

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Agents of Redemptive Hope: Churches and Communities Addressing the Problem of  
Anger and the African American Adolescent Male**

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Doctor of Ministry

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by

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**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## ABSTRACT

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Many African American adolescent males struggle with controlling their anger leading to abusive and addictive behaviors. The question is, should the Churches respond, and if so, how can they help? This paper argues that the Church must reach out with the compassion and healing message of the gospel to the at-risk young Black males who are having difficulty dealing with anger issues to ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong and stable Black men.

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## Introduction

Anger is compelling, perplexing, and common to all and does not discriminate according to race, gender, religion, or geographical location. One such demographic population are young Black men, who continue to be misunderstood, mistreated, ignored, and feared. Their very survival is at stake. Many African American adolescent males struggle with controlling their anger leading to abusive and addictive behaviors. The question is, should the Churches respond, and if so, how can they help? This paper argues that the Church must reach out with the compassion and healing message of the gospel to the at-risk young Black males who are having difficulty dealing with anger issues to ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong and stable Black men.

Anger is often mistakenly labeled exclusively as a negative emotion. However, in reality, anger can be either positive or negative based on certain influential factors and how a person responds to this emotion. Evidence of the problem of managing one's anger among youth in America can be seen in the rise in violence within our schools, the reports and feedback from law enforcement officers concerning the increase in the crime rate among youth. Furthermore, the internet is flooded with images and texts coming from social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, or apps like Facetime, Instagram, and TikTok), which vividly shows the struggle amongst youth in America. One such demographic population of young Americans is young Black men, who continue to be misunderstood, mistreated, ignored, and feared. Their very survival is at stake for many of these young Black men.

This project's objective is to provide an awareness of the effects of socialized anger concerning at-risk African American male adolescents and how the Church, in tandem with the community, can explore and create ways to assist these young men in learning how to cope with

anger constructively. The following four chapters address this anger issue and the various causes and workable solutions. Chapter one covers the statement of purpose, problem, statement of limitations, theoretical basis, statement of methodology, theoretical basis, and the definition of key terms as a foundation for this study. Chapter two provides a basis for ministry, a review, and an overview of the wide range of related literature to undergird the discussion. Chapter three leads to a meeting of the research results. Finally, chapter four deals with interpreting and applying the research results.

In the wake of the "Black Lives Matter" movement, Philip Jackson, Executive Director of the Black Star Project, responds with a scathing pronouncement in response to the plight of the African American male youth:

There is no longer a need for dire predictions, handwriting, or apprehension about losing a generation of black boys. It is too late. We have lost a generation of young Black men in education, employment, economics, incarceration, health, housing, and parenting. The question remains whether we will lose the next two or three generations, or possibly every generation of black boys hereafter, to the streets, negative media, gangs, drugs, poor education, unemployment, father absence, crime, violence, and death.<sup>1</sup>

The state of Black teenage males is in a state of crisis. Byron Daniels says the African American male adolescent is an "endangered species."<sup>2</sup> In cooperation with her music director, Nina Simone coined the 1960's civil rights anthem, "To Be Young Gifted and Black." The words were a rallying call to all Black youth in America to take pride in who they are. The first stanza is the heart of this song, as it speaks of being young, gifted, and Black as

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Jackson, "America Has Lost A Generation Of Black Boys," *Chattanooga.com*, March 21, 2007, [www.chattanooga.com/2007/3/21/103984/America-Has-Lost-A-Generation-Of-Black.aspx](http://www.chattanooga.com/2007/3/21/103984/America-Has-Lost-A-Generation-Of-Black.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> Byron Daniels, *Endangered Species: The Plight of the African American Male Adolescent and the Effects of His Surroundings* (Greensboro, NC: Unite Us Publications, 2011), 3-10.

a "lovely precious dream."<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, that dream has not become a reality, especially for many at-risk African American adolescent males. Today, it would be more accurate to say to be young, gifted, and, oh, God, a black man.

According to Kameron J. Sheats et al., the "African American adolescent male is our nation's most vulnerable population. They are more likely to be arrested, adjudicated, and detained than their White and Latino counterparts."<sup>4</sup> Homicide is the number one cause of death, including the problem of Black-on-Black crime, as well as the most recent tragic phenomenon, which is the use of lethal force by law enforcement officers. The results of one study indicated that in the case of deadly force by law enforcement officers, "victims were majority white (52%), but disproportionately Black (32%) with a fatality rate 2.8 times higher among Blacks than Whites. Most victims reported to be armed (83%); however, black victims were more likely to be unarmed (14.8%) than whites (9.4%) or Hispanic (5.8%) victims."<sup>5</sup>

Philip Jackson offers a sobering, realistic view of the young Black men's plight in America:

It is a fact that Black youth live and survive in a society which has subscribed to a particular view, attitudes, ideas, and assumptions about people of color, specifically Black people. Furthermore, when these attitudes emanate from a racist psycho-structure, the outcome of interactions between individuals and institutions can be abusive, debilitating, and destructive.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nina Simone, "Nina Simone: To Be Young, Gifted and Black," February 21, 2013, YouTube video, 9:21, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_hdVFiANBtk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hdVFiANBtk).

<sup>4</sup> Kameron J. Sheats et al., "Violence-Related Disparities Experienced by Black Youth and Young Adults: Opportunities for Prevention," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 55, no. 4 (October 2018): 462, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.05.017>.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah DeGue, Katherine A. Fowler, and Cynthia Calkins, "Deaths due to Use of Lethal Force by Law Enforcement," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 51, no. 5 (November 2016): S173–87, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2016.08.027>.

<sup>6</sup> Jackson, "America Has Lost a Generation Of Black Boys."

Within this context is a discussion about the impact of anger on the African American adolescent male and how well he can constructively manage his anger. In his anger management workbook, Jeffery Walker writes a succinct purpose statement in the form of dedication. In his preface, Walker dedicates his anger management workbook “to all African American males exposed to the ramifications of out-of-control anger.”<sup>7</sup> The writer of this paper would concur with Walker's sentiments entirely. What comes to mind are the insightful yet subtle and provocative words of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*: “I am invisible, understand, simply because people (i.e., White people) refuse to see me. You often doubt if you exist or are a phantom in other people’s minds. A figure in a nightmare that the sleeper tries to with all his strength to destroy. When you feel like this, you bump people back.”<sup>8</sup> For many young men of color, the societal invisibility metaphor is a concept they live with daily.

Anderson Franklin describes “social invisibility as an inner feeling that one’s talents, abilities, personality, and worth are not valued or recognized because of prejudices and racism. These experiences accumulate to create a feeling of invisibility.”<sup>9</sup> These feelings are well-founded among youths today, as young men of color find themselves constantly subjected to historical baggage of “white oppression and ‘black subordination,’ the social racism, prejudicial treatment, and derogatory stereotypical images.”<sup>10</sup> These are an assault on emerging young Black adults' hopes, dreams, identity, and potential; there comes a time when

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffery L. Walker, *Do You Know Why the Black Man Is So Angry?* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2014), 12, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross Macdonald School Resource Services Library, 2018), 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson J. Franklin, *From Brotherhood to Manhood: Rescuing the Relationships and Dreams of Black Men* (New York, NY: Wiley, 2002), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Webb, “Black Men, Invisibility and Crime: Towards a Critical Race Theory of Desistance, by Martin Glynn,” *Global Crime* 15, no. 3–4 (July 11, 2014): 380–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2014.932538>.



the assault becomes more than one can handle. Motivated by frustration and anger, they fight back in the only way they know.

The struggle is not unique to young African American men, but certain social-cultural and historical elements are naturally inherent to African American males. This study concerns young men of color at risk due to “debilitating personality flaws (i.e., environmentally induced pathologies) developed through a unique socialization process,”<sup>11</sup> making them more prone to choosing unhealthy and destructive behaviors.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to focus on the at-risk African American male adolescent, ages 10-17, who struggle with anger issues, potentially leading to a life of abusive, addictive, and destructive behaviors. In cooperation with the community, the Church must address this problem to help ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong Black men. The three objectives involved with accomplishing this purpose are as follows. The first objective sought to bring about an awareness of the unique social environment of the young Black men from the standpoint of the Black experience, his ability and willingness to act constructively on his behalf as a productive member of a potentially hazardous society, and his wellbeing.

The second objective is to better understand anger as a powerful secondary emotion. Anger can function as a primary emotion, specifically with Black adolescent males and their

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<sup>11</sup> Reginald R. Hicks, *Hidden in the Shadow of Truth, Why Our Black Boys Choose Criminality, Prison, and Enslavement*, (2010), 23.

ability, or lack of, to process the emotion healthily. Anger is no respecter of persons and is an equal opportunity emotion that is common to all, but specific social stressors require attention. One such stressor is racism. Farzana T. Saleem and Sharon F. Lambert note, “African American adolescents’ encounters with racial discrimination are a stressor known to interfere with their mental health and social and emotional development.”<sup>12</sup> When unmanaged, anger is a severe mental health and social issue that affects the individual and the community.

The third objective addresses the cooperative effort of the local Church, and the community-at-large, in responding to young Black males who struggle with various types of anger using both prevention strategies and intervention methods. In the process of achieving this goal, an examination of four programs is taken into consideration as vehicles for working with young Black men. Based upon their preventive and intervention qualities, wherein the Church and their local community can collaborate to bring about a positive change in these young men's lives, five preventive and intervention programs discussed include the following.

The five lettered acrostic, “PLAAY,” is an athletic and culturally based intervention program that stands for: Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth. It teaches young men how to control anger through play.<sup>13</sup>

“Brothers of Ujima,” which is a culturally specific program for young Black men.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Farzana T. Saleem and Sharon F. Lambert, “Differential Effects of Racial Socialization Messages for African American Adolescents: Personal versus Institutional Racial Discrimination,” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 25, no. 5 (December 10, 2015): 1386, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-015-0326-0>.

<sup>13</sup> Howard C. Stevenson, *Playing with Anger: Teaching Coping Skills to African American Boys through Athletics and Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 18-19.

<sup>14</sup> Faye Z. Belgrave et al., *Brothers of Ujima: A Cultural Enrichment Program to Empower Adolescent African American Males* (Champaign, IL: Research Press, 2012) 3-4.

“Adopt a School Initiative” is an outreach started by Dr. Tony Evans, the founder of the Urban Alternative.<sup>15</sup>

The 100 hundred Black Men of America, Inc. is a network of African American businessmen and civic leader, who serve as mentors. They “provide programmatic services in education, health and wellness, economic empowerment and leadership development, which makes a fundamental difference in the lives of young Black me.”<sup>16</sup>

The state of African American adolescent males is in crisis, wherein their futures, short-circuited by destructive behaviors, are due to unprocessed anger. Such anger is a product of specific socialization and environmental Stressors, which negatively impact many young emerging adults. Many of these young African American males live in a social environment wherein they are regularly stereotyped;<sup>17</sup> often endure a relentless, stereotypical bombardment through contemporary media. Stereotypical, demeaning adjectives label such terms as: endangered, aggressive, angry, superhuman, subhuman, lazy, hyperactive, jailed, paroled, on probation, lost, loveless, incorrigible, or plain self-destructive. The adolescent period of human development is challenging enough without contending with the damages associated with such vulgarized and inconsiderate labels thoughtlessly placed upon them.

The response to such a hostile social environment is anger, and many Black youths, especially males, have difficulty dealing with this potentially destructive emotion. Young Black men, who are often considered at-risk, are angry, and this is evident in how they behave, how

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<sup>15</sup> Tony Evans, “Adopt a School Initiative,” 2018, <https://churchadoptaschool.org/tony-evans/>.

<sup>16</sup> “100 Black Men of America, Inc.,” 100 Black Men of America, Inc., 2018, <https://100blackmen.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> Velma McBride Murry, Eryn Piper Block, and Na Liu, “Adjustment and Developmental Patterns of African American Males: The Roles of Families, Communities, and Other Contexts,” in *National Symposium on Family Issues*, vol. 7, *Boys and Men in African American Families*, ed. Linda M. Burton et al., (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016): 9, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43847-4\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43847-4_2).

they carry themselves, how they treat others, the music they listen to or produce, and other forms of rebellion. Why are Black men so angry? Such a question has ignited much controversy. Walker responds to this question by identifying six stressors, or root causes, for Black boys' anger: "racism, prejudice, unemployment, Black crime, police brutality, alcohol and drugs, and education."<sup>18</sup> Each of these is an element of stress. "Stress, a physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors, involves changes affecting nearly every bodily system and how people feel and behave."<sup>19</sup> Sarah Morrow writes, "The response to stressful conditions can be real or perceived positive or negative, makes no difference, and everyone experience and respond to stress in various cultural way. Some people seem severely affected while others can remain cool, calm, and collected."<sup>20</sup>

### **Statement of the Problem**

In connection with these stressors, two terms, disproportionate and disparities, continue to appear as descriptive adjectives concerning African American males' environmental conditions. Disproportionate has to do with the "ratio between the percentage of persons in a particular racial or ethnic group at a particular decision point, or experiencing an event (e.g., maltreatment, incarceration, school dropouts) compared to the percentage of the same racial or ethnic group in the overall population."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, whereas disproportionality refers to

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<sup>18</sup> Walker, *Do You Know Why the Black Man Is So Angry?* 33-57.

<sup>19</sup> *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, s. v. "stress," accessed date, <https://dictionary.apa.org/Stress>

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Morrow, "Health Psychology," Slide Serve, April 4, 2019, <https://www.slideserve.com/sarah/health-psychology-powerpoint-ppt-presentation>.

<sup>21</sup> Rowena Fong, Ruth G. McRoy, and Alan Dettlaff, "Disproportionality and Disparities," *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, June 2, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.899>.

the state of being out of proportion, “disparity refers to a state of being unequal. The concept of social disparity often appears among those who work in community services, and is often utilized in identifying unequal outcomes experienced by one racial, or ethnic group, compared to another racial or ethnic group.”<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, the problem is that a significant number of African American male adolescents are having a difficult time managing their anger that often leads to abusive and addictive behaviors.

### **Risk Factors**

Research has identified certain risk factors that seem to present clear evidence of disparities and the disproportionate representation of African American male adolescents in the American society. Risk factors are understood as “personal traits, characteristics of the environment, or conditions in the family, school, or community linked to youths’ likelihood of engaging in delinquency and other behaviors.”<sup>23</sup> At least eleven stressors in young African American males' lives can hinder their success as a healthy emerging adult male.

### **Racism**

The first risk factor for African American male adolescents is a social intolerance trifecta of racism, discrimination, and prejudice. Racism is a primary contributor to myriad emotions that often ignite the powerful secondary feeling of anger. Racism is not new and has existed in this

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<sup>22</sup> Rowena Fong, Ruth G. McRoy, and Alan Dettlaff, “Disproportionality and Disparities,” *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, June 2, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.899>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Shader, “Risk Factors for Delinquency: An Overview,” 2003, 2, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/frd030127.pdf>.

country since African men and women were involuntarily transported to America by the thousands. Discrimination and prejudice are two terms often used interchangeably with racism, even though each is distinct, although there are similarities. Therefore, it helps to define each element, elaborating racism as the foundation for the immediate discussion.

Racism is “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.”<sup>24</sup> Graham Garwood, citing James Jones, provides “a multidimensional definition of racism: [Racism] results from the transformation of race prejudice or ethnocentrism through the exercise of power against a racial group defined as inferior, by individuals and institutions with the intentional or unintentional support of the entire culture.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, racism has to do with a personal belief system that dictates one’s thinking and action, that one race is superior to another. By contrast, discrimination is the unjust treatment of a group of people. In contrast, prejudice involves prejudging groups based on their appearance, lifestyle, identification, and membership of a group of people purely out of ignorance. Therefore, a working definition is presented by combining these three forms of racial intolerance.

Thus, racism is an antagonistic belief system where one race claims superiority based on preconceived biases, leading to the unfair and unjust treatment of different categories of people. Racism targeting Black Americans continues to be a problem. According to a study done by an independent, non-partisan research center, when it comes to “racial inequality, a great many

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<sup>24</sup> Merriam-Webster Online, s.v. “Racism,” accessed date, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>.

<sup>25</sup> Graham Garwood, “Towards a More Complete Comprehension of Behavioral Problems in African American Adolescent Males: Racism, Trauma, and Parental Mis-Attunement,” (PsyD diss., Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2017), 4, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing; J. M. Jones, *Prejudice and Racism* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1972).

Blacks and Whites are worlds apart”<sup>26</sup> on this issue. Approximately four out of ten (43%) African Americans are skeptical about whether they will ever attain equality. Furthermore, “48% of the Black population say that individual prejudice is a bigger problem, while 40% point to built-in discrimination within this country’s laws and institutions.”<sup>27</sup> Another term often used is systemic racism, meaning the unfair treatment of one race, the White race, toward another race, the Black race, is inherently ingrained within every aspect of American society. The educational arena is often alluded to when referring to the academic achievement gap.

### Academic Achievement Gap

Advances in multiple areas are involved in educating America's children and youth. Still, one segment of the population shows apparent signs of a discrepancy, trailing others of America's male population.<sup>28</sup> This “academic achievement gap is the evidence apparent in many school districts throughout the country, where there is an overrepresentation of African American and Latino males in educational categories, which are associated with failure rather than academic success.”<sup>29</sup> In this researcher's opinion, the long-standing problem of disproportionality in the educational arena is the most critical risk factor young men of color face. Lauren E. Kaplan adds,

There is a problem when there is an overrepresentation compared to other racial groups of the same age and gender; African American adolescent males continually struggle with

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<sup>26</sup> “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart.” *Pew Research Center*, June 27, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/06/27/3-discrimination-and-racial-inequality/>.

<sup>27</sup> “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart,” *Pew Research Center*.

<sup>28</sup> Lora A. Adams-King, “Explaining the Achievement Gap of African American Males relative to Other Student Groups,” (EdD diss., Youngstown State University, 2016), 7-8, [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\\_etd/send\\_file/send?accession=ysu1464786325&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=ysu1464786325&disposition=inline).

<sup>29</sup> Adams-King, Explaining the Achievement Gap, 9.

subjects like reading and math. It is disturbing to know that they often receive harsher discipline in schools. For example, African American male youths are two to five times more likely to be penalized without school suspensions than their white counterparts.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, many of these young men's present trajectory could be more promising, and their prognosis for a prosperous future is in question. Michael A. Fletcher stated, “being a Black man in America can mean inhabiting a border between possibility and peril.”<sup>31</sup> Countless young African American males have the potential for greatness. However, they are written off as lost causes, deemed not worth the time, energy, or resources required to allow them to reach their full potential as they progress toward responsible manhood. According to Kevin T. Porter, “many young men of color are dealing with deep-seated anger in response to their attempt to survive the environment in which they live.”<sup>32</sup> The three essential concepts necessary for understanding the at-risk male are “academic self-concept, male bravado, or hypermasculinity, and school engagement.”<sup>33</sup>

### Academic Self-Concept

First, self-concept is vital for a more precise understanding of the African American male's ability to process what he learns. The notion of self-concept is within itself multidimensional. Therefore, the self-concept theory is “a dynamic, multidimensional psychological construct, which influences and is affected by a person’s social contexts and

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<sup>30</sup> Lauren E. Kaplan, “Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline: REBT with African American Youth in a School Setting” (PsyD diss., Spalding University, 2018), 11-12, ProQuest Dissertation Publishing.

<sup>31</sup> Michael A. Fletcher, In *Being a Black Man: At the Corner of Progress and Peril* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin Todd Porter, *Angry Little Men: Hypermasculinity, Academic Disconnect, and Mentoring African American Males* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2012), 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



interactions and varies across individuals and settings, but has a certain degree of internal stability.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, self-concept deals with what an individual believes about himself, his self-worth, and how he expresses that belief and ability to achieve.

For instance, academic self-concept is a student’s perception of their self-worth and ability to become successful in mastering specific academic domains or skills, as set forth by an educational institution.<sup>35</sup> Although they have made considerable improvements, studies have shown that African American males continue to exhibit a significant academic achievement gap that originates early during their school enrollment.<sup>36</sup> There is well-documented evidence that certain factors and determinants profoundly impact young Black males' educational achievement.

One piece of evidence suggests that “poor academic performance among the African American male can be attributed to a variety of risk factors, Such as risk factor low socioeconomic status, single parent households, level of parental involvement, the lack of availability of an external support system and teacher expectations. These risk factors often place the African American at a disadvantage.”<sup>37</sup> “Overall the literature suggests that a positive self concept leads to a constructive, socially desirable behaviors; then a distroted self-concept will

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<sup>34</sup> Herbert Marsh, Rhonda G. Craven, and Dennis M. McInerney, *New Frontiers for Self-Research*, Google Books (Greenwich, CT: IAP, 2006), 15-16, [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5\\_OnDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA95&dq=Pajares](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5_OnDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA95&dq=Pajares).

<sup>35</sup> Sandeep Kumar Jaiswal and Rashmi Choudhuri, “Academic Self Concept and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students,” *American Journal of Educational Research* 5, no. 10 (November 13, 2017): 1108–13, <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-5-10-11>; Ulrich Trautwein et al., “Self-Esteem, Academic Self-Concept, and Achievement: How the Learning Environment Moderates the Dynamics of Self-Concept,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 2 (2006): 337, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.2.334>.

<sup>36</sup> Scott Graves, “Are We Neglecting African American Males: Parental Involvement Differences between African American Males and Females during Elementary School?” *Journal of African American Studies* 14, no. 2 (August 7, 2008): 263–264, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-008-9065-2>.

<sup>37</sup> Dana C. Madison, “Parental Involvement and the Academic Success of African American Fourth Grade Males,” (EdD diss., Liberty University, 2017), 14, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2675&context=doctoral>.

lead to socially deviant behaviors.”<sup>38</sup> There is some truth to this concept although more study needs to be done. However, it is true that those risk factors can be transformed from the negative to the positive through support systems.

### School Disconnect

School connectedness is critical in determining a student's academic success or failure. Porter stated, “If there are at-risk boys, then there are at-risk parents, at-risk families, and at-risk schools that operate in at-risk communities.”<sup>39</sup> School connectedness is a student’s confidence in believing that the community, composed of parents, teachers, peers, and other significant persons, is concerned about their well-being and academic success.<sup>40</sup> The Centers for Disease Control considers school connectedness as a protective factor. It is protective in the sense that young people feel that “safe home, neighborhood, and school environments were substantial protective factors for not becoming involved in criminal activity. The student has confidence in his belief that the community comprises his parents, school, and peer group; all genuinely care about him as a person of worth and are interested in his positive future outcome.”<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, many students have disillusionment in school, which is evident in a complete attitude change. For example, the NAEP found that the dropout rate, from 2000

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<sup>38</sup> Porter, *Angry Little Men*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Jones et al., “Disciplined and Disconnected: How Students Experience Exclusionary Discipline in Minnesota and the Promise of Non-Exclusionary Alternatives,” (Boston, MA: Center for Promise, 2018), 1, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED586336.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (U.S.), Division of Adolescent and School Health., “School Connectedness; Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors among Youth,” [stacks.cdc.gov](https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/5767), 2009, <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/5767>; Kaplan, “Disrupting the School to Prison,” 26.

through 2016, was higher among Black than White students yet lower than among Hispanic students. There was no significant change in 2016. In 2000 the Black youth dropout rate dropped from 27.8 to 8.6 percent instead of White youth, who went from 13.1 to 6.2 percent, revealing a gap of 6.1 percentage points.<sup>42</sup>

This change in attitude presents itself in any student, regardless of their racial background. In the case of many young African American males, there is a state of academic and school disconnect, as opposed to educational connectedness, and this disconnect usually starts early in many lives. As with other children, the African American enters school with innocent excitement and enthusiasm, the motivation of which is to please, be appreciated, and be loved by both parents and teachers.<sup>43</sup> Then, at approximately nine or ten, in the fourth grade, many African American male students experience decreased enthusiasm and excitement. Jawanza Kunjufu referred to this crippling phase as the Fourth Grade Syndrome.<sup>44</sup> During this time, the student becomes “apathetic, less focused on schooling, and an increased interest in sports, peers, and being cool, which are some characteristics that African American children begin to display.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, “The NCES Fast Facts Tool Provides Quick Answers to Many Education Questions (National Center for Education Statistics),” Ed.gov, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16>.

<sup>43</sup> Judith Rozie-Battle, *African American Adolescents in the Urban Community* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 26.

<sup>44</sup> Sabra R. Smith, “The Plight of the African American Student,” *Journal of Health & Social Policy* 15, no. 2 (September 25, 2002): 25–33, [https://doi.org/10.1300/j045v15n02\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/j045v15n02_03); Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2005), 27-37, [https://archive.org/details/isbn\\_9780913543207/page/78/mode/2up?view=theater](https://archive.org/details/isbn_9780913543207/page/78/mode/2up?view=theater).

<sup>45</sup> Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, pg. #; Smith, “The Plight of the African American Student,” 14-15.

This phase in a child's life is a natural development, where most children begin to break away from their parents' influential identity, seek their own identities, and develop their personalities.<sup>46</sup> That which is not a part of natural development is the "Fourth-Grade Failure Syndrome."<sup>47</sup> The cause of this failure is the loss of confidence in the educational system and all its ramifications. The characteristics mentioned above are only symptoms of the academic struggle many young men of color experience. The critical question should be: What causes the at-risk African American male adolescents' academic achievement gap? Three primary causes presented showcase why a disproportionate number of young Black males flounder in the academic achievement gap.

During this period in their lives, many students become disillusioned with the educational system. Both teachers and the administration are responsible for providing the best learning environment possible. When an atmosphere of apathy exists at both the classroom and administration levels, there will be apathy in the students. The job of a school teacher today is far from easy. In fact, as with many schools, the classroom can be a very hostile environment for teachers and students alike, but the teacher must strive to teach to the best of their ability, and there lies one problem. This disillusionment came partly from the student's contact with teachers who are poorly trained and prepared to relate to the Black male. Putting forth a sincere effort to understand the student is critical, wherein the lack of understanding between students and teachers often leads to stereotyping. "A study that used to randomly survey teachers to discover

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<sup>46</sup> CHOC, "Child Development: Ages and Stages - CHOC Children's," CHOC Children's, 2019, <https://www.choc.org/primary-care/ages-stages/>.

<sup>47</sup> Kevin O'Neal Cokley, "What It Means to Be Black in the American Educational System," The Conversation, October 2, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/what-it-means-to-be-black-in-the-american-educational-system-63576>.

their feelings about Black students going on to college received negative replies from 60% of its respondents.”<sup>48</sup> Stereotyping often leads to labeling that can follow a student from school and beyond.

A teacher once shared this learning experience with participants at a teacher’s conference. A second-grade teacher shared the following story that changed her perspective on teaching. She had a student who would come to class every day with what she considered full of anger, and he seemed very rebellious and uncooperative. She wrote a letter to his mother to inform her of this situation and schedule a parent-teacher conference. On the meeting day, the teacher sat down with the mother, but before the teacher had a chance to start the conversation the Shawns mother wanted to Talk to the Teacher about the note sent home with her son, Shawn. The Teacher, Ms. Harris, stated in the note that Shawn often comes to school angry, wherein, Shawn's mother told Shawns teacher that labeling an African American boy as angry has the potential of remain on his record and follow him throughout his school career.<sup>49</sup> She, teacher concluded her story with the following compelling comment. “Educators must bemuse and actively combat placing students inside a stereotypical box—even within us.”<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, it is a shame that fewer teachers like Ms. Harris exist. Prejudiced Black boys' teachers mistakenly believe they tend to lack academic aptitude and exhibit behavioral problems. Such teachers tended to treat these students differently in the classroom. Teachers of African American boys tend to perceive them as behaviorally and academically deviant, leading

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<sup>48</sup> Sabra R Smith, “The Plight of the African American Student,” 31.

<sup>49</sup> “Labeling Black Male Students ‘Angry,’” Learning for Justice, October 31, 2016, <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/labeling-black-male-students-angry>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

to qualitatively different treatment by these teachers.<sup>51</sup>Stevenson pointed out that “the images of Black males have left a hole so deep in the consciousness of American society that Americans rarely accept evidence to the contrary.”<sup>52</sup> The classroom teacher has the opportunity to help bring about a positive change in the lives of these young men, but the teacher ought not to carry the bulk of this responsibility. The first and most critical responsibility lies in the parents or guardians who initiate the child's socialization.

### Lack of Parental Involvement

The lack of parental involvement is an additional cause for African American adolescent males' low academic performance. Parental involvement involves the active collaboration between parents and their child's school, promoting a healthy environment where students can receive the best education possible. The partnership between the parent or guardian and the school is paramount if one comprehends how vital the family plays in a young person.<sup>53</sup> The cooperation of most African American parents is very active in their child's learning process at school and home. They are visible in the classroom, attend special events, assist with homework assignments, monitor their child's progress, and are prepared to make their presence known in the event of problems affecting their child. Unfortunately, parental involvement with learning

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<sup>51</sup> Keisha M. Wint et al., “Countering Educational Disparities among Black Boys and Black Adolescent Boys from Pre-K to High School: A Life Course-Intersectional Perspective,” *The Urban Review*, September 20, 2021, pg. #, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-021-00616-z>.

<sup>52</sup> Howard C. Stevenson, “Wrestling with Destiny: The Cultural Socialization of Anger and Healing in African American Males,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 21, no. 3 (2002): 357, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/45599385\\_Wrestling\\_with\\_Destiny\\_The\\_Cultural\\_Socialization\\_of\\_Anger\\_and\\_Healing\\_in\\_African\\_American\\_Males](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/45599385_Wrestling_with_Destiny_The_Cultural_Socialization_of_Anger_and_Healing_in_African_American_Males).

<sup>53</sup> Yvette Latunde and Angela Clark-Louque, “Untapped Resources: Black Parent Engagement That Contributes to Learning,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 85, no. 1 (2016): 72, <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.1.0072>.

tends to decline as their children progress through secondary grades, hurting the quality of a student's education.

The fundamental objective of education is to provide youth with the basic skills needed to function effectively within American society. The home plays a vital part in the academic success of youths. A child's self-concept begins at birth and develops through their family unit members' experiences. The child learns by observing the behavior of their parents and other significant others in the family. Therefore, they incorporate what they see, positive or negative, into the traits of those living in the home. At this stage, the primary influencer in the family is the parent or guardian because the parent or guardian is responsible for the initial child's social-cultural view, especially in the case of the African American home, for instilling racial identity. Studies of “African Americans indicate that cultural socialization, and parents’ racial socialization more generally, is associated with indicators of racial identity.”<sup>54</sup>

Another reason parental involvement is critical is that the child is an adolescent by the time they reach secondary school age, 11-12 years. As adolescents, the parent has competition for their child's attention. Sometimes, their allegiance and parents often take a secondary position in their child's sphere of influence.

### Negative Peer Influence

The negative influence of peer influences is another significant factor in a Black male student's academic performance. Adolescence is a crucial social developmental phase in a young

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<sup>54</sup> Sandra Tang, Vonnie C. McLoyd, and Samantha K. Hallman, “Racial Socialization, Racial Identity, and Academic Attitudes among African American Adolescents: Examining the Moderating Influence of Parent–Adolescent Communication,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 45, no. 6 (September 14, 2015): 3, [https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-035\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-035_2).

person's life. During this development stage, their peers have a more centralized influence in a young person's life. The relationship between students and their peers can be positive or negative and predicated upon their choices. It is okay to refer to this type of relationship as peer pressure, especially emphasizing pressure part. Peer pressure is the “pressure to think or behave along with certain peer-prescribed guidelines”<sup>55</sup> so long as a person is willing to pay “the social cost of admission to the in-crowd. It is a way of transmitting a group’s attitudes to encourage a person to be consistent with the group’s norms.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, the youth's urge to become established as part of the influential group will often give in to the group's instrumental pressure to conform. “The relationship between peers and healthy friendships differs considerably. The relationship involved with being in a company is usually close and personal, whereas the peer groups tend to be a much larger group and are less personal. Despite the lack of intimacy, the peer groups' influential acceptance far outweighs the approval from friends and impacts their self-worth and self-esteem”<sup>57</sup> and will eventually have an impact their academic performance.

Besides parental relationships, “peer socialization is one of the most critical factors in adolescent development. Studies have shown that the one deterrent of a student’s school disconnect lies in the school's environment, which involves connections to peers, and teachers, who engage in prosocial behaviors.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, as previously mentioned, peer pressure can be

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<sup>55</sup> Dakari Quimby, “Positive Peer Pressure among Black American Youth and the Role of Ethnic Identity and Gender,” (master’s thesis, Loyola University, 2015), 6, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1705833829?accountid=12085>.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Kathryn R. Wentzel, “Social-Motivational Processes and Interpersonal Relationships: Implications for Understanding Motivation at School,” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 91, no. 1 (1999): 75, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.91.1.76>.

<sup>58</sup> Clea McNeely and Christina Falci, “School Connectedness and the Transition into and out of Health-Risk Behavior among Adolescents: A Comparison of Social Belonging and Teacher Support,” *Journal of School Health* 74, no. 7 (September 2004): 285, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2004.tb08285.x>.



negative or positive, depending on a person's choices. A student's decisions are another determinant of success relative to academic achievement. The determination to conform to negative peer influences has been detrimental to many young Black men, who are at risk of continuing the unfortunate generational pattern of “low education, unemployment, and living in high crime environments.”<sup>59</sup>

### **The Search for Identity**

Adolescence is a precarious phase of life for any youth, regardless of gender or race. The commonly used phrase, growing pains, is an applicable description for this stage of their lives. This period is marked by a phase wherein a young person will “define themselves based on personality, physical attributes, ethnic orientation, and other distinct traits.”<sup>60</sup> Adolescence is a natural period for young people to grapple with the all-important identity formation question: Who am I? Many adolescents struggle to find a firm answer to this critical question. Nurturing the young person’s family and community is vital, without which “the adolescent may remain in the fragile state of diffusion.”<sup>61</sup> Kenda Dean states,

Without a coherent identity, adolescents constantly feel at risk of disintegrating, becoming nonexistent - literally, of being a nobody. They intuit that this disparate self is "not right," but they lack the resources to justify it. So they resort to myriad anesthetics to numb the pain of falling apart: achievement, substance abuse, consumerism, serial

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<sup>59</sup> Porter, *Angry Little Men*, 25.

<sup>60</sup> David Moshman, *Adolescent Psychological Development: Rationality, Morality, and Identity*, ERIC (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1999), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED437602>.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin M. Gushiken, “Nurturing Spiritual Identity Formation in Youth Curriculum from the Theological-Psychological Approach of James Loder,” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 7, no. 2 (November 2010): 319–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131000700205>.

relationships - the list is endless. Every salve eventually wears off, revealing the fragile self anew.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, there lays the problem regarding the plight of African American male adolescents. Although all youth will indeed experience this search for self-discovery and identity, the male African American child has the unique challenge of circumventing such racial elusiveness, social discrimination, stereotypical images through media, low income, living in a violent environment, low academic performance, the absence of a father, and more. The Black male youth must grapple with his “racial identity” as a young, emerging African American adult living in a hostile environment. A. M. Liberman and J. Fontaine postulate that this environmental condition is where “boys and men of color are disproportionately represented as both crime victims and offenders and appear overrepresented in all aspects of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System.”<sup>63</sup> According to the CDC, “assault or homicide continues to be the leading cause of death for non-Hispanic, Black males ages 10-24. The top three causes of death for those among this age group are homicide, self-help-homicide, and unintentional accidents.”<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, any discussion on the Black male adolescent’s unique challenges in searching for his identity must address three problem areas relevant to prevention and rehabilitation. These three factors are the African American male's contact with the juvenile criminal justice system, aggression and hypermasculinity, and identity formation.

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<sup>62</sup> Timothy Prewette, “Meaning-Making as a Formational Pathway for Christian Adolescents,” (D. Min thesis, George Fox University, 2017), 126, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1220&context=dmin>.

<sup>63</sup> A. M. Liberman and J. Fontaine, “Reducing Harms to Boys and Young Men of Color from Criminal Justice System Involvement,” Urban Institute, February 2015, 4, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/reducing-harms-boys-and-young-men-color-criminal-justice-system-involvement>.

<sup>64</sup> “Leading Causes of Death – Males – Non-Hispanic Black – United States, 2018,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC, 2018), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr70/nvsr70-04-508.pdf>.

### Contact with the Criminal Justice System

Black adolescent criminality indicates that something is wrong, broken, and needs an overhaul in this country. A disproportionate number of African American boys and young men are sitting in jails, juvenile detention centers, and prisons across America, and they are angry. Many at-risk young Black males experience anger rooted in a history of racial prejudice, social injustice, and discrimination. Their anger is often prone to turn into an emotional rage. Walker succinctly addresses this anger issue and its connection with young Black males:

All men witness anger, but black men are more prone to kill or be killed through anger because unresolved anger turns into rage, and unresolved rage turns into jail or hell (death). As a nation of people, we must come to terms with angry black men and find healthy ways to assist him in dealing with his emotional cancer, anger.<sup>65</sup>

### Aggression and Hypermasculinity

The second critical factor relating to young African American males is the issue of aggression. Aggression usually is understood as “hostile, injurious, or destructive behaviors born of frustration and is an important correlative of violence, depression, coping and suicide among emerging young African American males.”<sup>66</sup> Aggression in African American males has received extensive study over the years. Studies have shown that young African American males appear disproportionately overrepresented in America’s violent crime and imprisonment rates.<sup>67</sup> This paper's objective is not an attempt to justify violent criminal behavior. However, the goal is

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<sup>65</sup> Walker, *Do You Know Why the Black Man Is So Angry*. 33, Kindle.

<sup>66</sup> Alvin Thomas, Wisdom Powell Hammond, and Laura P. Kohn-Wood, “Chill, Be Cool Man: African American Men, Identity, Coping, and Aggressive Ideation.,” *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 21, no—3 (2015): 369, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037545>.

<sup>67</sup> P. Tony Jackson, *Black Male Violence in Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), Kindle, loc. 23.

to explain how and why these at-risk young men think and behave the way they do to lead them to a positive life outcome.

For example, Porter grappled with anger among young males in the African American community and made the following statement regarding the predicament of young black men:

How do you reach a young man, an angry little man with so much talent and so much of the world to conquer, whose perception seems so squelched of the strategies and resources readily available for him to tap? They exhibit toughness and anger and are full of play and dreams, but they do not know how to achieve those dreams. They refuse to obey authority or heed the wisdom of their elders.<sup>68</sup>

An attitude of hopelessness has invaded young African American males' lives, confronted by adverse conditions perpetuated by their<sup>69</sup> “environments and their perceptions of and reactions to others and life situations. The community compounds these factors, such as poverty, violence, and subculture, reinforcing negative behavior”<sup>70</sup> Anger for many of these young men is often a survival mechanism in response to what they interpret as unfair treatment.

The National Research Council arrived at the conclusion about such treatment. Their findings were that “the risk factors are such that minority youth are born into and raised in severely compromised familial, community, and educational environments that set the stage for a range of adverse behaviors and outcomes, including problems in school, relationships, and engaging in prosocial behavior”<sup>71</sup> thereby setting the stage possible aggressive behaviors.

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<sup>68</sup> Porter, *Angry Little Men*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>71</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. “Literature Review: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Juvenile Justice Processing,” n.d. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/racial-and-ethnic-disparity>.

The inclination for exaggerated masculine behavior is present in all males of all ages and races who face the problem of becoming a man. Many young men confront conflicting signals about what it means to be a real man. Charles Corprew, Jamaal Matthews, and Avery Mitchell write,

These discrepant messages emanate from traditional societal concepts of masculinity, and these young men are often left to their own volition and adopt the idea that seems best to them. Traditionally the concept of masculinity, being a real man, includes such notions as the avoidance of even the hint of being feminine or sissified; possessing physical strength; exemplifying dominance or power over others; avoidance of showing weakness; aggressiveness; seekers of fame and fortune; willingness to take risks; bravery;<sup>72</sup>

Additionally, they must be defenders of the male bravado. On the other hand, hypermasculinity, instead of traditional masculinity, is an “exaggeration of traditional masculinity.”<sup>73</sup> Even though hypermasculinity is evident in males of all races, it is often more pronounced among the African American male, specifically among the adolescent male population. In his “High-Risk Model,” Porter states that “hypermasculinity is affected by daily hassles, fatherlessness, school pressure, peer pressure, and maladaptive coping mechanisms.”<sup>74</sup>

According to the *Encyclopedia on Social Issues*, hypermasculinity, as a distortion of male bravado-like behavior, has three features: “(1) the view of violence as manly, (2) the perception of danger as exciting and sensational, and (3) callous behavior toward women and a regard toward emotional displays as feminine.”<sup>75</sup> For example, there was a time when an older Black

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<sup>72</sup> Charles S. Corprew, Jamaal S. Matthews, and Avery DeVell Mitchell, “Men at the Crossroads: A Profile Analysis of Hypermasculinity in Emerging Adulthood,” *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 22, no. 2 (March 4, 2014): 105, <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.2202.107>.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>74</sup> Porter, *Little Angry Men*, 52.

<sup>75</sup> Ronald O. Craig, s.v. “Hypermasculinity,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hypermasculinity>.

man, an adult, could walk down the street, and when he encountered a group of young Black teenagers, the young men would step aside and allow the older man to pass through. Today's adult males find themselves forced to go around the young men to get by in today's world. Women, young and old, especially older adults, were once shown the highest respect by young Black males. On a crowded bus with standing room only, young men gave up their seats to the females out of courtesy. If a young man were to use profanity in a female's presence, he would immediately apologize to the female and announce the female's presence to the other young men. Women are often degraded and often referred to by derogatory and demeaning names regularly heard in popular music and rap songs that these young men listen to and, in some cases, produce.

Young Black men adopt such behavior due to being bombarded daily by stereotypical messages. These messages were transmitted through the various forms of media; peers and the family often learn such behavior on the road to manhood. A thirteen-year-old African American male, who had gotten into trouble for fighting at an amusement park with another male, stated that the reason he got in the fight was because “that N-word dissed” (i.e., disrespected) me and that he had to defend his “manhood.”

Many Black boys and young men put on the façade of being complicated and easily enraged due to their “lacking vision, understanding, and discretion, they become angry little men and wear the mask of hypermasculinity.”<sup>76</sup> This masquerade, the mask of hypermasculinity and anger, “protects their dreams, fears, and whom they want to become. These adolescents, emerging adults, think they must wear this mask to pass as men, never realizing that they may be headed in the wrong direction”<sup>77</sup> in their efforts to achieve what they think is authentic manhood.

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<sup>76</sup> Porter, *Little Angry Men*, 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

According to Porter, such “risk contributors influence hypermasculinity in at-risk African American males as the ability to cope with the stress of daily hassles, the absence of a father, and influence of peer pressure.” Males with this bravado orientation may develop hypermasculine attributes, likely leading to school disengagement.”<sup>78</sup>

### Identity Formation

Identity formation, defined as “the process by which individuals develop a sense of themselves, a sense of continuity in whom they are, including their values, goals, and purpose,”<sup>79</sup> is a crucial transitional phase in the life of a young emerging adult. During this phase of a person’s life,

...identity is a central issue of concern during adolescence when decisions about future vocational, ideological, and relational issues need to be addressed; however, these key identity concerns often demand further reflection and revision during different phases of adult life as well. Identity, thus, is not something that one resolves once. For all at the end of adolescence, but rather identity may continue to evolve and change throughout adult life too.<sup>80</sup>

This transition spans from childhood to adulthood, and during this phase, the young person begins to negotiate the rapid “developmental changes as increased autonomy, physical maturation, and initial experiences with dating set the stage for a wide range of situations and experiences”<sup>81</sup> that define who they are as unique individuals. In the case of the African

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<sup>78</sup> Porter, *Little Angry Men*, 52.

<sup>79</sup> Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2011), 354–55.

<sup>80</sup> Jane Kroger, “Identity Development in Adolescence and Adulthood,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*, February 27, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.54>.

<sup>81</sup> Von Nebbitt, “Self-Efficacy in African American Adolescent Males Living in Urban Public Housing,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 35, no. 3 (June 2009): 295–316, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409333616>.

American male adolescent, the added challenge “of negotiating racial identity comes to the forefront,”<sup>82</sup> which is a daunting challenge for many young men of color.

Jacqueline Smith points out the negative side of racial identity. He asserts that “all of us are a part of the human race, but physical characteristics such as hair type, the color of a person’s eyes and skin, and ancestry often dominate, oppress, and marginalize groups.”<sup>83</sup> Young Black at-risk males are one racial demographic reflected in this descriptive category. Stevenson makes the following statement as to how it often feels to be a Black male:

Being Black and male is surreal. You are despised. You are mostly hunted for sport and the development of others. Your rarity in certain contexts makes him a marketable commodity worthy of desire and loathing. You are assumed to be hostile, and you are assumed to be careless. You are followed as often as you are left alone. You want what everybody else wants, but the world looks upon you as if you want it with malice.<sup>84</sup>

Racial socialization “refers to the process by which parents transmit implicit and explicit messages about the meaning of one’s race in a broader societal context.”<sup>85</sup> As the definition implies, racial socialization begins within the home. In light of the concept of identity development, caution must be used in this case. As stated earlier, this paper does not claim that African American youth are any different from other racial groups regarding the struggle for identity. Young men of color in the United States undergo the same typical developmental experiences as any other racial and age group. Kathleen Boykin MCELhaney et al. writes, “Hallmarks such as physical growth and developing a desire to assert their independence are

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<sup>82</sup> Nebbitt, “Self-Efficacy in African American Adolescent Males Living in Urban Public Housing,” 297.

<sup>83</sup> Jacqueline Smith, “Racial Identity,” in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, ed. T. Hawkins and R. Clinton (Eugene, OR: Harvester House, 2011), 509.

<sup>84</sup> Stevenson, *Playing with Anger*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Sandra Tang, Vonnie C. McLoyd, and Samantha K. Hallman, “Racial Socialization, Racial Identity, and Academic Attitudes among African American Adolescents: Examining the Moderating Influence of Parent–Adolescent Communication,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 45, no. 6 (September 14, 2015): 1141–55, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-0351-8>.



normal signs of development in youth.”<sup>86</sup> However, many of these young individuals must “cope with a world where the normative is the expectation to experience racial prejudice.”<sup>87</sup> Therefore the challenge for at-risk African Americans is their ability to adapt in light of and despite the hostility and confusion many of them live in from day to day.

Studies have affirmed a “link between family and community support and African American adolescents’ mental health and behavioral outcomes (e.g., self-esteem, academic achievement).”<sup>88</sup> The problem is that many at-risk young men of color may not have the support systems (e.g., parents, the faith community, peer groups, and environment) and techniques vital to healthy development to facilitate positive outcomes. Research has concluded that “African American youths are more likely to experience certain risk factors. Risk factors such as poverty, single-parent households, and residence in communities with few resources could affect their development.”<sup>89</sup> The color of one’s skin, or complexion, has always been a point of contention in America, especially regarding African Americans.

Americans’ adjectives used for African Americans have been derogatory and demeaning. One of the most dehumanizing names given to America’s people of color was the use of the N-word. Through the years, African Americans searched for an adjective, a descriptive name, that

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<sup>86</sup> Kathleen Boykin McElhaney et al., “Attachment and Autonomy during Adolescence,” in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, Richard M. Lerner and Lauren Steinberg, eds., vol. 1 (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 358, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479193.adlpsy001012>.

<sup>87</sup> Robert M. Sellers et al., “Racial Identity, Racial Discrimination, Perceived Stress, and Psychological Distress among African American Young Adults,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 303, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14582310/>.

<sup>88</sup> Aerika S. Brittian, “Understanding African American Adolescents’ Identity Development,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 38, no. 2 (July 22, 2011): 172–200, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798411414570>.

<sup>89</sup> Ashley B. Evans et al., “Racial Socialization as a Mechanism for Positive Development among African American Youth,” *Child Development Perspectives* 6, no. 3 (February 2, 2012): 251–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2011.00226.x>.

would mark self-pride as a people. African Americans evolved from being called the N-word to colored, negro, African, Afro-American, African American, and Black. This writer can remember growing up in the 1950s when the worst thing one could do was to call someone Black. However, the Black experience is the focal point when referring to African American communities. This experience focuses on “demographic characteristics, such as economic status, race, ethnicity, and gender in a non-dynamic, non-individual-context relational way.”<sup>90</sup> Utilizing such experiential data about the experiences of young Black men in America no doubt aids in the discussion of identity development. Aerika Brittian makes an interesting point: “Many pathways exist between experiences with negative race-related stressors and how African American youth will cope with those experiences.”<sup>91</sup> The key is how these young men, trapped in an identity crisis, can overcome such overwhelming odds to achieve a positive outcome.

Thus, young African American males' identity formation is more about their ability to “cope with those experiences. Experiences with discrimination youth may develop problematic internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The encounters with stressors may trigger African American youth to use various behavioral coping processes.”<sup>92</sup> Many at-risk young Black men are experiencing an identity crisis wherein they feel as though they are fighting for their lives. This struggle regularly leads many at-risk youths to make unhealthy choices in their attempts to cope. That leads to such things as joining a gang, dropping out of school, sexual activity and teenage fatherhood, substance abuse, or bullying, leading many young men of color toward an adverse outcome.

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<sup>90</sup> Brittian, “Understanding African American Adolescents’ Identity Development,” 3.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

## Nihilism

This paper proposes to address the plight of many young men of color in America. The discussion examined such risk factors as racism, the academic achievement gap, and identity formation as essential elements for the at-risk African American adolescent male. Nevertheless, the discussion would be incomplete without addressing the notion of nihilism.

Philosophically, “nihilism believes that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated, which is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence.”<sup>93</sup> Cornel West offers a more direct definition of nihilism with the African American community in mind. He states that nihilism should be “understood as more than a philosophic doctrine. A doctrine that there are no rational grounds for legitimate standards or authority; it is, far more, the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness.”<sup>94</sup> For some at-risk African American male youth, the prognosis for achieving a positive life outcome is not very bright. Many are faced with having to cope with the challenges of “social, economic, and environmental factors that loom large in the developmental course.”<sup>95</sup> The loss of hope is the most disturbing event in a young person's life.

Amid stressors such as racism, absentee fathers, poor academic performance, identity crisis, poor choices, homicide, stereotypical messages, and the “socio-economic decline and

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<sup>93</sup> Alan Pratt, “Nihilism | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,” ed. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://iep.utm.edu/nihilism/#:~:text=Nihilism%20is%20the%20belief%20that%20all%20values%20are>.

<sup>94</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 30-31.

<sup>95</sup> Lisa Reyes Mason, Kelsey N. Ellis, and Jon M. Hathaway, “Experiences of Urban Environmental Conditions in Socially and Economically Diverse Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Community Practice* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2016.1269250>.

environmental breakdown of low-income neighborhoods and communities,”<sup>96</sup> there are many factors that can have a devastating negative impact. It is well-known that stress is detrimental to the health of anyone’s life, especially youth, in light of this crucial development period. Lisa Mason, Kelsey Ellis, and Jon Hathaway note, “High-stress levels can wreak havoc on bodily systems from the brain to the heart, and accelerate the pace of biological aging, according to experts. For people of color, race-based stressors can take a heavy toll on health for a lifetime.”<sup>97</sup> Therefore, they attempt to cope the best way they know how. It must be noted that “coping with these stressors depends on a host of cognitive, emotional, contextual, and situational factors.”<sup>98</sup> For example, one study discovered that constant “exposure to social and environmental (i.e., urban stressors) stressors including violence, was significantly associated with aggressive behavior.”<sup>99</sup>

West identifies the state wherein a person, or groups of people, accepts life as meaningless, void of hope, and that they are not persons of worth as the “nihilistic threat. This threat has a self-fulfilling prophecy that says without hope, there is no future, and without meaning, there can be no struggle.”<sup>100</sup> The all-important question is how to respond to such a threat. Tyrone Howard notes, “Many young African American males desperately seek help, yet

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<sup>96</sup> Lisa Reyes Mason, Kelsey N Ellis, and Jon M Hathaway, “Experiences of Urban Environmental Conditions in Socially and Economically Diverse Neighborhoods,” 50.

<sup>97</sup> “Stress of Racism Can Affect Health across Generations,” Harvard T. H. Chan, News, March 19, 2021, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/stress-of-racism-health-toll/#:~:text=For%20people%20of%20color%2C%20race-based%20stressors%20can%20take.>

<sup>98</sup> Noni K. Gaylord-Harden et al., “Understanding Development of African American Boys and Young Men: Moving from Risks to Positive Youth Development,” *American psychologist* 73, no. 6 (2018): 761.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 757.

<sup>100</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 14.

demonstrate resilience, showing resistance, or deliberately disengaging from school.”<sup>101</sup> In many cases, out of frustration, they often lash out in misdirected rage; the community and societies bear the negative impact. However, these young men have great potential and, like most, have always aspired for a positive future.<sup>102</sup> Having surrendered out of frustration and anger, these troubled young emerging adult men of color have buckled under the pressures of life. From the perspective of many young, at-risk Black men, the future can appear bleak and meaningless, believing that it is futile to keep trying. It would be an understatement to say that the condition of some young African American males is an epidemic. Far too “many of our boys have internalized the hype of their criminal and animal potential, and believe in very little, not even themselves. They end up buying the hype without the hope”<sup>103</sup> to realize their full potential. Engaging in a semantic debate “about blame, and any healing agenda or wrestling match that includes blame is dead before it begins.”<sup>104</sup>

The Church can no longer sit idly by while young Black men in America are in such a predicament in losing confidence in obtaining a positive life outcome. The argument as to who is to blame is not the answer. The answer to such a question centers around who should assist these young men of color in navigating the road toward becoming responsible adult men. The old African concept, which says it takes a village to raise a child, is still valid today. The new village is the community, and the Church is vital, though not as visible as it should be. This paper's crux

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<sup>101</sup> Tyrone C. Howard, *Black Male(D): Peril and Promise in the Education of African American Males* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2014), Kindle.

<sup>102</sup> Howard, *Black Male(D)*, Kindle.

<sup>103</sup> Stevenson, “Wrestling with Destiny,” 358.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

concerns the Church assuming the shared responsibility for helping African American males deal with self-defeating, destructive, and harmful anger toward themselves and others.

### **Statement of Limitations**

The title of this project is “Agents of Hope: Churches and Communities Addressing the Problem of Anger and the At-risk African American Adolescent Male.” The reason for this project is to discover to what degree anger is the cause of destructive and addictive behaviors among this demographic. The primary objective is to explore ways the Church and community cooperatively address this issue.

This writer has set certain boundaries for this discussion, concise yet thorough. Boundary lines limit the conversation to the essentials, wherein the objective achieves clarity. The first is when referencing anger associated with young black men of color. It would be wrong to imply that anger is unique to young African American males, and it would be false to say that all environmental factors that make up the Black experience are the same for all people of color. Certain social-cultural and historical elements are naturally inherent to African Americans in general. Secondly, anger is a common denominator for all adolescents; this project will be limited to African American male adolescents, not White males and females, Hispanic males and females, or African American females. Thirdly, even though the community comprises many religions and houses of faith, this project will limit its attention to the Christian faith known as the Church. Fourthly, this research project is limited to African American males, ages 10-24, who live in urban America, as reflected in a sampling of two metropolitan cities, Atlanta, GA and Chicago, IL, representing the northeast and southeast.

This project's primary concern is to what degree anger is the cause of destructive and addictive behaviors among teenage Black males and what measures can be taken by the Church to help.

### **Theoretical Basis**

In a superficial survey of the Black adolescent male of today, one might think of apathy. Judgment is usually based on clothing style, sagging, Hip hop music, Gangster Rap, sexual promiscuity, youth gun violence, behavior problems at school, drive-by shootings, gangs, criminals, and someone to be feared and avoided. Some may claim that this generation is somewhat apathetic. On the contrary, most care, aspire, and hope for a positive future, but they have given themselves a life of disappointment and hopelessness due to environmental stressors. Rather than apathy, a more descriptive word for many at-risk young men of color is anger, which often leads to abusive and addictive behaviors. So often, the Church community “stand helplessly watching Black boys and men who are so desperately in need of emotional nurturance that they fill their emptiness with aggression, anger, and physical outbursts.”<sup>105</sup>

This developmental period is challenging for the adolescent, especially at-risk African American males. According to Stevenson, young Black men and “boys’ emotional lives are under siege daily. The constant verbal assaults from peers, friends, and sometimes family about their physical features, fashion, walk, talk, or ideas bring a hypersensitivity to humiliation.”<sup>106</sup> News of the Travon Martin shooting controversy, police brutality, Black-on-Black crime, Black

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<sup>105</sup> Howard C. Stevenson, *Playing with Anger: Teaching Coping Skills to African American Boys through Athletics and Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 84.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Lives Matter marches and campaigns, the high number of homicides in Chicago, IL, and more, bombard the airwaves daily. African American males top the list for incarceration, murder, fatherless homes, substance abuse, and poverty. The identity crisis and perceived images are compounded for young African American males. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Black male teenagers ages 12-19 are 37% more likely to die than Hispanic and non-Hispanic White adolescents. Black male teenagers' leading cause of death is homicide, unintentional injuries, suicide, and cancer.<sup>107</sup> Violence (i.e. in the Black community) can take on many forms, including “racial profiling, police brutality, hate crimes, other incidents of racial bias, drive-by shootings, gang violence, Black-on-Black Crime, drug-related violence, domestic violence, and child abuse.”<sup>108</sup> Another factor that the teenage Black male must grapple with, though not exclusively a black problem, is the damaging effects of fatherlessness. In other words, the father's absence, or a significant role modeling male in the teenager's life.

Historically, it has not been promising for people of color in this country. Stevenson notes, quoting W. E. B. DuBois, “America daily asks a rhetorical question, ‘How does it feel to be a problem?’ Whether exceptional or underachieving, wealthy or poor, strong, or weak, Black folks cannot escape the fact that the basic orientation of American racial politics sees them as a problematic group.”<sup>109</sup> Society still looks suspicious as young Black men are looked upon stereotypically, consciously, or subconsciously, with disrespect, fear, and sometimes hate. At the

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<sup>107</sup> Arialdi Miniño and Sherry Murphy, “Death in the United States, 2010,” 2012, pg. #, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db99.pdf>, 4.

<sup>108</sup> Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy Understanding the African American Experience* (New York, NY: Guilford, 2006), 167.

<sup>109</sup> Stevenson, “Wrestling with Destiny,” 357.



same time, the Black male responds to these images and stereotypes with anger, anxiety, and in many cases, lashes out in rage.

### **Statement of Methodology**

Anger is a powerful and perplexing emotion that is inherent in all humanity. This emotion does not discriminate according to race, gender, religion, or geographical location. This project intends to provide an awareness of the effects of uncontrolled anger in the lives of many at-risk African American adolescent males and how the Church, in tandem with the community, can explore and create ways to assist these young men with healthy management of their anger through the use of prevention and intervention programs. The three chapters will address anger issues, various causes, and possible solutions.

Chapter 1, the introduction, will consist of the statement of purpose, problem statement, statement of limitations, the theoretical basis, statement of methodology, theoretical basis, and the definition of critical terms.

Chapter 2 provides a basis for ministry, a review, and an overview of the wide range of related literature to undergird the discussion. As mentioned in the introduction, anger is not unique to the African American male adolescent, nor is this writer saying that all black experience factors are the same. Some social-cultural and historical elements are naturally inherent to African Americans. Chapter 3 will address the following areas about the black teenage male: the world of the adolescent, socialized anger, the real problem of racism, media stereotyping of black men, community breakdown, and self-identity.

Chapter 3 can rightfully be called the application chapter. This chapter presents a detailed presentation of the research results, methods, models, and approaches to and counseling within

this project. The objective is two-fold. First, to offer ways and a plan to help churches mobilize their communities in addressing this issue practically, and second, to form a strategy toward starting a counseling center to address young black men who struggle with anger problems.

Chapter 4 focuses on the interpretation and implementation. The ministry context Church, long known for its leadership in addressing the many social problems plaguing communities by applying a spiritual remedy for humanity's condition, must be vigilant in responding to the Christian's calling to be the influential light and salt of the world. Two social movements gained popularity when the Church and Christianity was called upon to step out, take the lead, and became a positive change agent. Two of those movements were the social gospel and the civil rights movement. The social gospel movement was known for "applying the teaching of Jesus and the message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions such as the state, the family, and individuals."<sup>110</sup> In brief, the social gospel notion saw the church actively addressing the total person's needs (i.e., spiritual, mental, intellectual, social, physical) as he taught his disciples. From out of the social gospel movement came the Black social gospel movement. The Black social gospel "historically rooted in the black abolitionism and teaching that the God of the Bible favors the poor and oppressed. The Black social gospel played an important role in forming the civil rights organizations of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries,"<sup>111</sup> which was prevalent during the 1960s. The rise of the civil rights movement was under the leadership of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.

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<sup>110</sup> Christopher H. Evans, "The Social Gospel as 'the Total Message of the Christian Salvation,'" *Church History* 84, no. 1 (2015): 197, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24537296>.

<sup>111</sup> Gary Dorrien, "Achieving the Black Social Gospel," in *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1z27j6p.5>.

### Definition of Key Terms

A working definition of the key terms is pertinent to a better understanding of the material for discussion. The key terms are anger, adolescence, self-efficacy, and social determinants.

#### Anger

Anger, an emotion common to all humanity, does not discriminate according to race, gender, religion, or geographical location. In other words, everyone gets angry at some point. There is so much confusion concerning this emotion that a clear and concise definition is necessary.

Therefore, “anger is a powerful, God-given emotion that inspires a natural posture of readiness to respond to an actual or perceived injustice, wherein a person goes on alert allowing the individual to defend the good and attack the evil.”<sup>112</sup> The emotion of anger can be healthy or unhealthy, depending on how a person processes this emotion. The Bible has a great deal to say about this emotion. Anger is mentioned 455 times, usually about God’s anger. Even Jesus became angry, as mentioned in Mark 3:5: “After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart; He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ and, he stretched it out, and his hand was restored” (NASB). Jesus’ righteous indignation was expressed when he witnessed the lack of compassion and love for the man needed to be healing and their misunderstanding of the purpose of the Sabbath. The only other emotion spoken of more is love.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Tim Clinton and Chap Clark, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 34, Kindle.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

Of all the God-given emotions, “anger is the most powerful, misunderstood, and viewed as harmful, dangerous, and sinful. Many assume that all anger ought to be regarded as toxic, destructive, and unhealthy, never realizing that, as mentioned earlier, there can be healthy expressions of anger.”<sup>114</sup> Anger as an emotion will find a way to express itself. As stated earlier, no one is immune, and is in “reality a cluster of emotions involving the body, the mind, and the will.”<sup>115</sup> There are three ways that anger reveals itself. The first is,

in response to a person, situation, or event; to an imaginary or anticipated event, memories of a traumatic experience, or enraging situations; a response to a real or perceived injustice or hurt in the form of frustration, betrayal, deprivation, injustice, exploitation, manipulation, criticism, violence, disapproval, humiliation, intimidation, threats.<sup>116</sup>

Secondly, anger can “respond to a real or perceived injustice or hurt in the form of frustration, betrayal, deprivation, injustice, exploitation, manipulation, criticism, violence, disapproval, humiliation, intimidation, threats.”<sup>117</sup>

Third, anger can be a “response when a boundary in their life has been crossed.”<sup>118</sup> The counseling and mentoring objective lay not in eliminating anger but in helping the person manage or control such a strong emotion instead of holding them.

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<sup>114</sup>Tim Clinton, and Ron Hawkins. *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*. Harvest House Publishers, 2011, 178.

<sup>115</sup> Gary Chapman, *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 17, Kindle.

<sup>116</sup> Timothy E. Clinton and Ronald E. Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 40.

<sup>117</sup> Gary Chapman, *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion*, 18.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

## Adolescence

Adolescence is when a child develops into an adult, the state or process of growing up, or the development stage before growing up.<sup>119</sup> Another definition for this stage of human growth development is that adolescence “begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty and ends when an adult identity and behavior are accepted.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, “adolescence begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty and ends when an adult identity and behavior are accepted. This period of development corresponds to the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years, which is consistent with the World Health Organization’s definition of adolescence.”<sup>121</sup> However, recent studies have concluded that an “expanded and more inclusive definition of adolescence is essential for developmentally appropriate framing of laws, social policies, and service systems. Rather than age 10–19 years, 10–24 years corresponds more closely to adolescent growth.”<sup>122</sup> This developmental period is anything but smooth and can be particularly hectic for youth. One area that is especially hectic for adolescents is identity formation in the early years of development.

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson made the following observation about the search for identity in their quest to answer the question: Who am I? It is noted that

Erikson recognizes this to be an ‘identity crisis,’ a crucial turning point in which an individual must develop in one way or another, ushering the adolescent toward growth

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<sup>119</sup> “The Definition of Adolescence,” [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/adolescence>.

<sup>120</sup> Deborah Christie and Russell Viner, “Adolescent Development,” *BMJ* 330, no. 7486 (February 3, 2005): 301–4, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.330.7486.301>.

<sup>121</sup> D. Sacks, “Age Limits and Adolescents,” *Paediatrics & Child Health* 8, no. 9 (November 1, 2003): 577, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/8.9.577>.

<sup>122</sup> Susan M Sawyer et al., “The Age of Adolescence,” *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 2, no. 3 (March 2018): 223–28, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642\(18\)30022-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(18)30022-1).

and differentiation. Identity is formed through a process of exploring options or choices and committing to an option based upon the outcome of their exploration.<sup>123</sup>

Erickson further maintains that “failure to establish a well-developed sense of identity can result in identity confusion. Those experiencing identity confusion do not have a clear sense of who they are or their role in society.”<sup>124</sup> Today’s youth live in a complex age where technology is advancing at a whirlwind pace. Social media such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, instant messaging, and texting are commonplace and available. One would assume that relationships would be more robust and healthier through social media because of increased connectedness, with fewer issues such as self-esteem, drug abuse, alcoholism, and loneliness. Sadly, this is not the case. Relational pain and social isolation cut deeper today.<sup>125</sup>

The genesis of the problem is the breakdown of healthy, meaningful relationships that promise stability and wisdom. Consider that three thousand kids a day will see their parents divorced. What makes matters worse, youths must deal with issues such as sexual abuse, fatherlessness or an absentee father, high school dropout, substance abuse, suicide,<sup>126</sup> and in the case of many Black teenage boys, racism, homicide, and the stigma of being targeted for violence from law enforcement officers are additional issues.

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<sup>123</sup> “Identity Development Theory,” Lumen Learning, 2022, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/adolescent/chapter/identity-development-theory/>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Clinton and Clark, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers*, 80.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 34.

## At-Risk Youth

The term at-risk has been used in several ways and has several definitions. The definitions often refer to various social, cultural, and age groups. However, even though this project targets the at-risk African American male youth, the general meaning of at-risk youth is in order and is described as:

At risk is a term often used to describe students or groups with a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out. The term may be applied to students who face circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school, such as homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, transiency (as in the case of migrant-worker families), or other conditions, or it may refer to learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect the educational performance and attainment of some students.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to the above definition, which is valid and applicable to the presenting subject, for the sake of this project, another critical aspect is the various risk and protective factors involved. As the target of this study, the at-risk African American male adolescents are those young men of color who, due to specific socially, emotionally, and spiritually induced environmental forces, have turned to destructive solutions for problem-solving. In other words, these young men often resort to violence to manage their anger. However, the CDC adds,

...risk factors are characteristics linked with youth violence, but they are not direct causes of youth violence. Individual, relationship, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of youth violence. Other negative factors are toxic stress, racism, limited medical care, violence at home, substance abuse, mental and emotional problems, and more.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> “At-Risk Definition,” The Glossary of Education Reform, August 29, 2013, <https://www.edglossary.org/at-risk/>.

<sup>128</sup> “Risk and Protective Factors,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 2, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>.

Therefore, the intent of this study will concentrate efforts along these parameters on the at-risk African American male adolescent who struggles with anger control issues that place him on the path to unhealthy behaviors potentially harmful to himself and others.

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is “a significant linkage between possessing knowledge or skills and engaging in appropriate behavior to accomplish desired goals. Furthermore, self-efficacy is linked to many positive adolescent outcomes, including negotiating risks, academic achievements, health-promoting behavior, and a greater orientation toward the future.”<sup>129</sup>

This project will attempt to discover this definition of self-efficacy within the framework of the under-laying influence of anger in African American adolescent males.

### Social Determinants

Social determinants is the term used to identify specific social factors that affect the quality of life for individuals health-wise. There are four social determinant factors: sociocultural, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and historical background, all of which are vital to collaborating with African American males. The historical factor is the connecting element naturally inherent to African Americans. Edward P. Wimberly, when writing on pastoral care from the black perspective, addresses this issue. Wimberley says,

The unique emphasis in black pastoral care is a perspective shaped by the existential, cultural, and historical conditions peculiar to Black people. The perspective reflects the cultural heritage of the Black people, its history as individuals in a land of injustice, racism, and segregation, and its struggle to make sense of their existence in a hostile environment.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Von Nebbitt, “Self-Efficacy in African American Adolescent Males Living in Urban Public Housing,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 35, no. 3 (June 2009): 295, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409333616>.

<sup>130</sup> Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010),



Unfortunately, this context still exists for today's Black male youth, who must learn to cope with racism, media stereotyping, racial profiling, and the breakdown of the community and the family unit.

### The Church

The term Church has taken many descriptive terminologies through the years. Such descriptive words as “a building for public and especially Christian worship, clergy or officialdom of a religious body, public divine worship,”<sup>131</sup> the body of Christ, people of God, “the whole body of Christian Believers, Christendom, any division or body is believing in the same creed and acknowledging the same ecclesiastical authority, a Christian denomination”<sup>132</sup> have been used. Some refer to the fact that “the New Testament word for ‘church’ is ekklesia [ejkkhlsiva], which means ‘the called-out ones,’ and is used of the community of God's people some 109 times.”<sup>133</sup> According to Charles Ryrie, the term

ekkleisia was originally used as a secular term and meant an assembly and was used in a political, not a religious, sense. However, when this Greek word is used in the New Testament, it takes on a much richer meaning and fuller aspects to the basic secular meaning. The word became accepted as the people themselves, whether assembled or not.<sup>134</sup>

In other words, the Church became identified as the place of gathering for worship and later as the identifying mark of a community of people serving God. This paper has local Church in

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<sup>131</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “African American,” Merriam-webster.com (Merriam-Webster, 2023), <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

<sup>132</sup> “Definition of Church | Dictionary.com,” www.dictionary.com, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/church>.

<sup>133</sup> “Church, the - Meaning & Definition - Baker’s Bible Dictionary,” biblestudytools.com, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/the-church.html>.

<sup>134</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1999), 455-456.

mind by challenging the Body of Christ to engage their local community, where they live by addressing the needs of that community from the standpoint of the Gospel.

### African American

The term African Americans are designated for the “descendants of slaves—people brought from their African homelands by force to work in the New World. Their rights were severely limited, and they long denied a rightful share in the economic, social, and political progress of the United States.”<sup>135</sup> This project uses Black Americans, non-Hispanic Black people, and people of color synonymously about African American male adolescents.

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<sup>135</sup> Hollis Lynch, “Britannica.com,” Britannica.com, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-American.American>.

## Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

An old African proverb states, “It takes a village to raise a child.”<sup>136</sup> This well-known adage metaphorically speaks of the community's responsibility concerning nurturing its youth. The youth demographics researched involve African American male adolescents. The basis for this research project is that the Church must respond proactively to a genuine contemporary social issue as a vital part of the community. The problem is that many young Black boys and men, ages 10-19, struggle to process their anger. Because of their plight, many young Black men have drifted into abusive and addictive behaviors. It is with this in mind that this research commenced.

Alvin Thomas, Wizdom Powell Hammond, and Laura P. Kohn-Wood, in the article entitled “Be Cool Man: African American Men, Identity, Coping, and Aggression Ideation,”<sup>137</sup> write content that is supportive and vital for this research. The primary subject matter that made it a valuable resource was coping ability, or the lack thereof, as a survival technique among African American men.

An overview of the literature relating to this research project includes: the historical perspective of African Americans, racial identity formation, anger, environmental factors, the Church, biblical response, and preventive and intervention response.

### Historical Perspective of African Americans

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<sup>136</sup> Jackson, "America Has Lost a Generation of Black Boys."

<sup>137</sup> Thomas, Alvin, Wizdom Powell Hammond, and Laura P. Kohn-Wood. “Chill, Be Cool Man: African American Men, Identity, Coping, and Aggressive Ideation.” *psycnet.apa.org*, May 31, 2016. 1, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2014-31337-001>.

Historically, race relations have been turbulent since the arrival of people of color, who were involuntarily transported in chains and thrust into American society. Which was characterized by “the subjugation and degradation of slavery, the dismantling of the family unit, financial exploitation, negative stereotype, suspicion, discrimination, and marginalization.”<sup>138</sup> Shirley Butler-Derge, referencing early colonization efforts, identifies racism as the historical root of the life-and-death struggle of people of color in America. She succinctly affirms that “racism, characterized by a distortion of reality, destroyed the victim's identity, thereby claiming the superiority of the oppressor. Colonizers accomplished this by destroying the history and culture of their victims. They rewrote history to assist their claim to White superiority.”<sup>139</sup> This ideology gave rise to years where Black Americans were evaluated by society and “have been a nation within a nation.”<sup>140</sup> It is within such a historical context that young African Americans, specifically males, find themselves in what Elijah Anderson calls the “shadow of such a legacy.”<sup>141</sup> This legacy, marked by seemingly overwhelming historical vicissitudes, remains a tool wherein the “collective identity and history of Black people helps them discover their peoplehood, and consequently develop strategies to refute negative messages about their humanness.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Elijah Anderson, *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812206951>, 3-4. Kindle.

<sup>139</sup> Shirley R. Butler-Derge, *Rites of Passage: A Program for High School African American Males* (City, State: University Press of America, 2009), 87.

<sup>140</sup> Wellington Boone, *Black Self-Genocide: What Black Lives Matter Won't Say* (Duluth, GA: APPL Publishing, 2016), Kindle.

<sup>141</sup> Anderson, *Against the Wall*, 3, Kindle.

<sup>142</sup> Collette Chapman-Hilliard and Valerie Adams-Bass, “A Conceptual Framework for Utilizing Black History Knowledge as a Path to Psychological Liberation for Black Youth,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 42, no. 6 (July 26, 2016): 480, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798415597840>.

Despite the tumultuous curse placed upon people of color in this country, African Americans have exemplified tremendous resiliency since their arrival in America. Thus, in “reflecting upon the miserable statistics of the deplorable conditions, so many young Black men exist, let us not downplay the critical roles in our history played by strong Black men in every generation.”<sup>143</sup> Knowing one’s history is essential to understanding oneself and the future trajectory. As Quentin Stubbins writes, “Today, we live in a complex world, but history helps us make sense. Studying history enables us to explain our current circumstances, gain an insight of meaning, and learn from our mistakes.”<sup>144</sup> The problem is that many African American youths do not know their history as African Americans. Except for historical figures and events such as George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or a sketchy concept of slavery, or a distant view of the civil rights movement, contemporary young African American youth are deficient in the knowledge of their history as a people. Therefore, “meaningful dialogue about strength and resilience among African American children and adolescents is impossible without first examining the historical and contemporary social context within which these youth reside.”<sup>145</sup>

Many people of color, with the African American youth in mind, “proudly identify themselves as Black, but they know little about their origin.”<sup>146</sup> The English philosopher Frances

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<sup>143</sup> Anderson, *Against the Wall*, 64.

<sup>144</sup> Quentin Stubbins, “The Effects of Learning about Black History on Racial Identity, Self-Efficacy, Self-Esteem, and Depression among Low-Income African American Male Youth,” (EdD diss., Andrews University, 2016,) <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2887&context=dissertations>.

<sup>145</sup> *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, s. v. “stress.”

<sup>146</sup> Stubbins, “The Effects of Learning about Black History,” 24.

Beacon is quoted as saying, “knowledge itself is power.”<sup>147</sup> Wilson makes the following statement about the value of youth knowing about their historical and cultural background.

History uses the past to understand the present better to inform the future by recognizing: (1) the good, to do more of it, enhance it, and expand on it; and (2) the bad, to learn from it, how not to repeat it, and how to do more of what is good going forward. The purpose of history sounds like the purpose of high-quality feedback. Too often, an inversion happens, and the present is used to inform the past, and time is spent reinterpreting, re-presenting, and even reforming the past through the lens of the present.<sup>148</sup>

Therefore, the advantages of possessing a working knowledge of one’s history equips, motivates, and empowers young Black men to live more productive lives. In other words, Black history can become an asset in developing young African American males in three ways. First, the Black history study gives young African Americans essential coping skills when facing societal stressors through learning from the past. Secondly, a knowledge of Black history encourages racial pride and instills an appreciation and respect for a “shared African ancestral heritage as foundational to positive psychological development among Blacks.”<sup>149</sup> Thirdly, Chapman-Hilliard postulates that “*psychological liberation*, that is, healthy functioning characterized by a conceptual shift from a narrative rooted only in oppression to a narrative that acknowledges the strengths, accomplishments, and creativity of Black people throughout their history.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Leonard Azamfirei, “Knowledge Is Power,” *The Journal of Critical Care Medicine* 2, no. 2 (May 9, 2016): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jccm-2016-0014>.

<sup>148</sup> Wilson, Stephen A. “Black History Month”: *Family Medicine* 50, no. 2 (February 2, 2018): 157–59. <https://doi.org/10.22454/fammed.2018.302132>.

<sup>149</sup> Chapman-Hilliard and Adams-Bass, “A Conceptual Framework for Utilizing Black History, 483.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*,

Much of the literature agrees that knowledge of Black history and its potential as a protective factor and coping tool is essential for young African American males as they develop into healthy adults. Chapman-Hilliard and Adams-Bass further maintain “that Black historical knowledge represents an extension of current scholarly and community discourse and contributes to a more holistic understanding of the tools that help Black youth combat deficit conceptions of self and community.”<sup>151</sup> The literature reveals one inhibiting factor that tends to negate or hinder the benefits of the knowledge of Black history, which is nihilism.

### **Nihilism**

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP) defines nihilism, a theory coined by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, as “the belief that all values are baseless, and nothing can be known or communicated. A true nihilist, for instance, would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than an impulse to destroy.”<sup>152</sup> In his book *Race Matters*, West uses this concept, which he calls “the nihilistic threat,”<sup>153</sup> to describe the struggles of contemporary African Americans. According to West, nihilism is much more than some ideological thought, theory, or belief system that maintains no logical basis for established rules and regulations. He claims that the nihilistic threat to Black America is “evidenced in the lived experiences of young people coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and, most importantly, lovelessness. A life without meaning, hope, and love breeds a cold-hearted,

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<sup>151</sup> Chapman-Hilliard and Adams-Bass, “A Conceptual Framework for Utilizing Black History,” 479.

<sup>152</sup> Pratt, “Nihilism.”

<sup>153</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 13.

mean-spirited outlook that destroys others and the individual.”<sup>154</sup> A more in-depth discussion of nihilism would move beyond this project's scope. However, this view would explain many current events within the classroom and on the streets of America and has even affected the family unit. For example, the proliferation of Gun violence, gang activity, and police use of force, sometimes deadly force, have reached near me high., some studies have deemed it an epidemic.<sup>155</sup>

Nihilism is a significant risk factor for Black America. Still, specific elements apply to the contemporary African American male adolescent and the importance of learning about his history.

To restate the problem dealt within this project, many young Black school-aged males struggle with anger issues leading to abusive, addictive, and destructive behaviors. Working knowledge of Black Americans' history benefits these young men “by providing them with a healthy identity and a source of resilience when encountering interpersonal encounters.”<sup>156</sup> There was a time when the Black ancestral community's rich heritage was strong enough to protect against the hazards of nihilism. These protective factors within the Black community were evident in institutions like the home, Church, school, neighborhood, and civic groups.<sup>157</sup> Historically, Black people were encouraged, empowered, and sustained because “they valued service, sacrifice, love, care, discipline, and excellence. In other words, traditions for Black

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Eva Frazer et al., “The Violence Epidemic in the African American Community: A Call by the National Medical Association for Comprehensive Reform,” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 110, no. 1 (February 2018): 4–15, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2017.08.009>.

<sup>156</sup> Chapman-Hilliard and Adams-Bass, “A Conceptual Framework for Utilizing Black History,” pg. #.

<sup>157</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 15.



surviving and thriving under usually adverse new world conditions were major barriers against the nihilistic threat.”<sup>158</sup> However, times have changed, and the once historically influenced protective factors are no longer as prevalent within the Black community as they once were, but there is still hope. Redemptive hope is available through the Church.

According to Bakari Kitwana, in his provocative contemporary book, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*, it is a different world. He argues that America's race relations are no longer strictly black and white because America has become even more multi-racial and multi-cultural. However, despite this fact, Kitwana recognizes that significant issues gravitating around Black-White relations still exist even though there has been a change in basic assumptions of how today's youth view life.<sup>159</sup>

The Hip Hop Generation, comprised of those born between 1965 and 1984,<sup>160</sup> has become a part of mainstream American culture and a political force to be reckoned with. Kitwana contrasts the Black community's ancestors' worldview with present-day Black youth represented by the Hip Hop Generation. He writes,

Our parents' generation emphasized family, spirituality, social responsibility, and Black pride to nurture their identity as Black Americans, and as their parents before them looked to their elders for values and identity. In contrast to this worldview, a significant part of the Hip Hop Generation has turned to us, our peers, global images and products, and new realities we face for guidance. These values and attitudes describe and anchor our worldview.<sup>161</sup>

Many African American youths do not share their parents' optimism for the future.

During one of his speeches, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. related an angry young Black man who

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2008), 4-6 Kindle.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 7.

booed him. Astute as he was, Dr. King understandingly concluded that the young men's bitter hostility was due to disillusionment with the movement's leadership. They were frustrated because Dr. King's dream had not come to fruition. They were disappointed and angry because the administration could not deliver on their promises.<sup>162</sup> Young Black men are still disillusioned, frustrated, disappointed, and furious today. Many are mad to the point where they have lost faith in the values, hopes, and aspirations held so dear by previous generations.

Notwithstanding, despite the adverse problems and “negative messaging, history demonstrates that learning about Black history has been a catalyst for change in American society among African Americans.”<sup>163</sup> Black history's assimilation is especially beneficial to the Black male because it aids in developing identity, self-esteem, and efficacy.<sup>164</sup> Studies have shown that the American brand of racism has constantly burdened African Americans, and Black boys and young men are “the most potent instigator for anger among Black males.”<sup>165</sup> A substantial number of scholarly researchers have argued that securing an intelligent, honest, clear understanding of people of color in America requires starting from the beginning: in a single word, slavery.

One literary source that merited attention and value to this research is taken from *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Dr. Joy DeGruy. DeGruy utilizes the word “Sankofa,” taken from the Akan ethnic group of Ghana, to demonstrate Black history's importance. Sankofa means to

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<sup>162</sup> Gary Younge, “Martin Luther King: How a Rebel Leader Was Lost to History,” *The Guardian*, April 4, 2018, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/apr/04/martin-luther-king-how-a-rebel-leader-was-lost-to-history>.

<sup>163</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, “A Discourse on Black Studies,” *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 5 (May 2006): 646. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934705285937>.

<sup>164</sup> Chapman-Hilliard and Adams-Bass, “A Conceptual Framework for Utilizing Black History,” 481.

<sup>165</sup> Walker, *Do You Know Why the Black Man Is So Angry*, 12.

return, go, look, seek, and take. DeGruy maintains that “we must return and claim our past to move toward our future. It is in understanding who we were that will free us to embrace who we now are.”<sup>166</sup> One of the most challenging subjects America has dealt with is slavery and white America’s treatment of Black people through the years. Early white historians have attempted to eradicate, discredit, conceal, and outright lie about the historical presence and contributions of those descendants of Africa brought to this country in chains.

DeGruy acknowledges experts’ findings explaining why young African American men feel offended by someone who looks or talks to them disrespectfully. They refer to such causes as environmental influences as “television, newspaper, and magazines [that] project negative images and behaviors. On the other hand, we rarely look to our history to understand how African Americans adapted their behavior over centuries to survive the stifling effects of chattel slavery, which are evident today.”<sup>167</sup>

If Black history is critical and essential, what response should society expect from young African American males today? Anderson, in *Back Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male*, states that the primary goal is to get these youth to “see that there are ways that they can re-produce the strength, courage, and wisdom of past generations of Black men.”<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the objective should be that when these young men speak with the next generation, they will convey this message. With pride, they will instruct their sons about the men they know. These men were “strong Black men, who had the courage and willingness to think for themselves.

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<sup>166</sup> Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (City, state: Joy Degruy Publications Inc, 2017), 3.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>168</sup> Anderson, *Backs Against the Wall*, 68.

These men were willing to hold up a banner, not of cheap optimism, but of hope born of determined struggle.”<sup>169</sup>

### Racial Identity Formation

Before addressing this section about racial identity formation, a basic definition of identity formation, or development, would be helpful as a starting point. Seth Schwartz writes, “The term identity formation refers to the process by which individuals develop a sense of themselves, a sense of continuity in who they are, including their values, goals, and purpose.”<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, “a personal identity based on the need for uniqueness, people acquire a social identity based on their membership in various groups—familial, ethnic, occupational, gendered, and many more. In addition to satisfying the human need for affiliation, these group identities help people define themselves in the eyes of others and themselves.”<sup>171</sup> As with any adolescent, discovering and coming to grips with who they are and where they belong is a significant concern.

This developmental period in a young person's life is not easy; for many, it is turbulent. As emerging adults, these young people struggle with feelings of awkwardness, confusion, indecisiveness, independence, interdependence, and anger as they attempt to understand who they are and their place in the world. The writers at Lumen Learning noted, “Identity is formed through exploring options or choices and committing to an option based upon the outcome of their exploration. Failure to establish a well-developed sense of identity can result in identity

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>170</sup> Seth J. Schwartz, “The Evolution of Eriksonian and Neo-Eriksonian Identity Theory and Research: A Review and Integration,” *Identity* 1, no. 1 (January 2001): 25-26, <https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532706xschwartz>.

<sup>171</sup> *Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*, s.v. “Identity/Identity Formation,” ed. Jacqueline L. Longe, 3rd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2016), 561.

confusion, which Erikson refers to as an identity crisis. Those experiencing identity confusion or crises do not clearly understand their societal role. er opportunities,”<sup>172</sup> However, James Marcia, in taking this initiation a step further, “described identity formation during adolescence as involving both exploration and commitment concerning occupations”<sup>173</sup> and other life’s goal orientated decisions. Decisions or pressing concerns as what school to attend, religious affiliation, dating, sex, and one of the most significant concerns is what degree will their family, versus their peer group, have upon their decision-making process. It is noted that “As identity development progresses, adolescents are expected to make choices and commit to options within the confines of their social contexts.”<sup>174</sup>

Ellemers, draws on her own findings and those of other prominent social identity theorists, to make a connection between identity and self-concept.<sup>175</sup> Therefore,

social identity can be defined as an individual’s knowledge of belonging to certain social groups, together with some emotional and valuational significance of that group. His includes personal identity, which refers to self-knowledge associated with unique individual attributes; people’s social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong.<sup>176</sup>

To drive home to the point, Huseyin Cinoğlu cites three theories of identity. The first is the “social identity theory, wherein the particular social group frames a person’s perspective on life. The second is identity theory, wherein a person’s assigned roles are a major energy driving

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<sup>172</sup> “Identity Development Theory,” Lumen Learning, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/adolescent/chapter/identity-development-theory/>

<sup>173</sup> Ibid..

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Naomi Ellemers, “Social Identity Theory,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 4, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-identity-theory>.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

identity formation. The third theory of identity deals with the importance of personal values in explaining the identity and identity formation process (personal identity theory).<sup>177</sup>

Brittian's article "Understanding African American Adolescents' Identity Developmental Systems Perspective" states that the "purpose is to examine and discuss the nature of African American adolescents' identity development, using a relational systems perspective"<sup>178</sup> and argues, from a Developmental Systems Theory (DST) model perspective, which is uniquely challenging for young Black America's. Brittian, drawing from such early personality developmental theorists as Erickson and Marcia, contrasts Erickson's and Marcia's particular theories of identity adaptation with DST. DST maintains that the individual, specifically the African American adolescent, is more than a product of their environment but is an active producer of their development. Brittian maintains that every adolescent experience specific changes toward adulthood. The most notable changes are "biological, increase in cognitive abilities and impact of social influences."<sup>179</sup> These changes, influenced by variations of racial, cultural, and individualized stressors, create unique factors in the search for one's ability to adapt and learn healthy coping skills.

Therefore, in "carving out a personal identity based upon the need for uniqueness, people require a social identity based on membership to various groups (i.e., familial, ethnic, occupation). Affiliation helps people define themselves in the eyes of themselves and others."<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Huseyin Cinoğlu, "Self, Identity and Identity Formation: From the Perspectives of Three Major Theories," ResearchGate, September 2012, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265067069\\_Self\\_identity\\_and\\_identity\\_formation\\_From\\_the\\_perspectives\\_of\\_three\\_major\\_theories](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265067069_Self_identity_and_identity_formation_From_the_perspectives_of_three_major_theories).

<sup>178</sup> Brittian, "Understanding African American Adolescents' Identity Development," 177.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>180</sup> *Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*, "Identity/Identity Formation."

This affiliation that young African American male adolescents find challenging in their identity formation is personal and social. They face affiliation challenges due to their race, culture, gender, and youth, all of which struggle for understanding.

For example, it is sad but true that a significant segment of American society, when encountering a young Black male, automatically attributes three strikes against him. Negatively speaking, he is seen as a threat because he is Black, a male, and young. Stevenson contends, “Black boys must live in a world that fears and falsely idolizes their identity projections. Their stylistic machinations, verbiage, protests, and movements feared and desired, desired, and feared.”<sup>181</sup> Even Black community residents admit that they are apprehensive when encountering a group of young men of color on the street. Some at-risk, troubled youth will use this as a show of power, intimidation, and their advantage. These young men need an outlet that will guide them in how to deal constructively with their anger.

Stevenson would concur with this line of thought in his mentoring program, *Playing with Anger: Teaching Coping Skills to African American Boys through Athletic and Culture*. His fascinating discussion follows two schools of thought about Black boys’ and men’s identity formation and culture. One school of thought is the essentialist view, which “suggests that a group of people’s cultural expressions and strivings can be identified from a particular set of values and behaviors with enduring historical and relational connections.”<sup>182</sup> Stevenson refers to the second school of thought as a multiple-identity perspective. This view is “the other extreme

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<sup>181</sup> Stevenson, *Playing with Anger*, 4.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

of the perspective that claims there is no need to structure any one sense or definition or construction of identity or culture and to do so only oversimplifies a very complex reality.”<sup>183</sup>

Michael Merry and William New offer another perspective in their paper entitled “Constructing an Authentic Self: The Challenges and Promise of African-Centered Pedagogy.” In their research, they examine a growing movement in the Black community to regain control of the Black child's educational destiny, hence the formation of an African American-centered school. The African-centered schools aim to provide a culturally based curriculum, emphasizing history from an African American perspective and “the life experiences of individuals of African descent at the center of everything they do.”<sup>184</sup> The researchers offer three key questions as a foundation for their study. They question, “First, does the historical context in which many Black children live justify the existence of African-centered schools? Secondly, does African American pedagogy prepare Black children to participate in a democratic society? Lastly, does the construction of an essentialist racial identity in African American pedagogy compromise its mission and success?”<sup>185</sup> Merry and New conclude by stating:

African-centered schools do well. These include building character, pride, and self-respect; facilitating meaningful and purposeful activities; and fostering personal and collective responsibility and solidarity. Many African-centered schools are building coalitions with community leaders, church groups, and businesses. However, more work is needed to bring the aims of ACP into the community and families of some children.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Stevenson, *Playing with Anger*, 4.

<sup>184</sup> Michael S. Merry and William New, “Constructing an Authentic Self: The Challenges and Promise of African-Centered Pedagogy,” *American Journal of Education* 115, no. 1 (November 2008): 57 <https://doi.org/10.1086/590675>.

<sup>185</sup> Merry and New, “Constructing an Authentic Self,” 38.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*



The necessity for African schools remained questioned and relegated to imagining a perfect world setting. And...

imaginary future, where the system, transformed and revolutionized, and Black Americans, irrespective of social class, are constructing, maintaining, and effectively participating in democratic schools. Black identities would not disappear but would become ancillary to African-centered schools. This, he adds, the imaginary world would make African American Schools and African American pedagogy.<sup>187</sup>

West's *Race Matters* comes from a sociopolitical, radical stance. He discusses issues such as the slack of conservatism, crisis within Black leadership, Black and Jewish relations, Black sex taboos, and affirmative action. West's chapter on Black nihilism in America and his views on Malcolm X and Black Rage was significant. West cites nihilism as a "lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and lovelessness, as the most prominent threat to Black America today."<sup>188</sup> Although this book does not exclusively address the plight of the African American male youth, it addresses the current condition of the Black experience.

Walker's book, *Do You Know Why the Black Man is So Angry?* was a valuable resource for this research project because of the writer's emphasis on the link between Black men, specifically young Black men, and their struggle with processing their anger. In his writing, Walker raises nine reasons black men get angry, including racism, prejudice, police brutality, Black-on-Black crime, unemployment, drugs, alcohol, education, and Black relationships. In addition to these anger stressors, Walker offers tactics to help overcome anger and fear and a few anger management techniques.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Merry and New, "Constructing an Authentic Self," 57.

<sup>188</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 14.

<sup>189</sup> Walker, *Do You Know Why the Black Man Is So Angry*, Kindle.

## Anger

Anger is one of the most dynamically complex emotions and “is probably one of the most debated basic emotions, owing to difficulties in detecting its appearance during development, it is functional and effective.”<sup>190</sup> However, despite this fact, anger remains one of the most misunderstood emotions.<sup>191</sup> Gary and Carrie Oliver write, “All the headlines involving anger relate to destructive effects. This notion leads many to assume that all anger is negative and unhealthy; they do not understand that there can be healthy expressions of anger.”<sup>192</sup> There lay the crux of the problem. When referenced to specific sociocultural, gender, and age groups like African American adolescents, misunderstanding about anger is more pronounced. For instance, stereotypically, young Black men and boys, as one White educator discovered, are often viewed as inherently angry.<sup>193</sup> The following literature helped arrive at a clearer understanding of the anatomy of anger experienced by many young men of color in America.

One study, “The Angry Personality: A Representation on Six Dimensions of Anger Expression,” benefited the present research. According to Ephrem Fernandez, anger, as an emotion, is feeling-related and closely related to mood and temperament. Therefore, as with all emotions, there are three common traits: quantity, quality, and form. Discussion of the six dimensions of anger was of value in understanding the nature of such a common yet complex

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<sup>190</sup> Riccardo Williams, “Anger as a Basic Emotion and Its Role in Personality Building and Pathological Growth: The Neuroscientific, Developmental and Clinical Perspectives,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 1950, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01950>.

<sup>191</sup> Les Carter, *The Anger Trap: Free Yourself from the Frustrations That Sabotage Your Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), Kindle.

<sup>192</sup> Gary J. Oliver and Carrie Oliver, *Mad about Us: Moving from Anger to Intimacy with Your Spouse* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2007), Kindle.

<sup>193</sup> Bronwyn Harris, “Labeling Black Male Students ‘Angry,’” *Learning for Justice*, October 31, 2016, <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/labeling-black-male-students-angry>.

emotion about the target group in this study. The key to this study is the expression of anger and how it depends on several complex variables.<sup>194</sup>

Fernandez refers to the six dimensions and anchors of anger expression.

First, anger direction, reflection versus deflection, refers to the target of one's anger at which one aims, which can prompt an angered person to reflect or deflect. The second dimension is anger locus which pertains to internalization versus externalization, which “refers to the seat or primary location of one's anger.”<sup>195</sup> The third dimension, anger reaction, distinguishes between resistance and retaliation. This dimension deals with a particular interpersonal dynamic resulting in a possible personal provocation. The fourth dimension is anger modality making the behavioral distinction between the verbal, physical, and referring to the medium of anger expression. The fifth dimension is anger impulsivity, which raises the issue of controlled versus uncontrolled. The final dimension deals with the anger objective and concerns the “functional consequence of one's anger. This dimension demonstrates the decisional tension between restorative and punitive.”<sup>196</sup>

This verifies the complexity of such an emotion as anger.

Gary Chapman's *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion* offers a working definition of anger as a response to some event or situation that causes irritation, frustration, pain, or other displeasure. He examines this misunderstood emotion from a Christian worldview, which stimulates inquiry, reflection, and study centered around the origin of anger, its purpose and he offers healthy ways to process this emotion.<sup>197</sup>

Porter's, *Angry Little Men: Hypermasculinity, Academic Disconnect, and Mentoring African American Males* originates from the author's research collected for his thesis. Porter's

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<sup>194</sup> Ephrem Fernandez, “The Angry Personality: A Representation on Six Dimensions of Anger Expression.,” *ResearchGate*, 2008, 403.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Fernandez, “The Angry Personality,” 404.

<sup>197</sup> Chapman, *Anger*, 11.

primary target groups are educators and mentors who want to better understand the at-risk African American male youth. As the subtitle implies, the three areas addressed about African American boys are their innate hypermasculine tendencies initiated by environmental influences, their propensity to disconnect academically, leading to a negative academic outcome, and the necessity of mature and capable leadership from mentors. The author systematically deals with five questions. First, what are the root causes of anger among many young Black men? Secondly, how ought the community respond to such a dilemma? When and where does such irritation occur? At what point ought their violence be confronted? How can these young men be helped? This book is of value to this research for three reasons. First, it presents a foundational understanding of the nature of the stressors of anger relative to the at-risk Black youth. Secondly, this work is valuable in distinguishing between a Black and White male student's academic self-concept. Finally, The mentoring approach that he Porter utilizes, which is "C.O.D.E.. C.O.D.E., is an acronym for mentoring boys for Connect to a vision, Observation, Discipline and Example. The objective is to help guide boy code switch from tough attitudes of the streets to more engaging behaviors in the classroom. A new direction will help them reach their goals."<sup>198</sup>

Walker's book, *Do You Know Why the Black Man is So Angry?* was a valuable resource for this research project because of the writer's emphasis on the link between Black men, specifically young Black men, and their struggle with processing their anger. In his writing, Walker raises nine reasons why Black men get angry, including racism, prejudice, police brutality, Black-on-Black crime, unemployment, drugs, alcohol, education, and relationships. In

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<sup>198</sup> Porter, *Angry Little Men*, 94-101.

addition to these anger stressors, Walker offers tactics to help overcome anger and fear and a few anger management techniques.<sup>199</sup>

Jackson's *Black Male Violence in Perspective* was helpful. Jackson makes it clear that he does not condone nor make excuse for violence but examines Black male violence through personal experiences and the lives of Black men with a history of violent behavior. Jackson's methodological approach is from a cultural, socio-historical perspective. He offers a threefold objective for helping Black men manage their anger with positive life outcomes. The three therapeutic program objectives, depending on what stage the individual is at when presenting, are prevention, intervention, and healing.<sup>200</sup>

Stevenson, in his article, "Wrestling with Destiny: The Cultural Socialization of Angry and Healing in African American Males" deals with socialized anger associated with being a Black male living in America. Stevenson's article was valuable to this project because he draws upon his own experiences, applies them to the Black youth, and comes from a theological perspective. He introduces an intervention program for African American Boys and youth to teach them how to process their anger in healthy ways for healthy outcomes.<sup>201</sup>

### **Environmental Factors**

One of the significant challenges of this project is addressing rage and violent negative behavior associated with anger, which is prevalent among many young African American males. One of the most damaging theories ever to evolve over the years attempts to explain that African

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<sup>199</sup> Walker, *Do You Know Why the Black Man Is So Angry*, 78.

<sup>200</sup> Jackson, *Black Male Violence in Perspective*, 139.

<sup>201</sup> Stevenson, "Wrestling with Destiny," 357.

American males behave this way because Blacks are inferior based on genetic evidence. Alvin Thomas's article, "Aggression in African American Males: A Review of Selected Literature on Environmental Influence," argues that such a theory is erroneous without substantiation. Thomas maintains that such notions breed the stereotypical attitudes prevalent today. Many so-called methods associated with African American male aggression often ignore environmental factors. These ecological stressors, or the state of the social environment, influence particular "behaviors shaped by the social environment."<sup>202</sup>

In their article, "Emotional Desensitization to Violence Contribute to Adolescents' Violent Behavior," Sylvie Mrug, Anjana Madan, and Michael Windle address a critical contributor to anger hypermasculinity in males. This article suggests that one significant cause for so many young Black men, and their struggle with anger and potentially abusive and addictive behaviors, is the overwhelming influence of living in a violent environment. The argument posed in this article suggests that there appears to be a link between the exposure to violence at high levels or across multiple contexts with emotional desensitization, indicated by low levels of internalizing symptoms.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Alvin Thomas, "Aggression in African American Males: A Review of Selected Literature on Environmental Influence," *Challenge* 13, no. 1 (2007): 30, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281737527\\_Aggression\\_in\\_African\\_American\\_Males\\_A\\_Review\\_of\\_Selected\\_Literature\\_on\\_Environmental\\_Influence](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281737527_Aggression_in_African_American_Males_A_Review_of_Selected_Literature_on_Environmental_Influence).

<sup>203</sup> Sylvie Mrug, Anjana Madan, and Michael Windle, "Emotional Desensitization to Violence Contributes to Adolescents' Violent Behavior," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 44, no. 1 (February 17, 2016): 78, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-015-9986-x>.

## Academic Achievement Gap

There is no shortage of research regarding the academic achievement gap, and the term disproportionate is no more prevalent than in the school system. Susan Ansell addresses this subject in her article “Achievement Gap,” which succinctly defines the gap in America’s school systems. The education gap is “the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. This gap appears in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures.”<sup>204</sup> The demographic most studied is African American youth, and the emphasis is usually on the Black male. According to the various literature, one thing is clear; there is a gap, and young African American males, according to the statistics, are the most at risk.

Dawn Witherspoon, Deborah Rivas-Drake, and Meeta Banerjee’s article, “More the Exception Rather Than the Rule: African American Families’ Neighborhoods and Youth’s Academic Performance During Middle School,” offers insights. This article seems to concur with most of the researchers in this area. Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, and Banerjee maintain that “African American adolescents find it tarred to more social risk factors (i.e., family poverty, low maternal education, low-quality schooling) relative to their peers in other ethnic groups.”<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, this article proved helpful because of its ability to identify critical issues and offer solutions for closing the gap.

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<sup>204</sup> Susan Ansell, “Achievement Gap,” Education Week, July 7, 2011, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/achievement-gap/2004/09>.

<sup>205</sup> Dawn P. Witherspoon, Deborah Rivas-Drake, and Meeta Banerjee, “It is more the Exception rather than the Rule: African American Families’ Neighborhoods and Youth’s Academic Performance during Middle School,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 44, no. 6 (September 2018): 563, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798418806130>.

Daniels' book, *Endangered Species: The Plight of the African American Male Adolescent and the Effects of His Surroundings*, approaches this issue from the standpoint of the environmental conditions that tend to harm African American youth, emphasizing the African American male student. Daniels "proposes that the racial and gender representation of the teacher in the classroom is not reflective of the students. One of Daniels's major themes is the need for more Black male teachers represented in the school system, especially the classroom."<sup>206</sup> His insightful discussion on the academic achievement problem of African American boys, his emphasis on the connection between the home and classroom as a necessary ingredient for academic success, the critical need for more Black male teacher role models, and the detrimental impact of other environmental factors that these young Black males face on a daily basis is all valuable for this research. This book was an excellent literature source for this project because it offered one authentic solution toward closing the gap: getting more Black teachers into the classroom as mentors.

Adams-King's objective in her article "Explaining the Achievement Gap of African American Males Relative to Other Student Groups" was to explain Black male youths' disproportionate representation compared to their peers. Utilizing various existing research among school records, Adams-King "analytically evaluated existing research using the Identification with School Inventory and the Academic Motivation Scale to understand how these factors impact student achievement. More specifically, the impact on the achievement of African American male students."<sup>207</sup> This article proved to be an invaluable source for this

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<sup>206</sup> Daniels, *Endangered Species*, 8.

<sup>207</sup> Adams-King, "Explaining the Achievement Gap of African American Males Relative to Other Student Groups," 2016



project for two reasons. First, the study discovered that it is “school identity as a more significant motivation over that of academic motivation.”<sup>208</sup> This concept is often called school connectedness, wherein students feel genuinely connected with their school. Secondly, since this project's focus deals with the combined Church and community effort, Adams-King states that the solution to the problem will require a joint effort between the school, the school district, and the community.<sup>209</sup>

Black boys and young men's academic achievement gap dilemma comes from Umar Johnson. His book entitled *Psycho-Academic Holocaust: The Special Education and ADHD Wars Against Black Boys* is controversial, hard-hitting, and somewhat of a conspiracy theorist (i.e. whistleblower), with an authentic African-centered focus. All the previous descriptive adjectives are positive traits of this author as he takes on the plight of the American school systems and mental health, wherein Black boys are predestined for special education or have to settle for being medicated without a valid reason. Johnson's objectives are to expose, inform, and equip Black parents, leaders, and educators about the conditions many Black boys and young Black men face within the American School system. Johnson was of value to this project because of his focus on the inadequate mishandling and misdiagnoses of mental health issues.<sup>210</sup> In other words, young African American males, who show signs of anger leading to behavior problems, often find themselves relegated to a Special Education class or are placed on medication.

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Adams-King, “Explaining the Achievement Gap of African American Males Relative to Other Student Groups,” pg. #.

<sup>210</sup> Umar Johnson, *Psycho-Academic Holocaust: The Special Education & ADHD Wars Against Black Boys* (City, State: Prince of Pan-Africanism, 2013), pg. #.

## Criminal Justice System

Juvenile delinquency is a problem among adolescents in many areas in the United States. However, it is particularly critical among Black adolescent males; the focus of this project includes poor academic achievement as one factor leading to a negative life outcome. James Unnever addresses this issue in his article, “Causes of African American Juvenile Delinquency.” Unnever maintains that “Black youth encounter inimitable – peerless – experiences in their daily lives and that these unique experiences substantially add to the reasons why they have a disproportionate rate of official arrests, especially for index crimes (i.e., violent and property offenses).”<sup>211</sup> Unnever proposes three reasons so many young African Americans persistently encounter the criminal justice system: “racial disparities in the school, persistent stereotypes, and racism.”<sup>212</sup>

When addressing African Americans and the criminal justice system, police and community relations are critical factors. Anthony Braga, Rod Brunson, and Kevin Drakulich, in their article “Race, Place, and Effective Policing,” admit that when it comes to the relationship between law enforcement and the Black community, “there are no easy solutions to address the complex rift between the police and minority communities that they serve.”<sup>213</sup> Once again, the all too familiar term, disproportionate, arises. Braga, Brunson, and Drakulich maintain that anger, motivated by a history of fear, suspicion, mistrust, and even hatred, is often prevalent in the

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<sup>211</sup> James D. Unnever, “Causes of African American Juvenile Delinquency,” in *The Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*, ed. Marvin D. Krohn and Jodi Lane (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), pg. #, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118513217.ch10>.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Anthony A. Braga, Rod K. Brunson, and Kevin M. Drakulich, “Race, Place, and Effective Policing,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 45, no. 1 (July 30, 2019): 536, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022541>.

Black community's impression of the men and women sworn to uphold the law.<sup>214</sup> The authors assert that if young Black boys and Black men continue to lead the way, seemingly being targeted by police, the so-called "policing paradox,"<sup>215</sup> where the African American community, in particular, the urban areas, will continue to feel the tug of being both "simultaneously over and under policed."<sup>216</sup> Another source worth mentioning in the literature review is law enforcement officer's use of deadly force.

In recent years, America has witnessed several highly publicized cases involving the use of deadly force shootings by law enforcement officers, and many of the victims have been young Black men. Sarah DeGue, Katherine Fowler, and Cynthia Calkins address this critical issue in "Deaths Due to Use of Lethal Force by Law Enforcement: Findings from the National Violent Death Reporting System, 17 U.S. States, 2009-2012."<sup>217</sup> This article provides evidence of a disproportionate representation of young African American boys and men as lethal force victims by police. The study's objective was to note the circumstances of the deaths by using multiple state public health data banks and, by doing so, devise ways to avoid such incidence. This source was particularly timely in light of the recent police-involved shootings.

The well-known civil rights activist, Angela J. Davis, proves she is still at the forefront of the civil rights movement. This is demonstrated in the book she edited and wrote the introduction for, entitled *Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*. The subjects of

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<sup>214</sup> Braga, Brunson, and Drakulich, "Race, Place, and Effective Policing," 536.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 537.

<sup>217</sup> Sarah DeGue, Katherine A. Fowler, and Cynthia Calkins, "Deaths due to Use of Lethal Force by Law Enforcement: Findings from the National Violent Death Reporting System, 17 U.S. States, 2009-2012," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 51, no. 5 (November 2016): S173-87, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2016.08.027>.

vital consideration for this research project included the state of the judicial system about men of color, the perception of law enforcement officers by young African American males in their socialization process, racial profiling, violence against men of color, and the courts' perception Black Lives Matter.<sup>218</sup>

### Black on Black Crime

Black-on-Black crime invokes much trepidation; fearing backlash from suggesting such a thing exists. A case in point recently occurred when Rev. Jasper Williams, an Atlanta, Georgia pastor, delivered the eulogy for Aretha Franklin's funeral and made what many took as offensive comments about the Black Lives Matter Movement. Reverend Williams stated, "Black lives do not matter because Black lives cannot matter, will not matter, should not matter, must not matter until Black people begin to respect their own lives. Then and only then will Black lives matter."<sup>219</sup> There are three positions within the Black community regarding crime where both the victim and the perpetrator are Black. First, some readily admit that there is a problem and are ready and able to address the problem by speaking out on the issue. The second group within the African American community would rather play a blame game. In other words, they would say that it is society's (i.e., White people) fault that Black people have gone to such lengths as to turn on each other. Third, people of color are similar to the second group, with one exception; they would rather deny the very existence of the "Black-on-Black crime."

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<sup>218</sup> Angela J. Davis, *Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, A Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2018), 57.

<sup>219</sup> "Aretha Franklin Funeral Eulogy Slammed; Pastor Stands Firm," AP NEWS, April 20, 2021, accessed date, <https://apnews.com/article/aretha-franklin-music-donald-trump-us-news-ap-top-news-32d797c5a5324c7593b44a6d0a1c8f3d>.

Wellington Boone is a representation of the first group mentioned. Boone addresses self-hatred (i.e., Black-on-Black crime) in his book, *Black Self Genocide: What Black Lives Matter Will not Say*. Boone states, “No one has to kill Black Americans anymore by racial genocide. It is now Black self-genocide and cultural self-hatred.”<sup>220</sup> He readily admits that there is a problem within the Black community concerning violent crimes committed against itself. African Americans must be responsible for their actions and not lay all the blame solely on White society. Boone does not think the White community is faultless because they have some reconciliation for past and present sins, but it is time for Black people to become the great people God has called them to be.<sup>221</sup>

### Racism

The Washington Post staff conducted interviews, surveys, and discussions concerning Black men's plight in America, culminating in writing an inciteful book, with Kevin Merida as the editor, entitled *Being A Black Man: At the Corner of Progress and Peril*. As the title implies, the book's purpose is to convey how the very existence of the African American male is at risk as he strives to navigate his way as a member of American society. Merida uses the data collected to address the Black male's present-day condition, coping with racism, the struggle with self-image, and the importance and effectiveness of spirituality among Black men. Regarding spirituality, Merida stated that the Black Church, historically hailed for sustaining African

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<sup>220</sup> Wellington Boone, *Black Self-Genocide: What Black Lives Matter Will Not Say* (Duluth, GA: Appte Publishing, 2016), 2.

<sup>221</sup> Boone, *Black Self-Genocide*, 9.

Americans from slavery through the civil rights movement, is arguably at its zenith.<sup>222</sup> In other words, the Black church is in a position where it can become a positive influence in the lives of Black boys and men of all ages. This writing was a valuable source because of the shared experiences, though they may be good and the bad, of strong Black men who were upfront and honest about investing in future generations of Black men.

According to Graham Garwood, in his dissertation titled “Towards a Complete Comprehension of Behavioral Problems in African American Adolescent Males: Racism, Trauma, and Parental Mis-Attunement,” proved valuable to this project. Garwood’s study targets adults who work with African American youths in juvenile justice and residential treatment settings. The author aimed to ascertain each adult’s understanding and impact of racism, trauma, and attachment experiences on youths and their function. This material was utilized in this project, specifically for its emphasis on racism and young African American males’ efforts. It used various coping mechanisms as protective factors in response to an ever-present dilemma. Garwood addresses the issue of discrimination from the standpoint of the juvenile justice system and how racism has already taken a toll on the lives of many young Black men, who have become victims of what the author calls “race-related stress.”<sup>223</sup> In his research, the attachment theory used by Garwood revealed a lack of understanding of those who work with at-risk young

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<sup>222</sup> Kevin Merida and Washington Post Company, *Being a Black Man: At the Corner of Progress and Peril* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 206.

<sup>223</sup> Graham Garwood. "Towards a more complete comprehension of behavioral problems in African American adolescent males: Racism, trauma, and parental mis-attunement." PsyD diss., Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2017. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, 4, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1872705168?accountid=12085>.

men of color in the juvenile justice system. The absence of such discernment can aggravate three significant issues “anger, aggression, and behavioral problems.”<sup>224</sup>

Another source worth mentioning is Kunjufu’s *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*. This writer is unapologetically a conspiracy theorist, and even though Kunjufu’s subject matter fits in the above category dealing with the academic achievement gap, Kunjufu’s underlying theme is that there is a premeditated scheme to annihilate African American boys and young men at the grass-root, which is the classroom and on into the community. The writer tackles this issue by drawing upon historical (i.e., past and present) evidence of racism (i.e., White supremacy) in America and offering proof of a plot targeting African American boys and young men, setting them apart up to fail academically. What makes this sense of value is that he attempts to provide the African American community with solutions to offset the conspiracy or “counter”<sup>225</sup> such a conspiracy.

### Media Influences

The ever-changing world of the media has the world in its grip, either positively or negatively. Out of the three forms of media today, print (i.e., newspapers, magazines), broadcast (i.e., television, radio), and digital (i.e., internet), digital media stands out as the most popular and potent of them all. Robin Stevens et al., in the article, “#Digital Hood: Engagement with Risk Content on Social Media among Black and Hispanic Youth” claims that “youth’s exposure to social media content featuring substance use, sexual risk, and violence puts these young

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<sup>224</sup> Garwood. Towards a more complete comprehension of behavioral problems in African American, 4.

<sup>225</sup> Jawanza Kunjufu. *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys. Volume II*. Chicago, Ill.: African American Images, 1992.

people at risk”<sup>226</sup> for possible unhealthy behaviors. Steven et al.’s research consisted of Black and Hispanic adolescents living in urban areas and frequenting social media sites (i.e., Facebook and Instagram). It proved valuable to this project because it emphasized social media's effects on adolescents. Steven et al.'s conclusion, based on their study group, was that even though Black and Hispanic youth’s online experiences expose them to such things as “sexual content, substance abuse, and violence, it is unclear whether this increase in exposure leads to an increase in risky behavior and recommends more study.”<sup>227</sup>

Reginald E. Hicks, in his book *Hidden in the Shadow of Truth: Why Our Black Boys Choose Criminality, Prison, and Enslavement*, boldly offers five reasons why numerous young African American males experience unhealthy life outcomes. He writes:

The first is confusion about their identity as people of color, culminating in low self-esteem. Secondly, a loss of self-assurance stifles the development of their natural abilities and gifts. Thirdly, the drive toward instant gratification rather than delayed gratification at the expense of future achievement. Fourth is a flawed concept of being a man, depicted by such descriptive images as toxic masculinity, anger, and violence. The fifth reason is an outdated system, abnormal animosity, suspicion, and fear of white people. The fourth chapter, dealing with the influences of mass media in the lives of young Black boys and men, was of particular interest and aid to the existing project. He refers to the mass media (e.i., books, periodicals, radio, television, and motion pictures) as propagating racial images, language, and ideas, and the Black male is often the target.<sup>228</sup>

According to Anthony Braga and Rod Brunson in “New Perspectives in Policing: The Police and Public Discourse on ‘Black on Black Violence,’” the term Black on Black crime, even though statistically valid, is a simplistic and emotionally charged definition of urban

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<sup>226</sup> Robin Stevens et al., “#Digital Hood: Engagement with Risk Content on Social Media among Black and Hispanic Youth,” *Journal of Urban Health* 96, no. 1 (October 23, 2018): 74–82, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-018-0314-y>.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Reginald E. Hicks, *Hidden in the Shadow of Truth* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2010), 23-24.



violence that can be problematic when used by political commentators, politicians, and police executives. The term often conjures up fears of racial profiling and over-policing where law enforcement officers unfairly target Black Americans.<sup>229</sup> Some think that urban violence, where African Americans are both the victim and perpetrator, will relegate the seriousness of “urban violence as a black problem that, in the minds of some black residents, may only receive a cursory response or, worse yet, be ignored by police departments entirely.”<sup>230</sup> However, the media perpetuates stereotypical imagery daily, often referring to Black-on-Black violence. The authors suggest that the media and community leaders not use “simplistic descriptions as Black on Black violence when describing”<sup>231</sup> outbreaks of criminal behavior in Black communities.

### The Church and Community

A concise and informative article from the Arkansas Business School at Arkansas Baptist College exemplifies the church and community's cooperative effort to prevent Black on Black crime. The “Derek Olivier Research Institute for the Prevention of Black-on-Black Violence” was inspired in response to the tragic death of Derek Olivier. Olivier was killed by a single bullet in 2012 while helping a friend whose car had broken down. The primary objective of the Derek Olivier Research Institute was established “to provide strategic leadership and educational networking support in efforts to align students, community leaders, clergy and city and state government in creating community models which will invest in a segment of the population

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<sup>229</sup> Anthony Braga and Rod Brunson, “New Perspectives in Policing: the Police and Public Discourse on ‘Black-On-Black’ Violence,” National Institute of Justice, 2015, 1-2, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248588.pdf>.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 3-4

<sup>231</sup> Braga and Brunson, “New Perspectives in Policing,” pg. #.

which often has no Hope.”<sup>232</sup> This brief article offers evidence of the potential of a collaborative effort involving various segments of the community working toward the betterment of all.

In Daniels’ *Endangered Species*, two fundamental factors that are indicative of the low academic achievement of many African American male youths are presented. Daniels first proposes a shortage of African American male teachers in the classroom. The second indicator that widens the educational gap for boys and young men of color is their environmental surroundings and conditions that often negatively impact their lives. The latter factor is pertinent to this project, wherein Daniels connects the home and classroom as crucial community components for academic success. He emphasizes the Black community’s importance and responsibility for providing dependable Black adult males willing to mentor young Black males. Daniels states that “today, solutions are needed more than ever because male youth, African American males, are at tremendous risk for a lifetime of lack of accomplishment that early on in academic failures. Academic failures in lower grades usually predict higher academics and high school dropout.”<sup>233</sup>

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention was another valuable source for community action and addressing youth violence. They have produced a resource guidebook, “A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors.” Corinne David-Ferdon et al., aims to prevent youth violence and lessen the risk

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<sup>232</sup>Arkansas Baptist College. “Derek Olivier Research Institute – Arkansas Baptist College.” Accessed August 6, 2023. <https://www.arkansasbaptist.edu/derek-olivier-research-institute/>.

<sup>233</sup>Daniels, Byron. *Endangered Species*. Unit-Us Publications, 2012, 179.

factors by involving the community's cooperation. Each activity focuses on “three components: strategy (i.e., rational), approach, and evidence.”<sup>234</sup>

Von Nebbitt explores the notion that self-efficacy leads young Black males to a positive life outcome. In his paper “Self-Efficacy in the African American Adolescent Male Living in Urban Public Housing,” the writer briefly, yet thoroughly, discusses how self-efficacy, “an individual’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce the desired result, improves the life chances for this vulnerable population of youth.”<sup>235</sup> One of Nebbitt’s findings was of particular interest. Nebbitt found that “the increase in community cohesion was associated with the most significant increase in self-efficacy.”<sup>236</sup> His findings confirm that active cooperation between the Church and community makes a difference in the lives of young at-risk Black men and boys.

“Thriving Among African American Adolescents: Religiosity, Religious Support, and Communalism,” by Adia S. Gooden and Susan D. McMahon, was fascinating. This article utilizes a framework or model that focuses on those naturally occurring factors that promote thriving among Black youth. The three primary factors addressed are religiosity, religious support, and communalism in these youth demographics.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Corinne David-Ferdon et al., “A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors,” [www.semanticscholar.org](http://www.semanticscholar.org), 2016, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/A-Comprehensive-technical-package-for-the-of-youth-David-Ferdon-Vivolo-Kantor/60768376d5fdfcbe08b1bc981c99f778de43fc0f>.

<sup>235</sup> Von Nebbitt, “Self-Efficacy in African American Adolescent Males Living in Urban Public Housing,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 35, no. 3 (June 2009): 296, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409333616>.

<sup>236</sup> Nebbitt, “Self-Efficacy in African American Adolescent Males Living in Urban Public Housing,” 2009, 269.

<sup>237</sup> Adia S. Gooden and Susan D. McMahon, “Thriving among African American Adolescents: Religiosity, Religious Support, and Communalism,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 57, no. 1-2 (March 2016): 118–28, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12026>.

## **Biblical Response**

Numerous young African American males have difficulty managing their anger, exemplifying unhealthy and destructive behaviors, this project's objective hinges on a fundamental question: what should be the Church's response to this problem? The solution proposed in this paper is that the Church should be instrumental in collaborating with the greater community to help these young men while offering leadership and faith-based counsel. In other words, the Church brings to the table cooperation by providing a biblical foundational response to this issue. The Church is under a mandate and has the responsibility from God to be the “salt and light” (Matt. 5:13-16, NASB) to the world by putting His Word, the Bible, into action and doing things His way. The Church's mandate and counseling method are discussed as a framework for the biblical response or insight.

### The Church

God gave the Church specific mandates to serve as His reconciliation and redemption instruments by living out the Gospel's message as Jesus' followers. This mandate given to this faith community includes a description of its purpose and identity.

The Church operates in the community as a mandated, transformed people (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:10) with a purpose and an identity. First, they aim to be people on a mission with an urgent message. Jesus provides specific instructions for this message. The writer of the book of Acts says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NKJV). Then, Matthew’s Gospel says,

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20, NKJV).

Secondly, the Church’s identity as the body of Christ, the people of God, is defined in scripture by making it clear that they are a unique community of people. 1 Peter 2:9 says, “you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,” (NKJV); the Churches are also God’s representatives to the world. The Apostle Paul wrote:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. Moreover, he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20, NIV).

The Church must continue to be the community's light and salt (Matt. 5:13-16). In other words, the Church ought to be the chief source of positive influence in the community of the healing power of God.

### Anger

The Bible says a great deal about anger and identifies the differences between good and evil, healthy, and unhealthy, and righteous and unrighteous anger. John Golding writes, “The most common Hebrew word translation for ‘anger’ is ‘*af*’ figurative denoting the flaring or snorting of the nostrils that can accompany anger.”<sup>238</sup> Still, two other forms of the “Hebrew

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<sup>238</sup> John Golding, “Anger,” in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 9 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), pg. #.

word for anger is ‘*khemah*.’ In 2 Sam. 11:20, it suggests the fierce heat of anger; and is translated as ‘fury,’ ‘rage,’ and ‘heat.’”<sup>239</sup> The two words used in the “Greek New Testament for anger are *thymos* and *orge*. *Thymos* (Heb. 11:17) suggests passion, courage, and strength of feelings. However, *orge* (James 1:19) is an even stronger word more often translated as ‘wrath.’”<sup>240</sup> Thus, anger is a God-given emotion that God the Father, Jesus, and humans experience.

God’s anger is righteous (Num. 32:10-15; Ps. 78:21, 22; Josh. 7:1, 11-12; Judg. 2:11-14) in His dealings with humans. Psalm 7:11 says, "God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day" (NKJV). God’s motives for anger are to “stop evil and redeem the evildoer, motivate people to take action in righting a wrong, and restore the relationship with the wrongdoer.”<sup>241</sup> Jesus’ anger is also righteous indignation as His brief yet powerful ministry on the earth. In response to their evil motives, he whipped the greedy, selfish money changers from the temple (Matt. 12:12-13; Mark 11:15; John 2:13-16). He also became angry when the religious leaders chastised him for healing a man on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6). His anger was motivated by the “hardness of their hearts” and their unbelief.

However, things become more complicated regarding people as God’s crowning creations. As scriptures imply, anger is a God-given emotion and is “simply an aspect of being human, without necessarily suggesting a moral or theological judgment. It is part of a biblical understanding that human beings get angry by nature, as it is part of a biblical understanding that it is human nature to feel compassion, hatred, or desire.”<sup>242</sup> The problem lies in controlling and

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<sup>239</sup> Golding, “Anger,” pg. #.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., pg. #.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>242</sup> Golding, “Anger,” pg. #.

disciplining themselves in managing their anger in a healthy, non-threatening, non-violent manner concerning themselves and others.

The following scripture passages provide a framework for establishing a biblical overview of anger concerning this project on anger management.

Proverbs offers advice on controlling one's anger when the writer says, "Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end" (Prov. 29:11, NIV). These wise words demonstrate the proper attitude that one ought to have toward anger. The writer contrasts the wise and the unwise response to anger before getting out of control.

The writer of Proverbs offers more words of wisdom. He provides advice on avoiding an escalation of an argument: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1, NKJV). Then the Proverb closes by saying, "Hot tempers start fights; a calm, cool spirit keeps the peace" (Ps. 15:18, TMB).

God gave a stern warning to Cain about his anger management problem. The author of Genesis writes, "God spoke to Cain: 'Why this tantrum? Why sulking? If you do well, won't you be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lying in wait for you, ready to pounce; it is out to get you, you have got to master it'" (Gen. 4:7, MSG).

Stevenson makes an interesting analogy using the biblical story of Jacob and Esau as twin brothers. He uses this story from Genesis 25:19-34 and compares their struggles with the contemporary inner-city African American male youth, maintaining that "like Esau, Black males often make short-term decisions in exchange for long-term promises. When his clothes and

sneakers define their manhood, he fights to the death to protect them. One can safely assume enslavement to a market-driven economy.”<sup>243</sup>

Scriptures never say that people should never get angry. On the contrary, in Ephesians 4:26-27, the Apostle Paul says, “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil” (NASB?). Once again, this is about managing one’s anger healthily, but this is often easier said than done, especially for a young person dealing with other developmental issues.

Proverbs 22:24-25 offers a stern warning by telling Christians to avoid people and peers who exemplify unhealthy habits or attitudes: “Do not hang out with angry people; do not keep company with hotheads. Bad temper is contagious— do not get infected” (MSG). Therefore, as a “God-given emotion, anger, if handled well, will promote positive change if a person does not allow it to cause them to act in ways they later will regret, or turn the anger on themselves, or pretend they are never angry, but anger is to be dealt with as quickly and responsibly as possible.”<sup>244</sup>

James emphasizes the value of listening instead of speaking too quickly when mad as an excellent method for handling anger: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (passage, translation).

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<sup>243</sup> Stevenson, “Wrestling with Destiny,” pg. #.

<sup>244</sup> Clinton and Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling*, 45.



### Preventive and Intervention Resources

Several resources are available to the Church and community to reach out to the many at-risk African American adolescent males who have difficulty managing their anger. Some young men silently struggle with their anger locked up inside, potentially exploding into a rage. Others openly and aggressively express their anger in unhealthy, destructive ways. Both are unhealthy due to them not being taught to manage one's anger. The following are resources and potential programs for mentoring young Black boys and men. Some of these programs target African Americans and are culturally and racially specific and relevant.

Bernadette Sanchez et al. wrote a review of research focusing on “Mentoring for Black Male Youth for the National Mentoring Resource Center.” Their review revolves around four key subjects. First is a definitive measurement of the efficacy of such a program. Second is the nature of the mentor's relationship, the mentee, the method, and the potential success. Third is the procedure or process for measuring significant results in African American males. Finally, the research examined the adaptation record, the program's excellence, and the self-reliance of the institution in its environment.<sup>245</sup>

Sanchez et al. note that mentoring is just as effective among young Black men as with other groups. However, certain things must be considered when entering a mentor-mentee relationship with African American adolescent males. They write:

First, the mentor must be cognizant of young Black males' racial and cultural background (e.i., race, culture, and gender), especially if the mentor is White. Secondly, the mentor must understand that not all young Black boys and men are the same but come from various backgrounds. Thirdly, Black boys are likely to vary in their individual needs and, thus, the type of mentoring supports that might be most effective. Fourthly, help Black

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<sup>245</sup> Bernadette Sánchez et al., “Mentoring for Black Male Youth: A Systematic Review of the Research,” *Adolescent Research Review* 3, no. 3 (October 14, 2017): 259–78, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-017-0074-z>.

boys to identify and increase support from the existing mentoring and resources they have in their lives. Fifthly, ensure the mentor has adequate training.<sup>246</sup>

Elphin Maxwell Smith poses his title and subject matter in a question: *Does a Positive Male Role Model Affect the Achievement of Adolescent African American Males? A Case Study*.

Smith's study involves forming a plan to help young African American males succeed academically. Male role modeling includes how young Black male students are engaged, motivated, prepared, and supported as they move toward graduation, which is paramount to positive life outcomes.<sup>247</sup> This material proved beneficial to this project because of its emphasis on community involvement and teachers' input, which are all important links toward ensuring a positive, well-adjusted role model.

Raychelle Cassada Lohmann's dissertation on "The Effects of a Customized School-Based Anger Regulation and Aggression Reduction Intervention" was another valuable resource. This study supported the thesis subject matter by targeting anger and aggression among male adolescents. Lohmann recognized that many male youths are experiencing a problem with how to manage their anger. She writes, "As a result, many youths who exhibit disruptive anger and aggressive outbursts in school are often subjected to exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension and expulsion."<sup>248</sup> However, the researcher suggests a more intentional way to help and observes that "students need to learn constructive and proactive ways to cope and deal with anger-provoking situations. Attempting to discipline them due to their negative behaviors and

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<sup>246</sup> Sanchez, "Mentoring for Black Male Youth," pg. #.

<sup>247</sup> Elphin Maxwell Smith, Jr. "Does a Positive Male Role Model Affect the Achievement of Adolescent African American Males? A Case Study" (EdD diss., University of Arkansas, 2015), pg. #, ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>248</sup> Raychelle Cassada Lohmann, "The Effects of a Customized School-Based Anger Regulation and Aggression Reduction Intervention," (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2018), pg. #, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

excluding them from education will not solve the problem.”<sup>249</sup> The researcher supports her thesis by proposing a customizable anger management intervention for teens as a solution-based effort.

The National Church Adopt a School Partnership Initiative, a ministry of Tony Evans, who is a pastor and the founder of the Urban Alternative, is a school-based mentoring program designed to “turn around the lives of school kids and their families by partnering the local school with the local church”<sup>250</sup> to make a difference in the not only the school but the community.

*Playing with Anger: Teaching Coping Skills to African American Boys through Athletics and Culture*, founded by Stevenson, is a culturally specific mentoring program. The curriculum offers the what, how, and why to develop a racially identifiable, culturally sensitive, and gender-specific curriculum to teach young Black males how to deal with anger. Stevenson uses the team concept of athletics (i.e., basketball, martial arts, etc.), which is usually a language that the average male understands. The initiative that supports this is “PLAAY, meaning Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth, is a projected trajectory in getting to know the young men so that their aggressive behavior is explainable without cauterizing it according to race or gender stereotypes.”<sup>251</sup>

Belgrave et al. wrote the book *Brothers of Ujima: A Cultural Enrichment Program to Empower Adolescent African American Males*, which is another racially identifiable, culturally sensitive, and gender-specific program for Black male youths. This program “aims to reinforce

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<sup>249</sup> Lohmann, "The Effects of a Customized School-Based Anger Regulation and Aggression Reduction Intervention," pg. #.

<sup>250</sup> “The Initiative,” Adopt a School Initiative, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://churchadoptaschool.org/the-initiative/>.

<sup>251</sup> Stevenson, "Playing with Anger," xi.

and bring out the strengths of these boys. The word Ujima is a word that means ‘collective work and responsibility.’”<sup>252</sup>

There seems to be a consensus that anger, in and of itself, is a universal, God-given emotion that everyone experiences regardless of age, gender, culture, or race. All people have the potential for healthy or unhealthy expressions of this powerful emotion. Anger is a complex emotion for any emerging adult. One must go through a learning process to know how to manage this emotion. As for the African American male adolescent, the uniqueness kicks in. In other words, the difference between Black and White males is the influential factor that provokes anger. The influencing factors are a historical background (e.g., baggage) of being on the receiving end of racism, stereotypical images in the media, a disproportionate criminal justice system, discriminatory hiring practices, and low academic achievement. They are what drives the anger that festers within these young men.

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<sup>252</sup> Belgrave et al., *Brothers of Ujima*, 1.

### **Chapter III: Research Methodology**

The primary focus of this paper deals with anger and how many African American adolescent males struggle with this often-misunderstood emotion that tends to hinder positive development into adulthood. Therefore, this chapter introduces the research methodology for this qualitative phenomenological theory. The three objectives paramount to this research are as follows. The first is to demonstrate that anger management problems exist among this social and racial demographic. The second is to ascertain the root causes of uncontrolled and misunderstood anger among Black adolescent boys and young men. Finally, how the Church must become actively involved. The Church, as a community of believers, has an opportunity to collaborate with the community at large in helping these young men successfully navigate toward healthy adulthood.

#### **Design Method**

This section provides a detailed description of the methodology that undergirds the objectives of this paper. This project's research strategy includes a comprehensive discussion through three steps. The first involves this study's fundamental research questions, design, and approach. The second step deals with the study implementation giving a detailed discussion of the two research tools, the survey and the in-depth interview used in this study. The third step, as the intervention, applies Margaret Beale Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) to address and understand at-risk young men of color and their anger.

### Research Questions

The issue concerns the plight of many African American male adolescents who struggle to manage their anger constructively. Therefore, two complex questions arise. Question number one asks: Is the inability to understand and manage anger an underlying cause for many young African American males' negative behaviors? Question number two asks: How can the Church work with the community in helping these young men cope with this God-given emotion in their attempt to make sense of who they are?

### Research Design

This study's research design uses two methods of research. One method is a survey of adolescent boys ages 10-17 that is designed to understand how these young men perceive themselves and their environment.

The second research method is the in-depth interview approach to gather relevant data. This method utilizes a dialogue approach between the interviewer and interviewee “that elicits depth on a specific topic through inductive probing to obtain objectivity and substance of the participant.”<sup>253</sup> The primary issue concerns the destructive anger that certain African American adolescent males must deal with and how the Church and community must be actively involved in helping.

The “qualitative design deals with primarily verbal data and derives meaning from the participant's perspective and aims to understand the meaning people attach to everyday life.”<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Greg Guest, Emily E. Namey, and Marilyn L. Mitchell, *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374680>.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., pg. #.

This method aims to arrive at an “understanding and interpretation of the human world based on real-life experiences.”<sup>255</sup> With a durable subjective nature, this research design method, yet having objective undertones, was instrumental in addressing this issue's what, how, and why. For instance, Hicks, a seasoned African American educator, observed Black boys' behavior and demeanor. He stated that “the attitudes and behavior of the Black male students have caused much concern. Attitudes such as their unprovoked aggression, unrelenting negative outlook, lack of investment in their education, and glorification of prison life led him to pose the question. Why do many Black boys choose criminality, prison, and enslavement?”<sup>256</sup> One must comprehend the problem and what is at stake to bring healing or arrive at a solution.

A qualitative study is relevant when the primary aim is to examine a specific reality through the eyes of the individual's understanding of their environment.<sup>257</sup> Since this study is about assisting at-risk, troubled, African American male adolescents with difficulty managing their anger, a qualitative approach is the best fit for this project.

### **Research Approach**

It is vital realize that “race plays an important part in how people think, develop, behave, and navigate the social world.”<sup>258</sup> Through the years, the early Anglo psychosocial researchers and practitioners have assumed the one size fits all concerning “psychological and cultural

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<sup>255</sup> Donna M. Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2019), 242.

<sup>256</sup> Hicks, *Hidden in the Shadow of Truth*, ix.

<sup>257</sup> Robert E. Stake, *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work* (New York, NY: Guilford, 2010), 11.

<sup>258</sup> Steven O. Roberts et al., “Racial Inequality in Psychological Research: Trends of the Past and Recommendations for the Future,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 15, no. 6 (June 24, 2020): 1296, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620927709>.

truths.”<sup>259</sup> It took Joseph White, considered the father of Black Psychology, to articulate what was needed. White stated, “It is nearly impossible to understand the lifestyles of Black people using traditional theories developed by white psychologists to explain white people.”<sup>260</sup> Since the study at hand concerns helping at-risk Black male youth manage their anger constructively, a culturally specific, age, gender-relevant, and research-based framework is paramount.

#### Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST)

This study's qualitative approach derives from the Phenomenological Variant of the Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) perspective regarding the African American adolescent male. The rationale for using such a framework emphasizes the individual's context-centered concept; in other words, PVEST is a framework that provides a foundational understanding of the identity struggle of young Black men in the United States. PVEST employs a “non-deficit-based psychology applicable to Black people.”<sup>261</sup> Alvin Thomas and Elan Hope briefly define this theory when they write, “PVEST posits that behavior and development are best understood by considering the ecological system while accounting for variation across individual's experiences, how these experiences are interpreted, and systemic and contextual influences on the meaning that individuals assign to their experiences.”<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Kevin Cokley, Bedford Palmer, and Steven Stone, “Toward a Black (and Diverse) Psychology: The Scholarly Legacy of Joseph White,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 45, no. 2 (February 8, 2019): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798419828243>.

<sup>260</sup> J. L. White, “Toward a Black Psychology,” *Ebony* 25, no. 11 (1970): 45.

<sup>261</sup> White, “Toward a Black Psychology,” 1970, 46.

<sup>262</sup> Alvin Thomas and Elan C. Hope, “Walking Away Hurt, Walking around Scared,” *Journal of Black Psychology* 42, no. 5 (July 26, 2016): 454, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798415603539>.



Spencer “developed PVEST in 1995 and builds off the influential research of Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (EST). Combining the phenomenological approach with Bronfenner’s ecological system theory provides two critical integrations.”<sup>263</sup> The first “integration point captures the individuals' ability to understand social expectations, stereotypes, and biases, even if they endorse or fulfill.”<sup>264</sup>

Additionally, “PVEST helps to acknowledge the critically, undergirding, role of developmental changes in social cognition, multi-level social context character, and content and stage relevant social experiences that differentially influence meaning-making processes across the life course.”<sup>265</sup> To better understand PVEST, and the rationale for its use, a breakdown of this theory's most critical elements is in order. According to their origin and significance to this study, the critical elements that are to be defined are phenomenological, variant, and ecological.

## **Phenomenology**

There are several types of phenomenology, but the one utilized in this study relates to Transcendental Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a very complex, ideological term couched in philosophy. It is described as “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Phenomenology is the study of ‘phenomena’: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings

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<sup>263</sup> Margaret Spencer, “Old Issues and New Theorizing for Health, Achievement, Neighborhood, Growth, and African American Youth: A Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory,” *Black youth: Perspectives on their status in the United States* (1995):38 pg. #.

<sup>264</sup> Margaret Beale Spencer, “Self-Concept Development,” *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 1988, no. 42 (1988): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.23219884206>.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

things have in our experience.”<sup>266</sup> Transcendental Phenomenology is an outgrowth of several schools of philosophical thought; most of which would concur with the basic phenomenological definition.<sup>267</sup> Phenomenology as a research method is an “approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it.”<sup>268</sup>

Therefore, phenomenology is concerned with studying the phenomena that comes from the experience of being in the world. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers an additional definition: phenomenology is “a theory of human development that includes all humans, including those members of society who are more diverse as to skin color or ethnic background.”<sup>269</sup> The underlying notion within this definition hinges upon two factors: its inclusivity and diversity. Therefore, it explains what is meant by variant and its relationship to phenomenology.

## **Variant**

The phenomenological approach's primary objective is to describe how individuals navigate real-life experiences daily. This approach focuses on the critical, influential, aspects of the “human development that is inclusive to all human societal segments. This theory considers the more diverse segments of society, such as color, race, and ethnicity. It offers insight into how

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<sup>266</sup> David Woodruff Smith, “Phenomenology (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy),” Stanford.edu, December 16, 2013, accessed date, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>.

<sup>267</sup> Brian E. Neubauer, Catherine T. Witkop, and Lara Varpio, “How Phenomenology Can Help Us Learn from the Experiences of Others,” *Perspectives on Medical Education* 8, no. 2 (April 5, 2019): 90–97, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2>.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., pg. #.

<sup>269</sup> Smith, “Phenomenology (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).”

they make sense of the world linked to cognitive and social experiences.”<sup>270</sup> Basically, this “approach considers variations, namely, the qualitatively different ways of experiencing, as a central point of research.”<sup>271</sup>

## Ecological

The ecological aspect used in PVEST originated from “Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory and links culture and context with individuals’ meaning-making processes and resultant identity formation.”<sup>272</sup> From a sociological standpoint, ecology has to do with the impact of one’s social environment on one’s self-concept based on one’s interpretation of the world one lives in. According to Spencer, the PVEST theory’s developmental processes involve making sense of one’s environment. It is about learning how to deal with the stresses of living in a society that frequently belittles one’s humanity and “is linked to cognitive and social experiences.”<sup>273</sup> For further clarification concerning PVEST and its usefulness in understanding anger among African American male adolescents and the role of cooperative efforts of the Church and community, an attempt to put things in perspective in addressing the issue is due.

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<sup>270</sup> Margaret Beale Spencer, “Phenomenology and Ecological Systems Theory: Development of Diverse Groups,” *Handbook of Child Psychology* (June 1, 2007): 696. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0115>.

<sup>271</sup> Sylvain K Cibangu, and Mark Hepworth. "The uses of phenomenology and phenomenography: A critical review." *Library & Information Science Research* 38, no. 2 (2016): 148. Accessed August 6, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2016.05.001>.

<sup>272</sup> Margaret Beale Spencer et al., “Understanding Hypermasculinity in Context: A Theory-Driven Analysis of Urban Adolescent Males’ Coping Responses,” *Research in Human Development* 1, no. 4 (December 2004): 229, [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0104\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0104_2).

<sup>273</sup> Two Feathers NAFS, “Education in America: Race, Social Justice, and Protecting Our Children’ W/ Dr. Margaret Spencer,” August 7, 2020, educational lecture, 1:13:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7BLSnhMkVM&t=1423s>.

### **PVEST as a Coping Mechanism**

Recent events show that social unrest in America is at an all-time high, and there is a heightened awareness of systemic racism. More specifically, racial unrest has come to a boiling point giving rise to such movements as Black Lives Matter and Antifa. Both are radical, socio-political movements and protest based that arose in response to the mounting violence and often deadly force explicitly perpetrated against African American males, for the at-risk youth such movements could have a less than favorable outcome. Since this project deals with African American male adolescents, PVEST appears to be the best theoretical framework for this subject; therefore, this section addresses three strategic questions. Those questions are what is PVEST? Why is there a need for such a framework? How to go about making an assessment? Many of whom? The group's contributors? Those experiencing violence?

It must be noted that “PVEST, a concept primarily developed by Margaret Beales Spencer, is an identity-focused cultural, ecological framework.”<sup>274</sup> Spencer defines phenomenology as an “unavoidable mean-making process and is a synthesis of over a dozen theories plus contributions from privilege and critical race perspectives and is a new way of thinking about development and maximizing the resilience of all young people and families.”<sup>275</sup> According to Spencer, PVEST is a fresh alternative perspective to other developmental theories attempting to address marginalized youths' identity formation process. The objective of PVEST is to discover to what extent ethnicity, gender, and race affect young people's ability to develop their coping skills as they navigate their environment. PVEST intends to conceptualize this

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<sup>274</sup> Two Feathers NAFS, “Education in America.”

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

theory from a historical perspective, social and cultural context, and the impact on youth and adolescent development.<sup>276</sup>

America has witnessed a significant social and spiritual upheaval in recent years. Political and ideological movements, such as Black Lives Matter and Critical Race Theory (CTR), have taken to the streets and the halls of academia nationwide. The issue of Systematic Racism has again entered the public eye, becoming a platform for stirring emotions such as anger, guilt, remorse, and confusion when regarding debates on whether public schools would include Critical Race Theory (CRT). Such ideologies can further complicate and confuse “adolescents who concern themselves with identity formation, structuring their sense of self, and exploring educational and occupational possibilities,”<sup>277</sup> not to mention coming to grips with who they are amid various environmental interactions.<sup>278</sup> Although the search for identity, with all its ramifications, is not unique to any group, it is especially true for African Americans. As often noted, “being Black and male in the United States may be particularly challenging. Black men carry with them stereotypes and assumptions deeply rooted in a history of slavery, reinforced by media portrayals of Black male violence, criminality, and government policies on policing.”<sup>279</sup> Tamara R. Buckley notes, “Black adolescent males, in particular, are often perceived as threatening, underachieving, and hypermasculine.”<sup>280</sup> Many young Black adolescents respond to

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<sup>276</sup> Gabriel Velez and Margaret Beale Spencer, “Phenomenology and Intersectionality: Using PVEST as a Frame for Adolescent Identity Formation amid Intersecting Ecological Systems of Inequality,” *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 2018, no. 161 (July 3, 2018): 76, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20247>.

<sup>277</sup> Tamara R. Buckley, “Black Adolescent Males: Intersections among Their Gender Role Identity and Racial Identity and Associations with Self-Concept (Global and School),” *Child Development* 89, no. 4 (September 12, 2017): e13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12950>.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> Buckley, “Black Adolescent Males: Intersections among Their Gender Role, Identity and Racial Identity and Associations with Self-Concept (Global and School),” 2017.

these preconceived perceptions and stereotypes respond the best way they know how, in anger, to cope with their environment. The term “coping strategy” is often used for reactive coping and is critical to survival, especially in the urban environment. Reactive coping is “a stress-management strategy that involves efforts to deal with a past or present stressful situation by compensating for or accepting the associated harm or loss. Reactive coping may include steps to readjust goals, find benefits, or search for meaning.”<sup>281</sup> However, many youths who struggle with managing anger react the best way they know how to respond negatively by resorting to violence.

Therefore, PVEST is one way to address the dilemma inherent among many African American adolescent males. In their attempt to make sense of, cope with, and survive in the daily world,<sup>282</sup> they have difficulty managing the most basic emotion, anger. This inability to manage control often leads to behavior issues that are marked as being abusive and/or addictive. Furthermore, the argument hinges upon the suggestion that the Church has a responsibility and mandate to reach out to the young Black males who are having difficulty dealing with their anger with the compassion of the gospel, helping ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong, healthy, and stable Black men.

The primary reason for using “PVEST as a framework is its emphasis on the identity development of young minorities from a cultural and ecological perspective.”<sup>283</sup> In this case, the emphasis is on African American adolescents. Buckley noted, “In recent years, there has been a

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<sup>281</sup> Williams, “Anger as a Basic Emotion,”1950.

<sup>282</sup> Two Feathers NAFS, “Education in America.”

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

growing interest in race and gender-related influences on adolescent adjustment.”<sup>284</sup> As mentioned earlier, social and civil unrest with racial undertones exemplifies such an interest. Certain factors emphasized in this framework help understand these young men searching for identity amid destructive behaviors due to uncontrolled anger. The two factors are “risk and protective factor levels,”<sup>285</sup> which go a long way in understanding and helping these young men.

Therefore, the research tool utilized in this study, the in-depth interview, aims to ascertain three main things. First, the question addressed is whether the proposition concerning mismanaged, misdirected anger among African American male youth valid. Second, the awareness and opinions of those members of the community at large and the faith community will be explored. Thirdly, another question arises: can there be an effective cooperative effort between the Church and the community in addressing this problem?

## **Study Implementation**

### The Survey

The survey targeted African American male Adolescents, specifically those aged 10-17. Originally this survey was in five parts, based on questionnaires totaling 117 questions and phrases to be completed. The first dealt with “Anger Management and Anger Styles.”<sup>286</sup> The second set of questions derives from the “Teen Anger Triggers Scale, which is an assessment

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<sup>284</sup> Buckley, “Black Adolescent Males,” 2017.

<sup>285</sup> Two Feathers NAFS, “Education in America.”

<sup>286</sup> “Anger Styles Questionnaire | Anger Management Canada,” Anger Management Resources, Inc., accessed May 12, 2021, <https://angermanagement.ca/activities/anger-styles-questionnaire/>.

containing statements about what sets off the individual's emotions."<sup>287</sup> The third section is the "African American Respect Scale, a 20-item instrument measuring prosocial attitudes held by male adolescents."<sup>288</sup> Fourth, the "Urban Hassles Scale assesses the stressors within their environments."<sup>289</sup> The fifth is entitled Community Experiences Questionnaire. This section explores the degree to which at-risk young men of color are "exposed to community violence."<sup>290</sup>

### Study Participants

The original plan was to administer the survey to one hundred fifty African American adolescent males ages 10-18, using locations in Chicago, IL, and Atlanta, GA, with permission. These locations are in urban areas and have high adolescent crime rates. However, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited travel to locations in Chicago, IL, and limited the survey to the Atlanta, GA, area. Even then, there were limitations, and the total number of participants was fifty young men. The average age of the participants turned out to be 16 years old.

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<sup>287</sup> John J. Liptak and Ester A. Leutenberg, *Teen Anger Workbook: Facilitator Reproducible Self-Assessments, Exercises & Educational Handouts* (Duluth, MN: Whole Person, 2011), 19.

<sup>288</sup> Joy D. Leary, Eileen M. Brennan, and Harold E. Briggs, "The African American Adolescent Respect Scale: A Measure of a Prosocial Attitude," *Research on Social Work Practice* 15, no. 6 (November 2005): 463, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731505277717>.

<sup>289</sup> M. Daniel Bennett and David B. Miller, "An Exploratory Study of the Urban Hassles Index: A Contextually Relevant Measure of Chronic Multidimensional Urban Stressors," *Research on Social Work Practice* 16, no. 3 (May 2006): 305–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731505283886>.

<sup>290</sup> J. E. Richters and W. Saltzman, "Survey of Exposure to Community Violence: Self Report Version," Stanford University, accessed date, <http://sparqtools.org/mobility-measure/survey-of-exposure-to-community-violence-secv-self-report-version/#all-survey-questions>.



## Procedures

The parents of each prospective minor participant received a “Parent/Guardian Consent Form” and an “Assent of the Child to Participate in a Research Study” form. It was made clear to the parents/guardians that records of this study would be kept private. Furthermore, only the researcher will access the records stored securely. All participants received information as to the title of the study, the purpose, the why of the invitation to participate and reassurance that participation was voluntary and free to ask questions.

## Collecting and Analyzing Data

The purpose of this study, which this survey attempts to discover, is to examine the effects of non-productive anger in the lives of young Black men in America and how the Church can help. After signing the consent and the assent forms, each participant received a copy of the five-part survey. Due to the challenges in the face of COVID-19, a couple of churches and a community center became available.

## **The In-depth Interview**

The in-depth interviews were an outgrowth of the thesis statement for this project. This study derives from witnessing many young Black boys and men who have never learned how to process their anger constructively. Having never learned how to manage their offense during the primary developmental stage in their lives, they resort to destructive and often addictive behaviors. Hence comes the derivative for the title of this project: “Agents of Redemptive Hope: Churches and Communities Addressing the Problem of Anger and the African American Male.” The trajectory of this study seeks to address the subject matter as what, how, and why.

First is the “what” that attempts to identify the fundamental problem: unmanaged anger that tends to have adverse outcomes for many young men of color. Secondly is the “how” of the project giving rise to a solution to the problem. The Church should lead the way in cooperating with the community to address the issue. The Church should know about “redemptive and hope.”

### Study Participants

Each thirty-six randomly selected participants were chosen to represent the community of faith and various aspects of the community based on their willingness to participate and their experience of the subject matter. The interviewees included parents of adolescent males, single mothers with boys, teachers, educators, Black and White pastors, youth pastors/leaders, and community leaders.

### Procedures

Each participant received a letter of invitation to participate in this study and signed an agreement to join upon agreeing to do so. There were three methods used for the interviews. The first method was face-to-face at the interviewee's location or in a public place such as the library conference room. The second method used was Zoom and Facebook Messenger. The third method was by conference call over the phone. The two recording methods were audio devices and carefully handwritten notes on each participant's response to each question, and each in-depth interview lasted one hour and fifteen minutes.

### Collecting and Analyzing Data

The thirty-six participants who agreed to participate in this study received a written confidentiality statement via invitation. Each participant was made aware of the purpose of this

study, its title, the thesis statement, and the importance of an honest response to the interview questions, which consist of ten questions. The objective of the ten explorative questions was to stimulate the participants' thoughts and feelings based on their individual experiences related to the subject matter.

The first question asked: "When you hear Black Lives Matter, what comes to mind?" This explorative question asks about their concept or notion concerning the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement since the subject is prominent in the current. However, this is more than a question of exploration to stimulate discussion. Anger is an individual emotion and not Group oriented. Anger affects politics and government for better or worse, sometimes resulting in protests, bodily injury, bloodshed, and financial loss to property."<sup>291</sup> BLM fits into such a category, and people are attracted to such groups for various reasons, and in many cases, it turns out to be an outlet for anger expression. According to a survey taken in 2021, "Black Lives Matter remains stable despite a decline. The finding was as follows: 55% of American adults expressed some support for BLM; 85% of Black Americans strongly support BLM, wherein 58% say they strongly support it."<sup>292</sup>

The second question had two parts, beginning with a leading statement that asked: "Research suggests that being a young Black male in America is particularly challenging. Wherein the question posed, do they agree or disagree with this statement?" A follow-up question requested that the participants elaborate on why they responded the way they did.

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<sup>291</sup> Susan C. Cloninger and Steven A Leibo, *Understanding Angry Groups: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Their Motivations and Effects on Society* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2017), 3-4.

<sup>292</sup> Juliana Menasce Horowitz, "Support for Black Lives Matter Declined after George Floyd Protests, but Has Remained Unchanged Since," Pew Research Center, September 27, 2021, accessed date, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/09/27/support-for-black-lives-matter-declined-after-george-floyd-protests-but-has-remained-unchanged-since/>.

The third explorative question started with a statement about their agreeing or disagreeing with the second question and included a follow-up question: “Many African American males, ages 10-19, struggle with anger that often leads to abusive and addictive behaviors; agree or disagree?” The follow-up asked for an elaboration on “why they responded the way they did.” The abusive and addictive behaviors include drug and alcohol abuse, gang violence, criminal activity, and unprotected sex.

The fourth question explores the plausible causes by asking the participants what they felt were the causes for such anger among many African American male adolescents. In other words, this question sought to explore the causation of one’s anger that would lead to “inappropriate behavior that leads to physical, emotional, destructive responses.”<sup>293</sup> Such anger often presents itself in violence to others and the self. The Centers for Disease Control defines “youth violence as an occurrence where young people use the force of power to harm others.”<sup>294</sup> Usually, the discussion centers around the symptoms rather than the causes, which only become a byproduct of a problem. Concise diagnoses of cause and effect are vital to leading to a solution. One young man, 18-year-old, the this researcher visited in jail made the following statement. “Pastor, I was in my mess, tore up from the ground up. I needed help and I just could not see a way out of it of my mess. I was angry all the time it seemed. So, I took it out on others and ended up hurting myself as well.” The next question seemed remarkably similar. However, the intention was to address anger management specifically.

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<sup>293</sup> Chapman, *Anger*, 17.

<sup>294</sup> CDC, “Preventing Youth Violence,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/fastfact.html>.

The fifth question asked for the participant's views on the contributing factors leading to the inability to manage or control these young men. Aristotle stated that “anyone can become angry, that is easy, but to be angry at the right person, for the right reason, at the right time, and the right purpose, and in the right way, which is not in everyone’s power and is not easy”<sup>295</sup> to accomplish. The writer is referring to grown adults. If adults have difficulty controlling their anger, and they do, one can only imagine the struggles that a teenager, or emerging adult, is experiencing as they attempt to make sense of their world.

Struggling to come to grips with how to control their anger can be a daunting task for some of these young men. Some go at it on a trial-and-error basis from experiences stemming from four risk factors. These risk factors are not necessarily direct causes of youth violence. The CDC notes,

A combination of individual, relationship, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of youth violence. Many risk factors for youth violence are linked to experiencing toxic stress, or stress that is prolonged and repeated. Some examples are experiencing racism, limited access to support and medical services, living in homes with violence, mental health problems, substance abuse, and other instability.<sup>296</sup>

The sixth question addressed the interviewees' experience with at-risk or troubled youth. The question was: Have they encountered an at-risk or troubled young Black adolescent male who had problems controlling their anger? The idea behind this question involves the degree of contact each adult has had with at-risk or troubled youth. Each adult asked to participate in this study would have some opinion about African American adolescents who have difficulty managing their anger healthily. As a result, adolescents tend to develop irrational behavior resulting in a manifestation of anger. This anger, based on feeling, rational or irrational, based on

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<sup>295</sup> Chapman, Anger, 14.

<sup>296</sup> “Risk and Protective Factors.”

their cognitive repertoire of events or situations.”<sup>297</sup> Therefore, the trajectory of this question deals with those young men of color whose mishandling of anger has led them into a life of destructive and, in some cases, addictive behaviors.

The purpose of the seventh question sought to get the participant's opinion on the role of the Christian Church and houses of worship in responding to the plight of anger management of many young African American males. One central argument in this study is that the Church has an opportunity to work with the community to address specific societal ills. In this case, it is helping young men of color who have difficulty dealing with anger issues. This community is a mission field, but there seems to be a difference of understanding among pastors, leaders, and laypeople regarding missions. A recent survey noted that “80% of Pastors view missions, based upon the biblical record left by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20, as a biblical mandate to all Christians. However, many Christians find exceptions in Jesus’ parting command; they tend to believe missions are a calling for some (51%), not a mandate for all (25%).”<sup>298</sup>

Thus, to put this another way, this question is an inquiry into the Church's role in contemporary society. If the Church is a community of believers, the body of Christ, wherein the people of God are to be “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:50, KJV), then the people of God have a vital role in the community.

The eighth is a follow-up question designed to discover the participant's awareness or participation in programs or ministries, specifically helping Black youth who struggle to deal

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<sup>297</sup> Torubeli Victor Ayebami and Kebbi Janet, "Efficacy of Anger Management Strategies for Effective Living Among Adolescents and Youths," *Ife Psychologia* 25, no. 1 (03, 2017): 48, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/efficacy-anger-management-strategies-effective/docview/1926481177/se-2>.

<sup>298</sup> “Year in Review: Barna’s Top 10 Releases of 2022,” Barna Group, December 21, 2022, date accessed, <https://www.barna.com/research/year-in-review-2022/>.

with anger positively. This question in and of itself was a challenge. There is a shortage of written material concerning counseling African American male adolescents, and even fewer dealing with programs and ministries involving the Church and societal involvement. Depending on the location and community environment, there is either a state of mutual respect between the Church and the broader community or a mutual suspicion of mistrust between the two is in place.

Question nine was an attempt to ascertain why there seemed to be a lack of concern or unwillingness to discuss this subject. A substantial number of people, who were within their rights of course, declined to talk about any topic remotely hinting at racial issues. For example, why does Black-on-Black crime, a very controversial term where young African American males are both perpetrators and victims, occur? Black-on-Black crime is a taboo subject. However, when considering violence committed by Whites against Blacks, or violence involving White police officers, the media will hit the airwaves, and the protesters will take to the streets.

The final open-ended question asked for the respondents' suggestions concerning this project, of which most interviewees had no suggestions. However, those that made suggestions include recommendations of people to interview, male sexual orientation, online bullying, gang activity, and listening to gangster rap. A few people interviewed offered firsthand experiences about their struggles during their adolescent years.

Therefore, to restate the presenting problem dealt with in this project is as follows: many African American adolescent males struggle to express their anger healthily. This struggle leads these young men into unhealthy anger, "which, if not managed, could be dangerous resulting in violence that could be detrimental to self and others,"<sup>299</sup> and could have the potential of leading

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<sup>299</sup> Ayebami and Janet, "Efficacy of Anger Management Strategies for Effective Living Among Adolescents and Youths," pg. #.

to a life of abusive and addictive behaviors. Therefore, this paper's fundamental question and trajectory concentrate on how the Church might enter a cooperative relationship with the larger community in addressing the issues of uncontrolled anger among young men of color in this country.

The fundamental question is to what extent the Church can enter a cooperative relationship with the larger community in addressing the issues of uncontrolled anger among young men of color in this country. This paper argues that the Church, an essential part of the wider community, must reach out, with the compassion of the gospel, to those young Black males who are having difficulty dealing with anger to ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong and stable Black men.

Therefore, the argument initiated in this project maintains that the Church, as an essential part of the broader community, must develop methods of outreach to young men of color who are having difficulty channeling their anger in non-destructive ways. Chapter 4, Results and Implementation, provides a clear and concise interpretation, analysis, and implementation of a plan of action based on the research results.



## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS**

The inductive line of reason assumed in the in-depth interviews sought to assess the argument concerning the Church's response to specific social issues. In this instance, the discussion centers on the problems many African American adolescent males face in trying to control their anger constructively and positively. How ought the church respond to this problem? Can there be effective ways that the Church can be a change agent by collaborating with the broader community to assist these young men as they develop into healthy adulthood? The results of the in-depth interview and the surveys provided some insights into this issue. The significant themes pulled from the results of the in-depth interviews are used as the main discussion points of this chapter, with the surveys serving to support the data.

### **Interview and Survey Results**

In analyzing the data, specific patterns developed while reading over the responses several times, highlighting keywords, phrases, or codes, which led to several sub-themes. From the sub-themes came four significant themes (Figure 1). The first theme is the challenges of being an African American male. The second theme focuses on anger management. The third theme centered on the causes or factors that precipitate unhealthy anger. Finally, the fourth theme targets the Church's response or role in addressing the issue of Black youth acting out with anger issues that are detrimental to them and their communities. Each of the four themes will be defined and discussed.

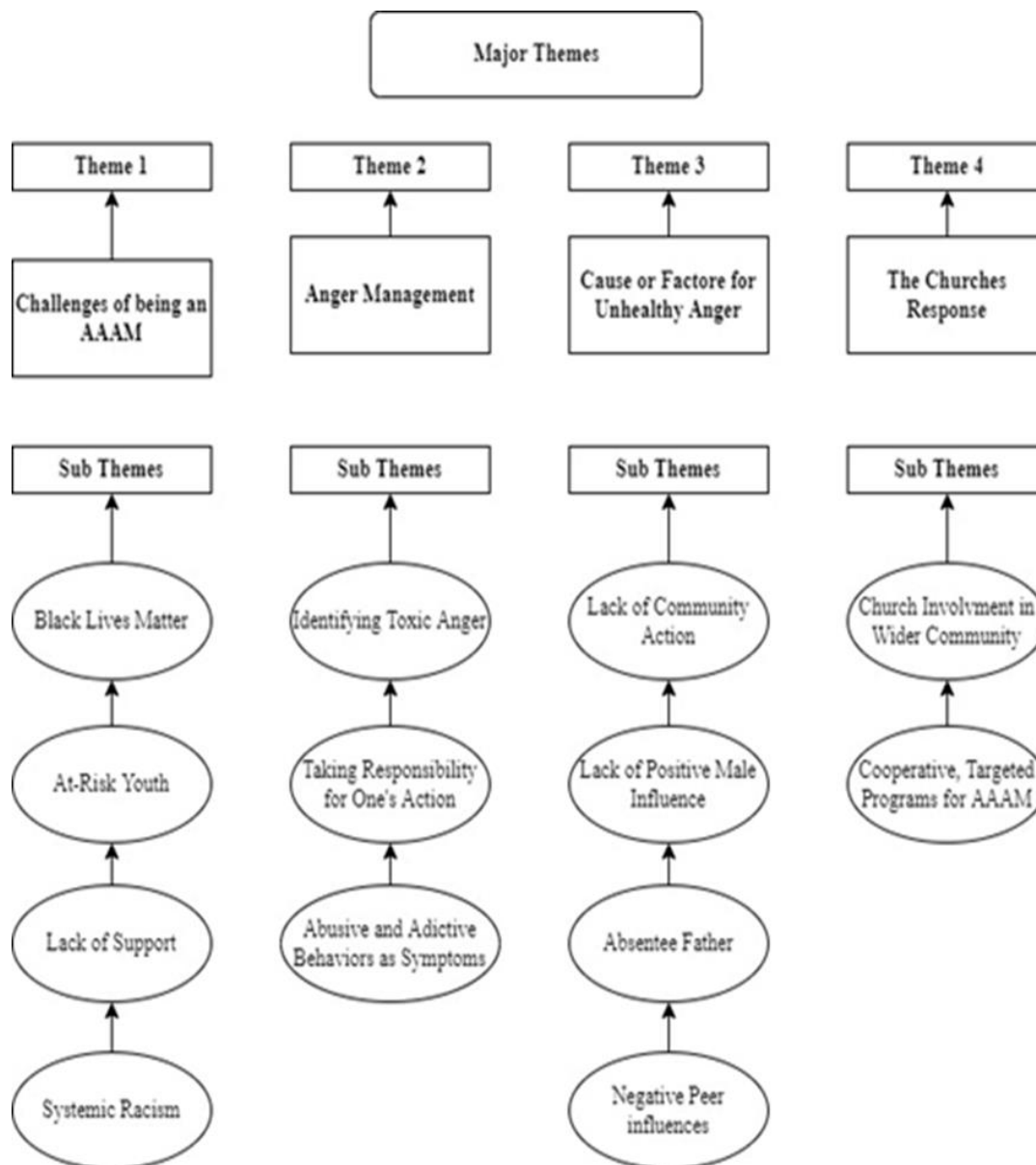


Figure 1. Major Themes Derived from In-Depth Interviews.

### Challenges of Being an African American Male

The first theme was an outgrowth of the second interview question. That question asked the participant whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “Research suggests that being a young Black male in America is particularly challenging.” One such paper worth mentioning is on the theory of intersectionality. According to Webster's Dictionary,

“intersectionality is the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.”<sup>300</sup> Buckley takes this approach and contends, “Black adolescent males are perceived as threatening, underachievers, and hypermasculine, receiving reinforcement by the media.”<sup>301</sup>

Furthermore, this theory examines “how gender and racial stereotypes and expectations intersect to shape identities, developmental outcomes, and the meanings that men and women attribute to their experiences.”<sup>302</sup> In other words, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the African American adolescent male identity of self and his society intersect in at least three ways. He is Black, a male, and an adolescent. With this question in mind about the challenge of growing up as a young Black man, the participants were then to follow up by elaborating on their answers.

As expected, the majority of the participants, thirty-four, agreed with this statement. Only one disagreed. That person clarified their disagreement by replying: “Life is challenging for any male or female adolescent or adult. There is no real difference, whether they are Black or White. Life is a challenge, period.”

Several significant phrases appeared in the conversations as the participants offered their ideas, feelings, and experiences. Such phrases include stereotyped, devalued, pain, systemic racism, Black Lives Matter, unfair treatment, police brutality, and school or teacher indifference.

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<sup>300</sup> Merriam Webster. “Definition of INTERSECTIONALITY.” Merriam-webster.com, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality>.

<sup>301</sup> Buckley, “Black Adolescent Males,” pg. #.

<sup>302</sup> Howard, *Black Male(D)*, pg. #.

Five direct quotes from the interview participants correspond to this theme; the first theme is in order.

According to one male participant, “Living as a young Black male, you get stereotyped, and the news media is at fault. They picture us as thugs, lazy, always suspect, sex-crazed, and never to be trusted.”

Participant B, a female educator, said,

Ever since I was young, people would look with mistrust of Black people. It seems like they never give them a chance to succeed. Often schools and some teachers did not care whether the Black student passed or failed, and it would seem harder for Black boys. It is a fact. A non-caring teacher, or educator, produces a student who does not care.

Still, another participant, a Black father of two boys, responded by referring to America’s history of racism. He said, “This country has a history of brutal negative treatment toward the Black man. That treatment received from the community and the world around them often hinders their identity development and well-being in their efforts to become a healthy developing Black man.”

Spencer refers to environmental influences and how young minorities respond to environmental influences as they try to make sense of their world based on their learned experiences and how they fit in as a person of worth. Challenges from the outside of the environment are one aspect. However, this is but one factor. Nevertheless, another dimension needs consideration; the first stage of learning or nurturing starts with the family unit. Some challenges stem from a lack of a healthy support system at home. One of the most significant issues raised several times is the problem of the absentee father, lack of a healthy male role model, and conflicting perceptions of masculinity. The responses clearly and powerfully hone in on a young Black man’s problem that often originates within a non-supportive home

environment. These young men often learn from observing adults and how their parents or significant adults manage their anger. Participant M a single father, stated:

So many young people, especially boys, do not know what to do when they get mad. They are confused as to why they are angry in the first place. I now know that after a tumultuous life growing up at home, teenage and young adult life, I dealt with or acted out my anger the same way I watched my mom, especially my stepdad, who was physically violent. Mom was on his side, and eventually, I was put out of the house at seventeen. The later personal relationship failed. I had legal problems, went to jail for a while, and had to take an anger management class. Yes, these young men need to learn, by example, how to act when they get mad. I mean angry.

Comments like this and other similar words led to the formation of the central theme, anger management.

### Anger Management

Anger is a basic human, God-given emotion. Whether primary or secondary, it is an integral part of every human. However, this paper argues that more than a few young men of color have trouble managing such an important, yet often confusing, emotion in a healthy, positive way. In their attempt to deal with their anger, some of these individuals often fall into unhealthy behaviors that tend to be abusive and addictive. Moreover, they become a deterrent both to themselves and others. There is a connection between aggression and a healthy or unhealthy heart among males.<sup>303</sup> For example, “studies link poorly managed anger and hostility, aggression, to physical problems that include headaches, ulcers, stomach cramps, high blood pressure, colitis, and heart conditions.”<sup>304</sup> In addition to these symptoms, one would usually

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<sup>303</sup> Jo Anne Grunbaum, Sally W. Vernon, and Carla M. Clasen, “The Association between Anger and Hostility and Risk Factors for Coronary Heart Disease in Children and Adolescents: A Review,” *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 19, no. 2 (June 1997): 179, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02883335>.

<sup>304</sup> Clinton and Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling*, 40.

consider that such health issues would be attributed to adult. More youth are exemplifying significant health problems that are connected to anger. However, studies have shown that...

in adolescents, the two types of anger (anger expression and anger suppression) can be associated with adopting unhealthy lifestyle behaviors (lack of physical activity and consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, and caffeine). An investigation in 2000 found that teenagers high in anger suppression reported consuming alcohol more frequently and were less physically active than their peers.<sup>305</sup>

Therefore, these emerging adult males, having not learned how to manage their anger, unknowingly set themselves up for adverse life outcomes. As emerging adults, some of these young men and boys must deal with trying to make sense of their identity, as is the case with all adolescent's experiences. However, they must contend with being identified as young, a male, and a Black male, with all the historical and cultural connotations to compound the situation.

Therefore, the second theme, managing anger, derives from keywords and phrases mentioned by various interview participants. Phrases such as the following were typical to suggest the need for anger management: "not knowing how to express anger," "meeting anger with anger," "not knowing why they are angry," "misunderstanding their worth," "pain," "bottled-up anger," and more. The first of two surveys pertinent to this study was the Anger Styles Quiz. Although the research did not have the sample numbers originally anticipated, figure 2 shows the results of the fifty adolescents who participated in this survey. The survey presented is an adaptation of the Anger Styles Quiz, which utilizes a yes or no response to thirty statements based on how the individual reacts to anger in various situations.

Each of the thirty statements asks the participant to respond by selecting agree or disagree with each message. In other words, participants would choose "yes" or "no" to the information

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<sup>305</sup> Mihaela-Luminița Staicu and Mihaela Cuțov, "Anger and health risk behaviors," *Journal of Medicine and Life* 3, no. 4 (2010): 372-5.

that best describes how they would respond based on their experience. Furthermore, they were to base their responses on their individual experiences and not on what they have seen or heard in the media. The Anger Styles Quiz aims to determine, depending on the participant's response, how they manage anger according to their anger style or way of responding to anger. Styles of anger often utilize various descriptive terminologies. It is noted that the “Anger Styles Quiz uses ten forms of anger an individual uses in processing anger. The ten forms or styles included in this quiz are as follows: anger avoidance, sneaky anger, paranoid anger, sudden anger, shame-based anger, deliberate anger, addictive anger, habitual anger, moral anger, and resentment hate.”<sup>306</sup> Fifty African American Adolescents, aged 13-18, participated in the portion of the survey. The results reflected in figure 2 Show the number of “yes” responses to the ten statements.



Figure 2. Anger Styles Results.

<sup>306</sup> Anger Management Resources, INC. “Anger Styles Questionnaire | Anger Management Canada,” n.d. <https://angermanagement.ca/activities/anger-styles-questionnaire/>.

### Results: Anger Styles

The questionnaire looks to identify the number of times the person agrees with certain statements, wherein every three statements identify with one of the ten styles. The breakdown of the statements, some of which seem to overlap, is as follows: statements 1-3 correspond with Anger Avoidance; statements 4-6 correspond with Sneaky or Passive Aggressive; statements 7-9 correspond with Paranoid; statements 10-12 correspond with Sudden Anger; statements 13-15 correspond with Shame-Based Anger; statements 16-18 correspond with Deliberate Anger; statements 19-21 correspond with Addictive Anger; statements 22-24 correspond with Habitual Anger; statements 25-27 correspond with Moral Anger; statements 28-30 correspond with Resentment/Hate. This section briefly discusses the ten anger styles, their definition, example, and how the participants in this study responded.

#### Anger Avoidance

Twelve, or 24%, of the fifty participants responded affirmatively to anger avoidance. There are at least two forms of anger avoidance, with emphasizes the avoidance. The two forms of anger avoidance, with place emphasis on avoidance, are repressed and suppressed anger. “Repressed anger is unintentionally avoided, often as an uncomfortable feeling related to stress, conflict, and tension, differentiating from suppressed anger, which refers to the feelings people *purposely* avoid.”<sup>307</sup> One the other hand suppressed anger “are those who are hesitant to admit their anger. They might feel they do not want to lower themselves to expresses anger.”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> “Repressed Anger: Signs, Causes, Treatments, & 8 Ways to Cope,” *Choosing Therapy*, January 28, 2021, accessed date, <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/repressed-anger/>.

<sup>308</sup> Liptak, John J, and Ester A Leutenberg. *Teen Anger Workbook: Facilitator Reproducible Self-Assessments, Exercises & Educational Handouts*. Duluth, Minn.: Whole Person, 2011, 64.



According to the Anger Style Quiz description, “Anger avoiders do not like anger much and are afraid of their anger and the anger of others. They are scared to get mad for fear of releasing a monster they cannot control.”

### Sneaky Anger

Thirteen, or 26%, of the fifty participants responded affirmatively to Sneaky Anger, more commonly known as Passive Aggression. Passive aggression is a “characteristic of seemingly innocuous, accidental, or neutral behavior that indirectly displays an aggressive unconscious motive.”<sup>309</sup> In other words, passive-aggressive behaviors is a form of sarcasm or purposeful neglect expressed toward others, but at the same time it slowly eats away at a person.

### Paranoid Anger

Six people, or 12%, of the fifty responded yes to those statements deemed to be scored as Paranoid Anger. “Paranoid Anger occurs when a person feels irrationally threatened by others. They think that everyone else is angry instead of acknowledging their rage. This type of anger exhibits suspicion, lack of trust, and jealousy as they guard what they believe they have, and poor judgment because they confuse their feelings with those of others.”<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> dictionary.apa.org. “APA Dictionary of Psychology.” Accessed August 6, 2023. <https://dictionary.apa.org/passive-aggressive>.

### Sudden Anger

Fifteen participants, or 30% of the fifty, responded yes to the Sudden Anger statements.

“People with sudden anger are like thunderstorms on a summer day. They zoom in from nowhere, blast everything in sight, and then vanish.”<sup>311</sup>

An example of this comes from one of the interview participants. A teacher in the classroom responded when asked if she had ever encountered an at-risk youth and described that encounter: “Yes, I have had many. One that comes to mind is a boy, age 10. When asked to do something he did not like, he tended to fly off in a rage and began yelling, flipping chairs, and throwing books and papers to the floor. Then, after cooling down in the school office, he seemed fine until the next episode of anger.”

### Shame-Based Anger

Thirteen, or 27%, of the fifty responded “yes” to statements considered Shame-Based Anger. It has been noted that, “Based on clinical observation, Lewis’s shame–rage theory posits that feelings of shame may instigate a seething, hostile type of anger described as humiliated fury. Lewis proposed that this is a defensive response to the powerlessness and defectiveness felt when experiencing shame.”<sup>312</sup> Referring to another interview participant, an educator commented on students' performance in the classroom with specific reference to the Black boy. They stated, “I have found that some male students act out in the classroom, getting mad, getting into a fight, due to being made fun of because they are unable to read well, the clothes they wear,

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<sup>311</sup> “Anger Styles Questionnaire.”

<sup>312</sup> H. B. Lewis, “Shame and Guilt in Neurosis,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 58, no. 3 (1971): 419–38, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/5150685/>.

or whatever. There is something that they feel ashamed of, and that makes them mad. They are at the age when their peers' opinion matters to them.”

### Deliberate Anger

Eighteen, or 36%, of the fifty responded “yes” to statements considered Deliberate Anger. The Anger Styles Questionnaire notes, “Deliberate anger is a planned thing. People who use anger this way usually know what they are doing. They enjoy controlling others; the best way is with anger and sometimes violence.”<sup>313</sup> Deliberate anger is often the style of a bully, who looks to use and terrorize others they consider weaker than them to get what they want.

### Addictive Anger

Nine people, 18%, of the fifty responded “yes” to statements under Addictive or Excitatory Anger. According to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, “Rage Disorder is any disturbance characterized by one or more episodes of extreme anger and aggression, such as any clinical disorder in which episodes of rage are a primary symptom such as intermittent explosive disorder.”<sup>314</sup> In other words, “rage is loss of control involving aggression or an act of violence.”<sup>315</sup> From this sample group, the numbers were lower regarding addictive anger. However, like any addiction, they want it and crave the rush of anger. One term, or syndrome, that is not an officially technical term is a “rageaholic.”

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<sup>313</sup> “Anger Styles Questionnaire.”

<sup>314</sup> *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, s.v. “rage disorder,” URL. “APA Dictionary of Psychology,” dictionary.apa.org, accessed August 6, 2023, <https://dictionary.apa.org/passive-aggressive>

<sup>315</sup> Clinton and Clark, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers*, pg. #.

Rageaholic often present with bullying behavior, physical aggression, or shouting. Their actions may be triggered without apparent reason but may include road rage, tantrums, fighting, or even domestic violence. Not only can rageaholic experience impaired health due to their anger, but their ability to maintain relationships, employment, and mental well-being can be affected as well.<sup>316</sup>

### Habitual Anger

Ten participants, 20% out of the fifty, responded “yes” to statements confirming Habitual Anger. This type of anger is a trap that many find themselves entangled in. The Anger Styles Questionnaire notes, “Anger can become a habit, wherein they get mad about little things that do not bother others. They wake up grumpy and looking for a fight. They are always in a state of anger. They cannot get close to people they love because their anger keeps them away.”

### Moral Anger

Fifteen, or 30%, of the participants responded “yes” to the statements confirming Moral Anger. This style is a very intriguing type. Righteous indignation would fit in this category. Those inclined to struggle with moral anger exclusively are crusaders of their belief system. The Anger Styles Questionnaire notes, “They do not feel guilty when angered; they feel that their anger is for a worthy cause; even consider themselves superior to others amid their anger. Moreover, they fail to understand people who think differently and are different from themselves.”<sup>317</sup> As the adage goes, “it is their way or the highway,” or else one withstands the worst of their anger.

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<sup>316</sup> Choosing Therapy. “Rageaholic: Definition, Signs, & Treatments,” June 30, 2021. <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/rageaholic/>.

<sup>317</sup> Yumpu.com. “ANGER MANAGEMENT ANGER STYLES QUIZ.” yumpu.com. Accessed August 9, 2023, 2. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/11631573/anger-management-anger-styles-quiz>.

### Hate/Resentment

Thirty, or 60%, of the fifty males responded “yes” to statements believed to be Hate or Resentment style of anger. This style was the most notable in that it had the highest affirmative responses. In other words, these young men, according to the quiz, indicated an inclination toward having this hate style of anger. According to the Anger Styles Questionnaire,

Hate is hardened anger. The characteristics include resentment toward others whom they feel have wronged them. Therefore, that person becomes totally bad. Forgiveness is impossible, and the hater vows to despise the offender and make them pay. Hate starts as anger that never gets resolved. Then it turns into resentment.<sup>318</sup>

One example is the issue of the absentee father repeatedly coming up during the in-depth interviews as one cause for the emotional well-being of young men. This writer can attest that many young African American man grew up without a father. Their mothers did their best but were unable to be fathers too. Some of these young men developed deep, angry resentment toward their fathers. This resentment may have been due to their fathers not being there. Another form of an absentee father is when he is physically present but not emotionally available to them, such as the father’s career or job dominating their time. Another cause for resentment stemming from fatherly neglect is verbal or physical abuse.

Numerous studies and in-depth interviews often raise the lack of a father's presence in the home. Two participants shared their experiences. Participant BB stated, “I only saw my father a couple of times, then when in my teens, I heard he had died. I did not feel anything. How could I? I did not even know the man. Growing up, I saw other kids with their dads and wished my father were around for me.” Another participant, CC, shared his experience with an alcoholic

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<sup>318</sup> “Anger Styles Questionnaire.”

father: “My father made things a living hell. When he came, he was drunk, and it was miserable; he would beat and abuse my mother, brothers, sisters, and me. I found myself having to deal with some heavy anger and even went through therapy.”

What is the rationale for using the Anger Styles Questionnaire? There are two reasons for implementing the Anger Styles Quiz and Questionnaire in this project. First, this tool helps point out and confirm that these young men are dealing with anger in various ways. In other words, it is a verification that they are naturally aware of the emotion of anger. According to the presenting questionnaire, the top three anger styles reported are hate and resentment (30 – 60%), moral anger (15 - 30%), and deliberate anger (18 – 36%). This tool only suggests one’s tendencies toward a specific style of anger. In other words, it proposes ways or methods of how a person reacts to anger. Youths are in a critical developmental stage; these young men must experience so much in their young lives. Regrettably, many of these boys and young men never reach adulthood. Learning how to manage their anger healthily is an essential step toward maturity.

One might ask what is so important about a person's anger style. Another reason for using the Anger Styles Quiz or Questionnaire is because it and a few other behavioral tools can be of value in identifying a person's anger inclination. This tool can assist counselors and clients in understanding why they react the way they do when they experience anger. Many descriptive lists overlap or are variations of such tools. One such tool is the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory for children and adolescents.

The inventory is a

35-item self-report that assesses state and trait anger, expression, and control. This inventory's purpose is to allow an individual to examine important dimensions that facilitate the evaluation of children and youth with specific problem behaviors. In a word,

a diagnostic tool used to distinguish temporary anger states from more trait-like or enduring conditions.

The Anger Styles Quiz is a simple format that, although not as conclusive, helps bring about an awareness of how and why personal anger is expressed. Moreover, an understanding of anger style helps to clear up misperceptions on the part of many “who only view anger as presenting itself exclusively as yelling and violent behavior. Anger is a feeling, and an emotion, which can be a conduit leading to a positive outcome, or an entrapment leading to despair with negative impact health-wise.”<sup>319</sup>

Therefore, “the treatment of anger, like anxiety, is not to eliminate anger but to help people recognize when it results from erroneous thinking. Although we do not have complete control over our emotions or the thoughts that pop up in our heads, we control how we respond to those thoughts and feelings.”<sup>320</sup> Thus, knowing this information goes a long way in helping someone, in this case, a young African American male who struggles with anger, manage his anger healthily and productively.

Unhealthy, out-of-control anger or rage and the behaviors that often follow are the effects of one's anger. However, it is essential to understand the causes of factors that trigger such emotions as anger.

### Unhealthy Anger

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<sup>319</sup> “10 Types of Anger: What is Your Anger Style? | Life Supports Counselling,” [lifesupportscounselling.com.au](https://lifesupportscounselling.com.au/resources/blogs/10-types-of-anger-what-s-your-anger-style/), February 17, 2019, <https://lifesupportscounselling.com.au/resources/blogs/10-types-of-anger-what-s-your-anger-style/>.

<sup>320</sup> Leslie Sokol and Marci G. Fox, *The Comprehensive Clinician's Guide to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* (Eau Claire, WI: PESI, 2019), 151.

As these African American adolescent males navigate their way toward adulthood, they encounter many challenges. Not every young Black man has anger issues, but those that do are significant in number, making it worth discussing. Those who grapple with anger management tend to express their anger negatively and, by doing so, tend to display that anger in abusive and addictive means, such as poor school performance or school dropout, turning to violent crimes, gang participation, use of illicit drugs, sexual promiscuity, teen pregnancy, poor emotional and physical health, self-harm, and suicide.

This section addresses the causes or factors that influence the behavior of these young men as they formulate their identities with the view toward positive outcomes in an often hostile environment. In a presentation on PVEST, an identity formation for marginalized youth, Spencer maintains that “perception matters, but context is critical. The context is the sources of stress, risk factors, and discomfort that represent the youth's development and perceptions and self-appraisals used by individuals in their identity formation.”<sup>321</sup> This is the context in which people must be understood to be helped. Therefore, it becomes necessary to look at the environment in which they live.

### **Environmental Cultural Challenges**

The five stages (Figure 3) incorporated into this study for consideration are risk contributors, stress management, reactive coping methods, stable coping responses, and life-stage outcomes and coping products. Based on this study, these five areas helped form a profile of an at-risk African American adolescent male.

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<sup>321</sup> Youtube, PVEST, 2020.



### Risk Contributors

The first stage is the risk contributors, stressors, or factors, wherein the at-risk African American adolescent male attempts to come to grips with his “identity, self-appraisal, how others view him, and how he will respond to the stereotypes and biases placed upon them by society.”<sup>322</sup> This study is based on the at-risk African American adolescent male in the prime of their identity formation as emerging adults residing predominantly in urban areas. A significant segment of this population, often ignored and condemned, is wrestling with certain emotions that often evolve into anger as they attempt to navigate through the daily hassles of life.

### Stress Management

It was noted that specific underlying stressors are both symptoms and causes of the problem. Descriptive adjectives such as disproportionate and disparities continue to appear regarding the treatment of people of color. To reiterate, one must face certain socio-environmental stress factors of daily living. However, at-risk African American males often resort to maladaptive rather than adaptive coping methods to solve their problems.<sup>323</sup> Therefore, the risk contributors in their case set them up for adverse behavior and negative health outcomes. This makes them susceptible to stressors such as racism, facing the academic achievement gap, academic self-concept, school disconnect, lack of parental involvement, negative peer influence, the search for identity, contact with the Criminal Justice System, aggression, hypermasculinity,

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<sup>322</sup> Spencer, “Old issues, and New Theorizing for Health,” pg. #.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., pg. #.

identity formation, and nihilism. If not appropriately managed, these stressful factors can turn into anger or rage while disguising themselves in a wide range of primary emotions. This fact was supported by views offered in the in-depth and youth surveys. Many young men of color cannot express their anger healthily and resort to unhealthy and potentially destructive behaviors as coping methods.

### Reactive Coping Methods

The two forms of problem-solving are “adaptive and manipulative.”<sup>324</sup> It was noted that not all African American men and boys have trouble controlling their anger. Many are learning to manage their anger healthily, mainly through a “good healthy environment and support system, and adaptive coping, self-acceptance, and interpersonal confidence.”<sup>325</sup> However, some have resorted to what Spencer calls “manipulative coping methods.”<sup>326</sup> The Social Respect Scale aims to assess an individual’s attitudes toward respect and help them manage their concerns about resorting to violence. Revealed aspects of manipulation methods such as intimidation or fear, the threat of retaliation, hyper-masculinity, being a man or their idea of what being a man might be, gang membership, controlling another for one’s advantage, temper tantrums, and explosive anger are a few examples of manipulative solution strategies.

Whereas there are negative and positive aspects to reactive coping and solutions to corrective problem-solving, the following point is proactive.

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<sup>324</sup> Spencer, “Old issues, and New Theorizing for Health,” pg. #.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., pg. #.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., pg. #.

### Stabile Coping Responses/Emergent Identity

A combination of culturally relevant goals, perceived, and available sources for stability in coping is important to an emerging identity. Stevenson mentions five elements of identity formation: “possessing a cultural and ethnic identity, a healthy sex role, strong self-efficacy, a stable personal identity, and access to available support systems.”<sup>327</sup> All these are essential to healthy development and potentially provide stability in a young person’s life. Having access to available support systems is critical and has the potential to help young emerging adults develop healthily. Hence the ability to do so equips youths to face the daily hassles of life successfully.

The critical element to healthy development includes positive “support systems, which includes the family unit, the school, the community.”<sup>328</sup> The exception is that this study emphasizes the Church as a community of people within the larger community. The Church a vital part of community, hence it has the potential to be valuable resource to the local community.

### Life Stages Outcomes/Coping Products

Once again, the focus of this project is on at risk African American Adolescent males, aged 12-18, who are marked by role and identity confusion. It is suggested that identity confusion is one cause leading to possible anger issues in these young men. There are two relative outcomes: “behavior and health, physical and mental.”<sup>329</sup> Concerning destructive and

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<sup>327</sup> Stevenson, *Playing with Anger*, 5-6.

<sup>328</sup> Spencer, “Old issues, and New Theorizing for Health,” .

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #.

addictive behaviors in at-risk African American male adolescents, concern for positive outcomes should be a priority. For example, people who cannot control their anger tend to react adversely in their coping mechanisms, such as a “judication, mental and emotional illness, poor physical health, lack of intimacy.”<sup>330</sup> On the other hand, those who have learned, or learning under a good sound system, how to manage their anger tend to exhibit healthy traits, such as “competence, good health, mental and physical, and healthy relationships.”<sup>331</sup>

The in-depth interviews and two surveys, the African American Respect Scale and The Urban Hassles Scale, suggest addressing specific causes and factors that may trigger negative behaviors in African American Adolescent males dealing with anger issues. To be more precise, “research drawing from a variety of disciplines, analyzing factors that place certain individuals at a more significant risk than others. In this case, African American males are at greater risk due to environmental and cultural influences.”<sup>332</sup> It is important to reiterate that daily hassles are not unique to any cultural, racial, or gender group, and neither is the struggle to control one’s anger. One model, the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Model, suggests that “people’s emotions, body responses, and behaviors are influenced by their perception of events. In other words, it is not the situation or event, but the interpretation of the situation that drives the distress,”<sup>333</sup> and in this case, emotions such as out-of-control anger.

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<sup>330</sup> Margaret B. Spencer, “A Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST): A Self-Organization Perspective in Context,” *Development and Psychopathology* 9, no. 4 (December 1997): 817–33. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0954579497001454>.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Kayla M. Gass and Judson C. Laughter, “‘Can I Make Any Difference?’ Gang Affiliation, the School-To-Prison Pipeline, and Implications for Teachers,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 84, no. 3 (2015): 333, <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.84.3.0333>.

<sup>333</sup> Sokol and Fox, *The Comprehensive Clinician’s Guide to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 1-3.

The uniqueness lies in the causes and factors experienced as the individual attempts to understand and navigate his immediate environment. The interpretation of these conditions tends to precipitate anger expressions based on “automatic thoughts which influence feelings, how our body responds and behavior.”<sup>334</sup> In other words, “many factors as antecedents to or moderators of anger experience such as the perception of threat to an injustice against oneself.”<sup>335</sup> Before implementing a plan of action, the Church and the community must obtain a degree of awareness and understanding of such causes or factors contributing to unhealthy anger.

Therefore, “efforts to counter behaviors viewed as injurious—whether dropping out of school, selling drugs, or engaging in violent behavior must include measures to comprehend the logic and motivations behind the behavior. The only way to change behavioral outcomes is to understand the cognitive processes influencing how individuals adapt, cope, and respond.”<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Sokol and Fox, *The Comprehensive Clinician’s Guide to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 1-3.

<sup>335</sup> Aire Mill et al., “The Role of Co-Occurring Emotions and Personality Traits in Anger Expression,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (February 9, 2018): pg. #, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00123>.

<sup>336</sup> Gass and Laughter, “Can I Make Any Difference?” pg. #.

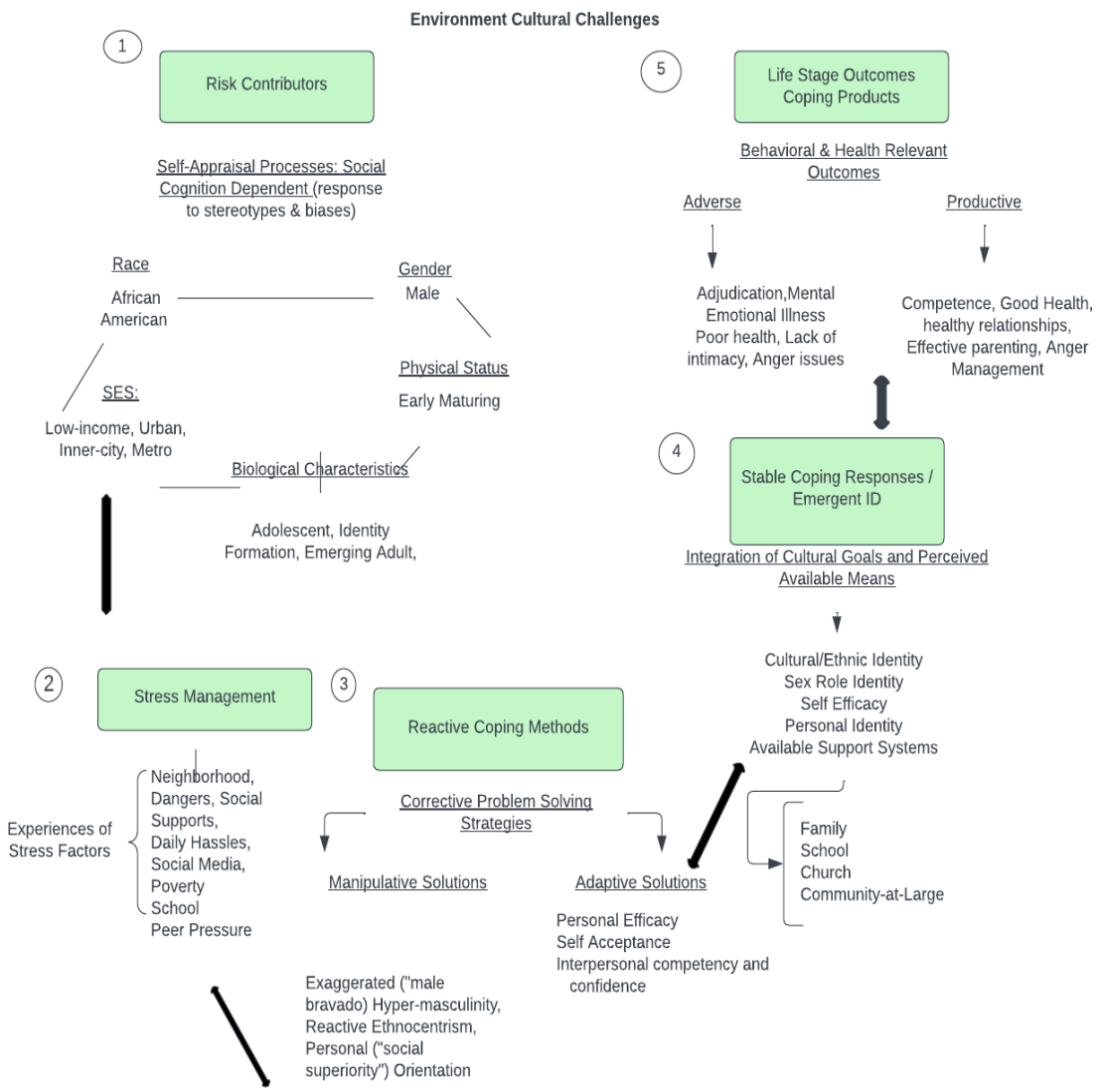


Figure 3. A Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST).

The data collected from the research tools employed in this project supports the belief that there is a strong “connection between the environment and mental health. The places where one spends a lot of time, such as home, work, school, and even socially—can significantly

impact a person's mental well-being."<sup>337</sup> These are known in the area of "psychology as environmental factors of mental health."<sup>338</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control,

mental health pertains to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we manage stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is essential at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.<sup>339</sup>

It is with this in mind concerning at risk African American male adolescents and their inability to manage their anger.

The African American Respect Scale emphasized the feeling of being respected. Joy DeGruy et al. noted, "The issue of respect among contemporary African American male youth is important. The level of respect they feel contributes to their sense of psychological well-being and their social identity; it is also critical for their feelings of safety, recognition, and acceptance"<sup>340</sup> within their community structure. The instrument used is comprised of twenty statements, wherein the participants, a total of fifty young men, with the average age of 16 years, were to read each statement and respond by selecting the one that best describes their attitude toward each statement. The four responses available to them were: 0 = never or strongly disagree; 1 = sometimes or disagree; 2 = often or agree; and 3 = very often or strongly agree.

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<sup>337</sup> Sara Lindberg, "How Your Environment Affects Your Mental Health," *Verywell Mind*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-your-environment-affects-your-mental-health-5093687>.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "About Mental Health," June 28, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>.

<sup>340</sup> Joy DeGruy et al., "Racial Respect and Racial Socialization as Protective Factors for African American Male Youth," *Journal of Black Psychology* 38, no. 4 (December 6, 2011): 395–420, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798411429744>.

	Statements
1	It is hard to get any appreciation as a Black man.
2	The police trust and appreciate me.
3	African Americans are highly regarded in America.
4	I am valued and appreciated by my teachers.
5	Salespeople are happy to help me when I come into their stores.
6	I have a good chance of getting good jobs I qualify for.
7	Someone can offend me just by the way they look at me.
8	When I am at a bank or other places, businesspeople are helpful and pleasant.
9	I admire my family.
10	I listen to and appreciate the guidance my parents give me.
11	I am proud of my family's achievements.
12	My father is a good role model.
13	My family admires and appreciates me.
14	People treat me well because they are afraid of me.
15	No one will respect you unless you demand it.
16	A girl appreciates a man that takes control.
17	People will admire me if I have expensive things.
18	I may try and hurt someone if they embarrass me in front of people.
19	If someone curses at a family member, I might hurt them.
20	You can get respect if you are in a gang.

Figure 4. African American Adolescent Respect Scale.

The research instrument identifies three critical environmental influences on African American adolescent males: familial influences, societal influences, and their peer groups.

### Family Influences

The family structure has been under attack in recent years by internal and external forces. Even the very definition of family is under fire. Kenton Bell writes,

No definition can encapsulate such a dynamic term, but the underlying theme is sharing resources and responsibilities among the members, such as living together, pooling economic resources, and caring for the young. Additionally, the domestic group is sometimes used as a replacement for family and even household because it is less problematic.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>341</sup> Kenton Bell, s.v. "family," *Open Education Sociology Dictionary*, April 18, 2013. <https://sociologydictionary.org/family>.



Hicks adds, “The family unit, home, is vital to nurturing each family member, especially our children and youth, wherein it is the first and most important agency of socialization. In other words, the youth's first exposure to the world occurs within the family.”<sup>342</sup> Therefore, the “items in the scale were developed to address the family sphere of influence looks at the issue of esteem as it relates to membership within the family.”

The results from this project’s sampling of fifty African American Adolescent males were in keeping with the assumption as to the importance of the family unit. This section of the African American Adolescent Respect Scale (AAARS) was the only section with no reverse-scored items, which is shown in Figure 8.

#	Never	Sometimes	Often	-Very Often
9	-	10%	20%	70%
10	-	16%	14%	70%
11	30%	10%	20%	40%
12	24%	20%	22%	34%
13	24%	20%	24%	32%

Figure 5. The African American Adolescent Respect Scale, Family Respect Subscale.

### Societal Influences

A society “is an organized group of people living together as community members distinguishable by aims, standards of living, or conduct. A community is a grouping of people who follow a societal structure involving religion, morals, customs, values, and certain historical

<sup>342</sup> Hicks, *Hidden in the Shadow of Truth*, 25.

foundational backgrounds.”<sup>343</sup> Hence, a society is composed of multiple communities centered around particular “actions, places, circumstances, interests, and practices”<sup>344</sup> with a historical and cultural background.

Therefore, in keeping with the aim of this paper and the results of the presenting research, it is vital to identify a specific demographical segment of the African American community, which is the at-risk African American adolescent male and the influences of society at large. Thus, “this domain measures two things. The first degree is if the adolescent felt respected when integrating with institutions such as businesses, public and private agencies, or organizations. Secondly, it measures the degree to which the adolescent felt respected as an African American within the general culture.”

#	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1		20%	54%	26%
2	78%	22%		
3	30%	34%	16%	20%
4	24%	28%	30%	26%
5	24%	20%	30%	26%
6	2%	78%	11%	
7	48%	24%	20%	8%
8	22	35%	20%	24%

Figure 6. Societal Respect Subscale.

<sup>343</sup> “Difference between Community and Society,” [www.differencebetween.info](http://www.differencebetween.info), December 4, 2013, <https://www.differencebetween.info/difference-between-community-and-society#:~:text=Society%20means%20the%20number%20of%20people%20living%20in>.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

### Peer Influence

Of all the environmental influences on young people,

the influence from their peer group is the only nonadult initiated socialization agency. Peer groups are important to a youth's social development in several ways. Social interaction of this type helps them learn cooperation, competition, and how to defend themselves. Furthermore, it involves self-expression, aid in their exploration of the world around them independent of parents, as well as establishing a friendship, and how to deal with conflict.<sup>345</sup>

Hence, this set of statements in this subscale “reflect how youth might assert a need to demand respect inclusive of the use of aggression or intimidation. The Peer Respect subscale scale items are reverse scored to reflect the lack of perceived respect resulting in readiness to act aggressively towards peers to control their potentially disrespectful behavior.”

#### Peer Respect Subscales

#	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
14	50%	20%	12%	18%
15	36%	20%	20%	24%
16	2%	40%	20%	38%
17	24%	30%	40%	6%
18	12%	18%	30%	40%
19	8%	34%	18%	40%
20	18%	14%	6%	62%

Figure 7. Peer Respect Subscales.

<sup>345</sup> Hicks, *Hidden in the Shadow of Truth*, 72-73.

The AAARS aims to help young men of color “asses their attitudes toward respect and assist them in managing respect without resorting to violence.”<sup>346</sup> There were no right or wrong answers, and the participants were told as such. However, an assessment must be made of the level of one’s respect. Joy Leary, Eileen Brennan, and Harold Briggs note, “The concern that African American youth feel promotes psychological wellness and social identity; conversely, a lack of respect compromises their identities and is viewed as a threat to safety.” This project aimed to evaluate the level of respect of each participant regarding each area of environmental influence, as seen in figure 4. For starters, built into the African American Respect Scale are nine “reverse-scored items,” where agree represents an antisocial attitude or belief about respect. Figure 8 reflects how these sample groups responded to the reverse items for this project. The nine statements are included in two of the subscales. The social respect subscale numbers 1, 6, and 7 and peer respect subscale numbers 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 represent tendencies toward aggressive or violent behaviors. The two responses, often (or agree) and very often (or strongly agree), were combined for scoring purposes since both agreed with the statement.

<b>Social Respect Subscale</b>	Often/Agree-Very Often Strongly Agree	
1 It is hard to get any appreciation as a Black man.	80%	
6 I have a good chance to get a good job I qualify for.	11%	
7 Someone can offend me just by looking at me.	28%	
<b>Peer Respect Subscale</b>		
14 People treat me well because they are afraid of me.	30%	
16 A girl appreciates a man that takes control.	58%	
17 People will admire me if I have expensive things	46%	

<sup>346</sup> Joy D. Leary, Eileen M. Brennan, and Harold E. Briggs, “The African American Adolescent Respect Scale: A Measure of a Prosocial Attitude,” *Research on Social Work Practice* 15, no. 6 (November 2005): 462–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731505277717>.

18 I may try and hurt someone if they embarrass me in front of people.	70%	
19 If someone curses at a family member, I might hurt them.	58%	
20 You can get respect if you are in a gang.	68%	

Figure 8. Results from the reverse stated items from the African American Respect Scale.

From the response to these nine items, it becomes clear that their perception of feeling respected is vitally important to their sense of personhood, and when that respect is violated, it can lead to aggressive tendencies. The highest-scoring responses dealt with perceived threats that could trigger aggression and anger leading to violent behaviors.

First, statement number one, dealing with the difficulty of gaining appreciation as a Black man, had the most significant response. Eighty percent of the participants responded by indicating that this statement is true. This shows his racial and cultural identity. The individual identifies as a young Black man who recognizes that he lives in a society with cultural bias and stereotypical imagery of men of color. In other words, it indicates the individual's perception of how they see themselves by how society perceives them.

Second is being on the receiving end of embarrassment, of which 70% of the participants responded that they agreed with this statement. In other words, the information described how they are prone to react in a comparable situation. Leary, Brennan, and Briggs stated, "some African American youth adopt artificial symbols of dominance such as violence as a means of reinforcing cognitive distortions and unworkable images of respect and success."<sup>347</sup> An adult participant in the in-depth interviews shared their experience as a school counselor:

One young man, a fifth grader, carried a chip on his shoulder. He intimidated the other students with his size. He was big for his age and had been kept back one grade; he intimidated other kids by bullying them. He felt that he had to use force to get what he wanted. In his own words, he once beat another student for laughing at him when asked

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<sup>347</sup> Leary, Brennan, and Briggs, "The African American Adolescent Respect Scale,"

to read in class. He was heard to say that he was nobody's punk. It was later discovered that he had difficulty with reading.

Thirdly, over half, sixty-eight percent, of the participants responded in the affirmative to the statement: "You can get respect if you are in a gang." It is unknown how many of the sample groups are affiliated with gangs. Still, it is known that part of Metro Atlanta is known for gang activity and violence involving adolescent males.

Fourthly, more than half, fifty-eight percent, responded by often selecting "a girl appreciates a man that takes control," indicating that they believed this to be true. It would be pure speculation to attempt to define what this statement means. Nevertheless, this survey is not a discussion group but a survey, and it cannot be determined how the young male participants interpreted it. However, one potential area among young Black male development is his characteristics of masculinity. Countless young Black men struggle in this area as emerging adults and often confuse what it means to be a man and take on what Hicks calls a "warped sense of manhood."<sup>348</sup> This misunderstanding, misguided, and artificial image of male adulthood and Black males are fraught with stereotypical ideology. One such message often accepted is that sexual dominance or control is essential to being a man. Destructive elements of toxic masculinity have influenced many young men of color, wherein young emerging adult males behave in how they feel expected of them. Their behavioral expectations are perpetuated by all levels of influence, primarily through the media's negative stereotyping and imaging of young Black men.

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<sup>348</sup> Hicks, *Hidden in the Shadow*, 130.

This Respect Scale statement indicates learned behavior with possible adverse and abusive consequential outcomes. The next question is what role the Church can play as a support system to help this African American community segment.

### **The Church's Response**

The African American Church has long been a strong proponent of civil rights and other societal issues. However, a study among American pastors of various denominations reveals many concerns about the Church's effectiveness in the wider community. Some of the major concerns are "a watered-down Gospel (72%); being equipped to address complex social issues with biblical integrity (58%); the diminished influence of Church in the community (45%); negative reputations of the Church (40%)."<sup>349</sup>

Agents of redemptive hope seemed a fitting lead into this last thematic section, wherein the attempt is to determine how the local church can partner, as an agent and advocate, with their local community in addressing issues that affect the community. In other words, the Church ought to be about engaging with people living within the Church's sphere of influence. The majority of those interviewed for this project expressed concern as to how effective it is in the world today. This involves self-examination on the part of the Church. As stated earlier in this paper, in the past the Church did not shy away from addressing social ills. On the contrary this Church often leads the way as the vehicle to social change. The presenting argument derives from the fact that many young African American males struggle to deal with their anger in healthy, non-threatening, and non-destructive ways to themselves and others.

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<sup>349</sup> "What's on the Minds of America's Pastors," Barna Group, February 3, 2020, date accessed, [https://www.barna.com/research/whats\\_on\\_mind\\_americas\\_pastors/](https://www.barna.com/research/whats_on_mind_americas_pastors/).

Therefore, since this is a valid issue facing society, and the Church is an essential part of society, what should the Church's response be to this problem? The question posed to each participant was as follows: "In your opinion, what ought the Church's response be in the helping process of helping African American adolescent males learn how to manage their anger in positive, non-destructive ways?" The feedback from the thirty-six participants varied from simple speculation to heavy opinion. From this question, three concerns emerged: the Church engaging the community, the Churches image, and Church-initiated programs and activities.

### The Church Engaging the Community

The first concern deals with one's perception of the Church. Two ideas of Church engagement became apparent during the interviews. First, out of the thirty-six participants, ten spoke of the Church as more of a place, an institution with a geographical location. Participant A3 commented: "We need to get them into the Church where we can pray for them, provide training, and teach them the Word of God." Another interviewee confessed, "I do not know what the Church can do to help these young men. These young men and their families need to be invited to Church. We need to get them to Church."

Participant B3 said that "the door of the Church needs to be open where the people feel safe and can get help. We need to get them into the Church." Participant C3, a school counselor, said, "I see so many of our Black boys full of anger and acting out in class. We must reach the parents and these young men and get them into Church." Finally, a comment comes from Participant E3, a juvenile department worker:

The Church can offer mentoring programs. I encounter so many of these troubled young men and their parents. I can usually tell the difference between those parents who attend church and those who do not. Those parents who go to Church, I do not see their kids



again come through the juvenile system. The problem is how to get these kids involved, and the key to connecting them and their parents with the Church.

However, the alternative view of the Church engaging the community came from one participant, who is a community leader, volunteer, and active member of a local congregation. They staunchly stated, “The Church should go out to the masses, to reach out to those in need. The Church cannot help them if they do not seek them out.” Twenty-one out of thirty-six participants felt that the Church had the responsibility to engage their wider community “by meeting these troubled teens where they are, in their environment.” Still, another interviewee said “that the Church needs to get involved in the inner city, where many of these at-risk kids live, and not just leave it to the government.” Most of the group spoke of “outreach,” in one form or another, whether it is bringing the people to the Church or the Church going to the people. Engaging people is vital in helping to collaborate with the broader community to address societal problems. However, there is another issue that arose, and that is how the Church is viewed by society.

### The Church’s Image

There was some concern, expressed by five of those interviewed, that merits recognition and that is a perception of the Church. In a word, what is the state of how the Church is viewed by society, its reputation, and a preparedness to address and respond to such apprehensive feelings?

Participant E3 responded, “Growing up as a troubled teenaged boy myself, I feel that the Church can help by not being so judgmental and in some ways condemning.” One church leader maintains that “the Church can often do more harm than good in trying to help troubled teens in

the right way and needs to learn how and when to refer them to trained persons outside the Church. We need to know our limitations. Besides, Christians are considered full of judgmental angry people.”

An interviewee made this statement about the Church helping young men of color learn how to manage their anger:

The Church has been given a bad rap, and due to media coverage over the years, the trust level may not be what it once was, and many of these young men are reluctant to trust the Church for help. We, the Church, must be willing, honest, and frank about wanting to help. We can be effective by utilizing the in-church folk and outside the Church, and the Pastor must be real.

Still, another participant replied, “The Church must use caution when working in the community. They need not be judgmental and condemning because many have negative feelings toward the Church.”

The in-depth interview participants responded by offering many suggestions concerning what the Church can do or showing young African American males struggling with anger.

#### Church-Initiated Programs and Activities

Thirty-four of those interviewed said that the at-risk African American adolescent males needed guidance and that the Church could facilitate such guidance and help. “Youth need someone who will take the time to listen to them, spend quality time with them, and so often such care is lacking in the lives of many young men,” said one interviewee. Another participant mentioned another aspect of this problem, which is the issue of gang involvement: “Our young Black men do not get the positive guidance from those who are supposed to love and care for them. However, if they do not get it, they will find false, imitative support elsewhere.” This agrees with Tune. He stated “that gangs offer a false sense of protection, family, community,

encouragement, and support. Communities of faith can and have proven the ability to meet these needs for both young and old. As the church seeks to be relevant in the world, leaders must pay attention to what is happening around them and consider what youth are drawn to.”<sup>350</sup>

The interview results revealed five potential areas in the Church that can be instrumental in collaborating with the broader community in addressing the issue of helping at-risk young men of color manage their anger healthily. The first area is a mentoring program for young Black men. Some interviews referred to the program as a leadership program held on the Church grounds, such as an after-school program. “All these young men need to know is that someone cares about them and is willing to listen to them and not be judgmental,” replied one participant.

The second area listed was for the Church to help with counseling by going into the community centers, schools, and church facilities as meeting places. An interesting comment from a pastor suggested that “the church could draw for its the people resources from within the membership to provide training and staffing lay counselors—one word of caution. The Church, its pastor, and other leadership must have a plan. The plan is to know when to make referrals in cases where professional help is needed, or they can worsen matters.”

The third area noted was athletics or similar activity where the Church could engage its community in various volunteers and other supportive roles. One interviewee commented, “I remember so well my experiences at Camp Cedine. That is a Christian outreach camp retreat for inner Tennessee for inner city teenagers. We had all sorts of things to do, along with Bible

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<sup>350</sup> HuffPost. “Gang Violence: How the Church Can Help,” August 10, 2010. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gang-violence-how-the-chu\\_b\\_675327](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gang-violence-how-the-chu_b_675327).

teachings. I was a kid full of anger when that little church came and invited my brother and me to go camping with them.”

The next area was Bible study groups geared toward addressing the needs of troubled youth. One interview participant noted,

Growing up in the southeast, Reynolds Town, Atlanta, Ga, was rough. The thing that helped me make it as a teenager was Stewart Baptist Center, now the Andrew P. Stewart Center. Every Thursday, they had a Bible study for teens. I started going there for the refreshments because the center directors, a married couple, lived out their faith and were interested in us. We even had a basketball team for boys, but you had to come to the Bible study, which was okay with us.

Another adult participant said, “If we are to be the Church, then we cannot forget the Bible. We must let these young men know that God can make a way and turn their lives around for the better.”

Finally, the last suggestion was family enrichment. The majority of the thirty-six adults interviewed emphasized working with families. One said, “We need to get the families. Have workshops for single mothers and fathers in child-rearing. We need to work with the families of these young men. Go into the schools with them and, if necessary, the juvenile hall.”

## Conclusion

The inspiration for this study comes from a combination of the researchers' experiences in Church Planting ministry in inner city of Atlanta, GA, serving with the Church and Community clusters, counseling families during the missing and murdered children era of the '80s, and serving in youth ministry and pastoral work in Atlanta's inner cities for over twenty years.

The eventuality of the Black Lives Matter and the recent rise of gang activity and school violence among this age group in Atlanta, GA, is grounds for concern for youth. Therefore, considering the thesis statement, the primary research questions raise implications resulting in some recommendations. These recommendations and suggestions were based on the conclusions and purpose of the study, thereby offering suggestions for further research, insights into what could have been done differently, and a suggestive plan of action for the Church.

The subject matter concerning adolescent males as reflected in the title of this paper, "Agents of Redemptive Hope: Churches and Communities Addressing the Problem of Anger and the African American Adolescent Male," is a vitally significant undertaking. The task was challenging and at times elusive; challenging due to the many interruptions that hindered progress toward the completion of this project, which this researcher was determined to complete; elusive in that although much has been written and researched concerning the subject matter, at times, such research could only barely touch the surface. For example, very little is mentioned about the role of the local church as a possible link to helping address such social issues. So, for clarification, the title breaks down into four phrases.

Three phrases or descriptive parts of this title are the foundation for this project. First are the agents of redemptive hope. The term agents convey the concept of a support system, a vital

life force of any society “composed of a network of people friends, family, peers, school and the local Church; whose purpose is to provide emotional and practical support.”<sup>351</sup> The proposition is that the Church should be an initiator and leader in cooperation with their community for a common cause to redirect those headed toward a negative life outcome and instill hope for a brighter future. The notion of redemptive hope has to do with helping the purpose for these members of an often-vulnerable segment of society: young, Black, emerging adult males who have difficulty handling anger positively, which leads to destructive and addictive behaviors.

Secondly, it dealt with the cooperation between the Church and the broader community as a support system. One interview participant made this statement:

The youth are being hijacked. Every day they question their safety as they deal with metal detectors, bag searches, K9, drug-sniffing dogs, school violence, one form or another, and police presence. The streets have become even more brutal, and home life is not what it used to be. Nowadays, it is not just the streets that are raising our youth. Now they are being raised and influenced by social media. We, the parents, teachers, and other adults need help, even from the Church.

More and more youths are getting hold of guns and using them; gang activity, school violence, bullying, depression, and suicide rates have risen among this age group in Atlanta, GA. This became evident during the interviews. The interviewees were asked a two-part question. First, should the Church get involved? The second question was, how should the Church get involved? To the first part of the question, the majority responded yes. The Church ought to be actively involved. However, most of the interviewees could not give a definitive answer as to how the Church can help.

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<sup>351</sup> “Society Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary,” [www.britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/society), n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/society>.

Thirdly is the issue of anger among at risk African American male adolescence who have poor, unhealthy, anger management skills, wherein many often turn to violence, and either harm themselves and others. Furthermore, it was suggested that certain factors tend to contribute, or provoke anger or rage. Some of the factors mentioned were environmental factors, breakdown of the support system, identity confusion, racism, lack of a healthy relationship, a lack of mentoring from the biological father (e.g., absentee father, abusive relationship), negative peer relationships. These factors are vital and must be changed from the negative to the positive if these young men are to have a positive life outcome.

An additional statement came from a Pastor interviewee who related this encounter. "I received a booklet from a family member, who was a publisher," he said. "It was a book written by a now middle-aged adult male relating his life story. One statement in his story stuck out in my mind," the pastor said. "The story went like this: " said the pastor. "This father left home while the man was a teenager. His father was abusive. "Now, here is the part that got me," the pastor said. "At the age of 17 years old, he prayed. Please send me someone to teach me how to be a man." That is what this is all about. The Church can get out of its comfort zone and engage the community, helping young men struggling to handle anger and all the other emotions that come with it.

In considering the thesis statement, primary research questions raised implications resulting in recommendations. These recommendations and suggestions were based on the conclusions and purpose of the study, thereby offering suggestions for further research, insights into what could have been done differently, and a suggestive plan of action for the church.

### **Overview of the Study**

The thesis statement for this study maintains the following: a significant number of at-risk African American adolescent male's struggle with anger issues leading to a life of abusive and addictive behaviors. The question is how the Church should help address this problem by identifying the causes of this anger. This paper argues that the Church must reach out, with the compassion of the gospel, to the young Black males who are having difficulty dealing with anger to ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong and stable Black men.

From this comes the following primary questions, which are twofold. First, to what degree is anger the cause or motivator for destructive and addictive behaviors among at-risk African American adolescent males? Second, what measures can the Church take in cooperating with the community by addressing this problem for the good of these young men and the community? With these research questions in mind, the four chapters of this paper attempted to accomplish four things: thoroughly examine the presenting problem, evaluate a sampling of the literature utilized in the study, explain the methods and tools used, and present the results and offer recommendations.

First, thoroughly examining the presenting problem was necessary to understand the issue's extent. Spenser's PVEST Environmental Cultural Challenges chart (Figure 3) was instrumental in this study. Trying to make sense of one's surroundings and one's place and part in it as an emerging adult, being considered at-risk, and having a rough time handling a perplexing problem like uncontrollable anger, and rage.

In other words, the distinction is the sociohistorical perspective from which African Americans view themselves and others and how they function accordingly in their environment. The six stages incorporated into this study for consideration include risk contributors, stress



management, reactive coping methods, stable coping responses, and life-stage outcomes and coping products (See Figure 3). Based on this study, how these young men of color attempt to navigate safely through their environment will be the challenge to success in life. However, the key to their success lies in the quality and availability of strong and stable support systems. The support system comprises the support systems, the family unit, the school, and the community at large, the Church.

Next, a literature review dealing with the subject matter is considered. This material gave undergirding and background support for the study. In a word, the literature dealt with various aspects of the stressors in the life of an at-risk, young African American male. Factors include the academic achievement gap, contact with the criminal justice system, crime in the Black community where young Blacks are perpetrators and victims, the effects of racism, and the constant bombardment influence of the media. The literature and research were deep and varied on the subject of anger. However, not much focused on the young Black male and even less on how the church might address this issue.

At this point, this researcher sought to further connect with the subject in three areas deemed essential to this study. The first is to make a case for a cooperative effort between the Church and community, with the Church leading the way in arriving at solutions for helping these young men. Second, a brief examination of the biblical response. In other words, what does the Bible say about the Church, its role and responsibility as the body of Christ, and the origin, purpose, and dangers of uncontrolled anger? Thirdly, a brief review is made of the preventive and intervention resources that are in place and available to those seeking ways to help those within the sphere of influence.

The actual research method focuses on the African American male adolescent, aged 10-17, and the issue of managing their anger healthily, and the Church's response, in conjunction with the broader community, to this problem. The research design approach comes in two forms in-depth interviews and surveys.

The in-depth surveys were conducted in various locations by phone and Zoom. This inductive line of reason was assumed in the in-depth interviews to test the argument concerning the Church's response to specific social issues. All thirty-six participating adults, both males and females, had some experience with working with African American adolescent males. The interviewees consisted of teachers, administrators in the school system, pastors, youth leaders, single mothers, and single fathers, and most were active members of their church. A list of ten questions, some included a follow-up response, were handed out. There were objectives paramount to this research. The first was to demonstrate that anger management problems exist among this social and racial demographic. Second was to ascertain the root causes of uncontrolled and misunderstood anger among Black adolescent boys and young men. Third, and finally, was to get the opinions and views of each participant about the Church and how the Church might be able to help.

The interviews resulted in the formation of four major themes. The first was the challenges of being an African American male adolescent; second, the need for a plan to manage anger; third, help them navigate through environmental stressors; fourth, there was an agreement that there should be a response from the Church, which the interviewees struggled with initially. Finally, five suggestions arose. The church can help by first providing and training mentors. Secondly, the Church can help with counseling in the following ways: know when and to whom to refer cases outside the Church; make use of the trained and train the untrained in basic

counseling; set up a counseling center in the church facility and out in the community; share the gospel message with them. Thirdly, provide activities such as athletics, youth retreats, and youth support groups, connect with the juvenile detention centers, and volunteer and support community centers. Fourthly, organize youth Bible study fellowship off campus. Finally, manage, train, and lead family enrichment classes, discussions, and communication with parents and the school.

The surveys administered to the fifty African American male adolescents were inconclusive regarding anger issues within the sample group. However, the survey tools, the African American Respect Scale and the Urban Hassles Scale did suggest, and were in agreement with the research, the reality of specific causes and factors that potentially trigger negative behaviors in at-risk young African American males.

### **The Implication**

The implications of this study are to call attention to the at-risk African American male adolescent who has difficulty controlling their anger or rage; and to bring about an awareness as to how the Church can cooperate, as the initiator, with the broader community to help these young men. With the rise in the crime rate, gang activity, and the breakdown of the family and the sad state of the school systems; the future is not very bright. Firearms are finding their way into the hands of more and more Black teenaged boys. Almost every day, the news reports someone being shot; many perpetrators and victims are young Black men. School violence has escalated so that students are fighting each other and attacking teachers. As a matter of fact, according to some of the teachers interviewed, some teachers have left the profession out of fear for their safety.

There must be a cooperative effort between the Church and the wider community. As the body of Christ, the local church still has the potential to turn things around in the lives of some of these young men. In doing so, the people of God, Jesus' followers, can impact their communities for the better as they share the gospel redemption in their testimony.

### **The Significance**

The question that naturally arises from all of this is: What is the point? Why should this matter? Then comes the question as to what should be the Church's response. Why should the local church, a community within itself, and the people of God be concerned about these at-risk youth? What is the significance of such a study?

What is the point of all of this? Succinctly, several at-risk young Black boys and men are experiencing difficulty controlling their anger. Why should this matter? As a result, they are prone to displaying destructive and addictive behaviors toward themselves and others. The future of many of these young men is not very bright unless it helps change their lives. For instance, the homicide rate for non-Hispanic African American youth (aged 10-24) remains among the top three causes of death, physical violence, and assault crimes. These young men are both perpetrators and victims. Moreover, the incarceration rate, contact with the Juvenile Justice System, and school-to-prison pipeline continue to be a reality in the lives of the so-called at-risk youth. Furthermore, gun violence among youth is escalating every day in the streets of Atlanta.

The very nature and mission of the Church's mandate is that believers engage the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as His "ambassadors." As Jesus' followers, Christians know the destructive power of sin in people's lives, but even more so, they know God is redeeming love, who can deliver those same people from evil to new life. Because God cares for the "least of

these” (Matt. 25:40, NASB), Christians, too, should care. The argument is from the beginning. The Church must reach out with the compassion and healing message of the gospel to the at-risk African American adolescent males who are having difficulty dealing with anger issues to ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong and stable Black men.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the survey and interview findings, two recommendations for further study exist. The first recommendation has to do with the research methods used. There were two used in this study: the in-depth interview and the surveys. The validity and usefulness of both methods of research is sound and can be useful. However, it is this researcher’s recommendation that one or the other be used to avoid confusion. In the present study the in-depth interviews were the most effective and productive.

A suggestion would be to widen the in-depth interview participation to include adults and adolescents, ages 12-17, for instance. In the case of the adolescent, it could be an equal number of people who have had contact with the juvenile court system and those who have not. Also, many of the studies done on anger and at risk adolescence seem to have targeted urban areas. However, the urban areas, the inner city youth, are not the only ones who are prone to have anger management problems or who fit the category of an at risk youth.

Thus, the in-depth interviews could consist of three possible groups: those who have had contact with the juvenile court system, those who have not had contact with juvenile court system, and those who live in the rural areas.

A school counselor and an interviewee made the following statement. “The Church needs a plan and it needs to be very strategic in nature. We, and as a member of a Church I speak of

myself as well, ought more actively involved with the community that affects us all.” In other words, she was saying that the Church must be prepared and intentionally strategize the what, how, and why of engaging its local community. Therefore, the prime recommendation would be that the Church formulate an action plan as to how the local body of believer can respond to this and other issues faced by the community. The following are suggestive guidelines, resources, and examples that, based upon the individual church’s adherence to the Word of God, the church should implement as it aligns with thier vision and mission statements.

### Church Action Plan

The Action Plan, a detailed set of instructions to follow in order to solve a problem or achieve something,<sup>352</sup> ought to have at least seven phases. Those phases are identifying a discriptive title, main goal, assigned tasks, milestones, identifying the resources, visualization of the plan, ongoing evaluation.<sup>353</sup> The action plan must be prayfully decided on how they will proceed in working with their community as they are guided by the Holy Spirit.

However, this project was a challenge. Wherein this paper’s subject targeted a specific problem, among a specific demographic, who are struggling with unhealthy anger and the local church’s call to respond by working with their community. not every church is able to respond depending on its size, location, and resources, and congregations may have to combine their resources in working with their community.

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<sup>352</sup> “ACTION PLAN | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary,” [dictionary.cambridge.org](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/action-plan), n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/action-plan>.

<sup>353</sup> “How to Write an Action Plan to Help You Achieve Your Goals - US,” Indeed.com, 2019, <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-write-an-action-plan>.

A few other recommendations are as follows. First, local churches could come together, pooling their resources for the sake of gaining community cooperation and collaboration. For example, a larger congregation might have a gymnasium for activities. This space might be used for youth activities. Secondly, anger management, as mentioned earlier, affects so many youth and it should be available to all youth. Thirdly, churches can set up a mentoring program with the school system and the Juvenile Detention System. Fourthly, offer classes and workshops for parents concerning various family unit relationships. Finally, above all, the Church must be the Church. In other words, the Church must be faithful to its calling as the body of Christ, ambassadors, and representatives as declared in II Corinthians 5:18-21:

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is , that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (translation).

In conclusion, this DMIN action research project discussed the what, why and how of a pressing issue affecting a valuable demographic of the American society, specifically the African American male adolescent. The what pertains to the at risk African American male adolescent who struggles with managing his anger. This leads to the why, which deals with the question: why should this be of concern? The answer revolves around the male's inability to manage anger often leads to abusive and addictive behavior. Finally, the important how question is solution based: how can the Church work with the community in helping these young men understand, acknowledge and manage their anger healthily?

Although awareness of one's historical background and the ability to handle the daily hassles of one's environmental and risk factors are critical to developing a healthy identity

formation, some elements are even more vital. The vital element is the quality and availability of one's support systems.

To reiterate, it is not easy growing up, and for some, it is even more difficult; in this case, young men of color have a tough time dealing with anger without harming themselves or others. This project identified four elements of the support system that ought to be available to youth: the family unit, the initial and most crucial socialization unit; the school; the community at large; and the local church. All of these lapping units are important in helping to address societal ills. There is no time for excuse-making or fault-finding. There is a part to play for all, so let Christians start with this need and help ensure a positive future for the next generation of strong and stable Black men.



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## Appendix A

### Interview Script

The title of this study is Agents of Redemptive Hope: Churches and Communities Addressing the Problem of Anger Management and the African American Adolescent Male. It deals with young Black boys and young men, ages 10 - 19, who are struggling with anger issues and how the Church, in cooperation with the community at large, in helping these young men learn how to manage their anger constructively. Your honest response to the following questions will be appreciated.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term “Black Lives Matter”?
2. Research suggests that being a young Black male in America is particularly challenging. Would you say you agree or disagree? Could you elaborate as to why you feel this way?
3. Would you agree or disagree with the following statement: “There is a significant number of African American males, ages 10 – 19, who struggle with anger that often leads to abusive and addictive behaviors? Could you elaborate as to why you feel this way?
4. What do you think are some causes of anger in young African American males?
5. What factors contribute to their inability to manage or control anger?
6. Have you personally encountered an at-risk or troubled young Black adolescent male (pre-teenager/teenager)? If yes, would you describe your experience?
7. In your opinion, what should the Churches, houses of faith, and role be in helping African American adolescent males learn how to manage their anger positively, non-destructive way?
8. Are you aware of any programs (e.g., ministries, support groups, or other organizations) available to address such problems? If so, would you name a few?

9. Why do you think there is such a need for more concern on this issue?
10. What suggestions would you like to offer that would make concerning this research project?

## Appendix B

The following questions you are being asked to respond to are divided into five sections: Anger Styles, Teen Anger Triggers, Respect Scale, and Community Experiences. For each question circle or check the number that best describe your experience or response. **Please do not include what you may have seen or heard about on TV, radio, news, or movies.** Your response will be anonymous; no one will know how you responded.

### Anger Styles

**Directions:** After reading each statement check the box that best describes you.

		YES	NO
1	I try never to get angry.		
2	I get nervous when others get angry.		
3	I feel I am doing something bad when I get angry.		
4	I tell people I will do what they want, but then I forget.		
5	I get jealous a lot, even when there is no reason.		
6	I say things like “yeah, but...” and “I’ll do it later.”		
7	People tell me I must be angry but I’m not sure why.		
8	I don’t trust people very much.		
9	Sometimes it feels like people are out to get me.		
10	I get angry fast.		
11	I act before I think when I get angry.		
12	My anger goes away very quickly after I explode		
13	I get very angry when people criticize me.		
14	People say I am easily hurt and oversensitive.		

15	I get angry when I feel bad about myself.		
16	I get mad in order to get what I want.		
17	I try to scare others with my anger.		
18	I can pretend to be very mad when I'm really OK.		
19	Sometimes I get angry just for the excitement or fun of it.		
20	I like the strong feelings that come with my anger.		
21	My anger takes over and I get out of control.		
22	I seem to get angry all the time.		
23	I just can't break the habit of getting angry a lot.		
24	I get mad without thinking – it just happens.		
25	I become very angry when I defend my beliefs.		
26	I feel outraged about what others try to get away with.		
27	I always know I'm right in an argument.		
28	I hang onto my anger for a long time.		
29	I have a hard time forgiving people.		
30	I hate people for what they've done to me.		