what you do any more. Oh really?"

IMPORTANT COPING STRATEGIES FOR ADOLESCENTS TO LEARN

CULTURE

Yeah, motivation but even with the rappers – the influences – some of the kids don't know that Master P has a master's degree or Lil Wayne has a bachelor's degree – they just look at their rapping – if you look at the successful businessman in this industry, the guys who are actually making the real money, has an education.

"They need the teaching of that more than religion – religion will come with it. Everything comes with that inner self belief."

We can't address it (religion). But I think that should be something that should be addressed. I think that you have to believe in something, and our kids don't believe in anything. You have to have some belief system."

CONTEXT

"It's almost like this (school) is the place that she comes to that is consistent. So it's a normal day for her here. I'm not sure what it would be like when she has to go home and be part of the situation, but here it's almost like a reprieve."

" I think it would help for them to be able to recognize what it is that is stressing them. A lot of times they lash out at the things that aren't even the root of the issue. If they could just recognize the true root of what's making them upset or what's making them feel the way that they're feeling. Identify the stressor."

"This might be far-fetched for the demographic to deal with but it helped me a lot – meditation – sit still, be by yourself, be alone with your thoughts – being with yourself. Being in a place of peace – sometimes you are so active you don't stop and think. That's why our children have a lot of problems because they don't stop and think about what they're doing."

FAMILY

First, I think the parents need to know how to deal with it. If the parents know how to deal with it then it can be communicated.

I think they're used to having no boundaries. I dont think their parents do. I think their parents tell everybody their business, wehter it be on the phone or after hours when you have cmpany, whatever.

Just no discipline. Maybe I'm wrong, but I see it very often in mothers who have boys here. It's like they're friends or this my boy. They get away with a lot of things.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF LOW INCOME URBAN ADOLESCENTS COPING NEEDS

COPING STRATEGIES EXHIBITED BY ADOLESCENTS

IMPORTANT COPING STRATEGIES FOR ADOLESCENTS TO LEARN

POSITIVE

NEGATIVE

Culture

Context

Family

With people and study, no he's like, he'll walk away from a situation instead of reacting. For real, since sixh grade I was coming up to the school every day because he was whooping somebody and he'd be like, "Mom, they hit me first."

It's that image that someone put on - some of them put on that image to deal with-when they put on that image, they disrespect at you, you and you and now when you come back, you gots to walk like this."

Well, I try to teach my son and my daugter never to take anything for granted. My son, he's like African and, like he just went to Liberia this summer to meet some of his family with my daughter...she was scared to go because she thought that, like they're going to kill us... I wanted her to know that it's not like that. Don't believe everything that you see on TV.

Well, what if you can't duck and dodge? You gonna let somebody just hit you? No, earn your suspension, but then I had to go back and think about that because then I'm telling him that's how you resolve all your issues is by letting somebody hit you first and then you can do whatever you want. No, sometimes you've got to be the bigger person and walk away.

Honestly, I feel like you have to get the family connect back because a lot of kids are not connected with their parents, or their parents want to be their friends. Some parents might need to learn how to be parents because they were never taught, so I think something that would be a very good cmponent-and a lot of parents, they too ashamed to ask for help, but when it's offered they will take it.

My two sons, my niece, and my nephew went to Inglewood. All of them are in college now, so – and they know, everybody around here, hi, whatever, you know, but you know what you have to do too, and they know what we expect out of our household. You know, so there ain't no such thing as, you know, you got caught up in this area. Nah, you have to stay on them, you know, and that's what we did. My son graduates in May."

My little brother, he's adopted. He's in that stage where he's trying to find out who is birht mother is and why she give me up and all that... he just got supsended from that school. He throwing paper, fight, and I'm like, he's tyring- he tells me all the time, the's just trying to find himself because he really dont know who he is.

I dont care if that person is a year older than you, you respect them because I still to this day...I am not gonna disrespect no grown person. These kids today, they will haul off and all this and all that, you be standing looking like- I know your mother, your mother didn't teach you that kind of language.

It's not just deaths, just tragic death. When you said, like, in the communities and around the school, it results back to gang violence, you know, the gang banging. The – stay away from the crowds.

: It's like, when you listen to your kids and your grandkids because they always come up to you and say, grandma, I love you and [inaudible]. Like, grandma loves you too X, stuff like that. When you listen to your kids, it seems like that just takes it all away.

INTERVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

| MENTORS | PROTECTIVE SETTINGS | PROGRAM STRUCTURE | PARTICIPANTS | ACTIVITIES | RELATIONSHIP BUILDING | PARENTS |

A person that's fun, understand what you're syaing dont try to put you down or saying things to offend you, understand what you're saying (MG).

I think at a center they can focus more besides school because everybody doesnt focus well t school, so it would be better to do it outside (PG).

Like a man to man project, like for me being truthful to him , and he being truthful to me (MG).

I say start with the younger kids, because with us being older, we should know how to pen our mouths and say something, if something worng. the younger kids they be scared to say stuff like if someting happening at home to them...We will come up and say something, especially to your friend (FG).

People get on computers. teach them how to do that. While they're getting on, you can still cope with their feelings, talk to them and stuff. Youf've got the basketball court upstairs. Play ball right there. They you've got the dance floor...for the people who like to dance. (MG)

It's not so much about the location; it's about building a relationship (PG).

First, I think the parents need to know how to deal with it. If the parents know how to deal with it then it can be communicated (TG).

Make it a play, make it a rap – things like that. They love to see themselves... Whatever it is, involve them in something like a video. If we're conversing like now, we're taping it and that way you can watch it and they can add to it and say, "Well, how did we cope with this problem." Or, they can do a commercial and then watch the commercial. They could do commercials for coping for the school (TG).

Like elementary school kids relate with high schoo, so if you put a high school with them, with the elementary kids, they'll relate more, especialy if it's a girl and they're going through the same thing, like they have a boyfriend, they have a boyfriend, things like that (FG).

I would say they should partner up with a business, a company, so there's a lot of people there that they can grab a kid,show them waht they do...that can makethat child strive to want to do that or do something in that field. (PG).

It should at least be at the age of 11 and up because some girls , they get full of themselves, they get to thinking they have boyfirends. Sometimes, 11, thats when they start peridos and I think 11 and up (FG).

Culture and adversity training...like maybe swimming, track, playing ball, football, donating time to help others (PG).

Probably prior to coping, you're going to need team building. You're going to need a lot of team builders like where people get to knw each other, a lot of sharing sessions and stuff like that because they're not going to feel comfortable with them (mentors) if you do'nt do that (TG).

Honestly, I feel like you have to get the family connect back because a lot of kids are not connected with their parents, or their parents want to be their friends. Some parents might need to learn how to be parents because they were never taught, so I think something that would be a very good cmponent-and a lot of parents, they too ashamed to ask for help, but when it's offered they will take it.