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A qualitative exploratory study of African American men's experiences and/or perceptions of class or racial discrimination in relation to their social and economic status, education job opportunity and employment

Mellace Slaten-Thomson

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN'S EXPERIENCES AND/OR PERCEPTIONS OF CLASS OR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN RELATION TO THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS, EDUCATION JOB OPPORTUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

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by

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that African-American men occupy inferior social and economic status when compared with their Anglo-male counterpart. Many research studies have been conducted regarding African-American men to determine the underlining cause for these disparities. This qualitative exploratory study, however, explored with African-American men their social and economic experiences, and their understanding of these experiences, thus gaining novel, fresh, and innovative information regarding this population. The intent of this study is to focus on beginning where individuals are, thereby allowing African-American men to identify what they see and experience as the social and economic problems and their causes. The results of this study showed that the majority of respondents experienced some form of racial discrimination on numerous occasions, and generally experienced racial and class discrimination synonymously. Though most of the respondents struggled with various aspects of racial discrimination during some portions of their lives, a large number reported having managed to establish social and economic stability. Implications for social workers are indicated on both micro and macro levels.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated

to the African-American men

who so willingly participated

in this study and helped make it possible.

To all my African-American "Brothers"

wherever you are.

To Hany, my new found friend,

who has been instrumental in helping me

gain a better understanding of myself.

To my son, Garth, and my daughter, Maria

who gave me their support.

Above all, to God,

my friend and main role model.

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INTRODUCTION

The socio-econo-political forces, and value systems, along with social welfare responses to them, have influenced the definition of African-Americans. The overall welfare ideology that greatly influenced the destiny of African-Americans was a combination of a Protestant work ethic and a "white Anglo-Saxon" ideal value system, (Day, 1989). The Protestant work ethic purports that hard work is dictated by God and morality is demonstrated by wealth. The essence of the white Anglo-Saxon ideal is that those who look different are inferior and those who are perceived as a threat are rejected.

Historical Perspective

Although many Europeans and Africans came to the New World to work as indentured servants or slaves, African-Americans were denied the opportunity to fulfill the wide range demands for labor. Anglo-indentured servants were not ideal for potential slaves because they did not represent a supply of sufficient quantity, and they were not a product of pre-conditioned slavery. In addition, they could easily blend into their own European culture in the colonies. Native Indians, likewise, were seen differently because they had never experienced slavery, and had the advantage of being familiar in their own land; as such, they strongly resisted enslavement control and submission, (Zinn, 1990).

Zinn further notes that Africans, on the other hand,

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had experienced some aspects of slavery as they had been part of slave labor for 100 of years. One million had already been transported from Africa to other parts of the New World. Unlike the Indians, they were separated from their own land and culture, and brought to a strange land of unfamiliar customs. They were from different tribes, did not speak the same language, nor could they speak English. Their vulnerability made them ripe for exploitation in the slave market, and unlike Anglo-indentured servants, Africans existed in abundance.

Plantation agriculture expanded rapidly and required large numbers of laborers who were disciplined and controlled in terms of cost and time. The demand for labor increased. It was more practical to extend the service of those who were already conditioned than to train a new group of workers to perform labors with which they were unfamiliar. An alternative to a model of indentured servants was to develop a system of chattel slavery in which Africans served for life and status was fixed at birth. Morally, the Protestant work ethic justified slave labor as hard work dictated by God and, simultaneously, justified the wealth of Anglo-Americans as an obligation. Africans did not meet the Anglo-Saxon ideal because their skin was dark and their hair was kinky. Also they did not worship the "true" God. Thus, when slaves of African descent met all of the required conditions, the stage had been set for their exploitation.

African-Americans did not willingly submit to slavery. From the very beginning, imported African men and women resisted their enslavement. Historical documents revealed that even under the most difficult conditions, under pain of mutilation and death, they continued to rebel, (Zinn 1990). Rebellion generally was demonstrated by running away, or subtle forms of resistance, such as engagement in sabotage and slowdowns. Occasionally there was an organized insurrection. There are reports that slave women killed their masters, sometimes by poisoning them; sometimes by burning tobacco houses and homes. Punishments for these behaviors ranged form whipping and branding to execution, yet rebellion continued.

A greater fear than of African-American rebellion was that of poor discontented Anglo-Americans joining slaves to overthrow the existing order. Historical evidence shows that during the seventeenth century Anglo-Americans and African-Americans, who found they had common problems, common work, common enemy in their master, behaved toward one another as equals. African-Americans and Anglo-Americans worked and fraternized together. Zinn (1990) pointed out that poor Anglo-Americans became less a threat when the ruling class proclaimed that:

> all white men were superior to black, (and) went
> on to offer their social (but white) inferiors a
> number of benefits previously denied them. In
> 1705 a law was passed requiring masters to provide
> white servants whose indenture time was up with
> ten bushels of corn, thirty shillings, and a gun,

while women servants were to get 15 bushels of
corn and forty shillings. Also, the newly freed
servants were to get 50 acres of land, (p.37).

Feeling less exploited, the poor Anglo-American became

more cooperative with his powerful neighbor who he saw as

the protector of their common interest.

A powerful system of control was initiated by slave

owners to maintain their labor supply and their way of life.

According to Zinn, the system was both psychological and

physical:

> The slaves were taught discipline, were impressed
> again and again with the idea of their own infer-
> iority to "know their place," to see blackness as
> a sign of subordination, to be awed by the power
> of the master, to merge their interest with the
> master's, destroying their own individual needs.
> To accomplish this there was the discipline of
> hard labor, the breakup of the family, the lulling
> effects of religion ..., the creation of disunity
> among slaves by separating them into field slaves
> and more privileged house slaves, and finally the
> power of law and the immediate power of the over-
> seer to invoke whipping, burning, mutilation, and
> death, (p.35).

Contemporary Issues

Racism still exists in the United States, and it con-

tinues to place many African-American males under severe

stress, creating an affected and at-risk, highly vulnerable

group who subsequently remain far behind Anglo-Americans in

most social, health, and economic indicators, (Morales and

Sheafor, 1995). Kirk (1986) argues that stress is signif-

icantly related to the degree and amount of power that one

perceives having within the society. Considering that

African-Americans have minimal amount of power, real or

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perceived within society, it is reasonable to believe that they would experience a greater amount of stress. Kirk also contends that such stress can result in poor physical and mental health.

Herd (1985) noted that African-American males are more susceptible to stress related disease. They experience higher levels of hypertension and strokes than any other ethnic group. Prostate cancer is the highest among this group when compared to all men. Cirrhosis of the liver mortality rate, among all ages of African-Americans, is nearly two times that of the dominant population. In general, the life expectancy of the African-American male is 65 years, less than either the African- American female at 69 years, the Anglo-American male at 70 years, or the Anglo-American female at 73 years, (Warfield et al, 1985).

African-American males have not fared well in science, economics, or in education. Prior to the Association of Black Psychologists, founded in 1968, there was gross neglect in addressing the extensive use of "deficient" models, and the "victimization" in the psychology of African-Americans, (Thomas, 1985). Even now, approaches toward African-American psychology by main stream society fail to fill the void related to Afro-centric issues:

> There has been only a modest attempt to system-
> atically define factors common to Blackness as a
> personality construct in which it is possible to
> acquire the knowledge necessary for dealing with
> conceptual modules, behavior modification, social-
> ization systems, and social welfare in gener-

> al...Common problems are conceptual frameworks
> that do not adequately challenge scientific rac-
> ism, especially the myths about racial inferiority
> in Afro-Americans...the problems of inadequate
> description of subjects...researchers having a
> value orientation that is outside the socio-poli-
> tical realities of the Black community... conduct-
> ing studies according to whether techniques are
> available does little to provide solutions to the
> problems of living in today's society... Sensitiv-
> ity to the Afro-American heritage should be re-
> flected in attention to antecedent cultural fac-
> tors, current social regulatory conditions, and
> personal response action (p. 43-44).

Franklin (1992) supports the above cited concept. He

believes that as a result of growing up in a racist society,

African-American men carry with them a particular set of

historical and personal experiences that affect their psych-

ological makeup. These experiences reflect their self-

esteem, a key component in how they orient and respond to

the world around themselves and an essential feature of

mental health. The author further explains how the societal

message that African-American men lack value and worth

creates a sense of "invisibility" that is reinforced by

social rules and codes that deny African-American men full

access to life's amenities and opportunities. From this

perspective, Franklin suggests that there is a need for

methods of studies and treatment models that are culturally

sensitive to the unique needs of African-Americans, espec-

ially the males:

> African-American men who succumb to the
> stresses of racism and limited opportunity mani-
> fest various symptoms that reflect their invisi-
> bility status ("people refuse to see me"). Cli-
> ents may present with psychosomatic complaints

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> associated with stress (ulcers, head- and body
> aches); exacerbated physical ailments (hyper-
> tension); contentious, confrontational, opposi-
> tional behaviors; anger and aggression; despond-
> ency over unfulfilled life goals; and conflicted
> self-concept... these primary problems can be
> exacerbated by secondary problems, such as job
> stress (p.354).

Therefore, there is a need to understand the African-American experience.

A review of the United States' prison population revealed that African-American males, between 20 and 30 years of age, show the highest incarceration rate which is twenty-times that of the total population. Of these males, 18.2% can expect to serve a portion of their life's span in such an institution, as compared to 2.7% for the Anglo-American male, (Blumstein, 1982). Since it is during this developmental stage individuals in this age group generally work towards building a stable financial career base, the subsequent long-term effects of being incarcerated during this crucial time period is apparent. Also, African-American males are disproportionately represented in mental hospitals. They outnumber African-American females, and both male and female Anglo-Americans (Warfield & et al, 1985).

During the war on poverty of the 1960's, some African-Americans' social and economic status improved, (Larson, 1988). The trend of the 1960's, however was reversed in 1970 when the nation experienced a recession and was followed by another recession between 1973 and 1975. As a result, African-Americans' median income declined by three

percent which reflected their unemployment rate. In 1970,
(Foner and Lewis, 1978-1984), the national unemployment rate
was 7.8% while the unemployment rate for African-Americans
was 11 percent. This was approximately two times higher
than Anglo-Americans' which was 5.8 percent. By 1976, the
average unemployment rate for African-Americans had in-
creased to 13.8 percent while the rate for all Americans was
7.7 percent.

Under President Reagan's administration, support for
federal enforcement of equal opportunity laws and "affirma-
tive action" weakened. Cutbacks were made in most federal-
ly-funded programs. For example, cutbacks totaled 60 per-
cent in employment and training programs during the first
three years of the Reagan administration. This trend has
continued over the subsequent years resulting in a decline
in higher educational grants; training, employment, and
rehabilitation services (Day, 1989).

Schaefer (1988) believes that the economic system of
African-American men is deteriorating. He suggests that
behind the woman-headed families is the plight of the Afri-
can-American man. This approach supports Neckerman's (1987)
position. Neckerman proposes that the increasing rate of
joblessness among African-American men should be considered
as a major underlying factor in the high percentages of out-
of-wedlock births and female-headed households. Also, when
the factor of joblessness is combined with the high mortal-

ity and incarceration rates, the remaining proportion of
African-American men who are economically stable to support
a family is generally diminished.   In order to highlight
this point, Neckerman developed a "male marriageable pool
index" (See Table 1).   This indicator shows the effects of
male joblessness trends.   The contrast is between African-
Americans and Anglo-American employed civilian men, each in
conjunction with women of the same race and age group.   The
number 100 is used as the denominator to represent marriage-
able females.   Males, between 25 and 54 years of age and
financially stable to support a family, shows a more gradual
decline for African-American men in proportion to Anglo-
American men who are in a position to support a family.

Table 1.	MALE MARRIAGEABLE INDEX POOL	
EMPLOYED MEN Age Range:	Anglo-Americans (ratios)	African-Americans (ratios)
25 and 34	88 to 90	68 to 60
35 and 44	89 to 85	73 to 66
45 and 54	90 to 82	79 to 63
Employed men per 100 women of the same age and race between 1954 to 1982. Source: Kathryn Neckerman, Poverty and Family Structure, (1987).		

    Such evidence warrants more attention in establishing a
positive correlation between the disintegration of poor
families and joblessness among African-American males.   In
1987, the national unemployment rate for African-American
males between 25 and 55 years of age was reported at 9.9%.

This is approximately two and one-half times that of Anglo-Americans' rate of 4.5 percent, (Holzer, 1988). Educationally, many African-Americans do not relate or identify with their school experience because it does not address their particular concerns of poverty, racism, and lack of self-worth, (Patton, 1991). An overview of unemployment rates in relation to levels of schooling revealed that although employment problems for both African-Americans and Anglo-Americans worsened as educational levels dropped, African-Americans experienced higher rates of unemployment and non-participation in the labor force than Anglo-Americans within each educational category. Table 2 gives the percentage rate of the labor force status of African-Americans (AA) males and American-White (AW) males, by educational attainment, between the ages of 35 and 44 during the year of 1980:

TABLE 2.	LABOR FORCE STATUS					
	HS dropouts		HS graduates		Some college	
	AW	AA	AW	AA	AW	AA
Not employed or in school	18.4	27.8	7.5	18.8	5.2	13.3
Out of labor force	9.3	15.9	3.3	9.3	2.4	6.0
Source: Diana M. DiNitto, Social Welfare, Politics and Public Policy. 1991, pp.58.						

Median incomes are also effected by educational difference between African-Americans and Anglo-Americans. In 1987, Anglo-American family income was substantially higher than African- American family income at every educational

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level, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME BY ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION (1987)

EDUCATION	AW	AA
Elementary School:		
Less than 8 years	$15,264	$12,149
8 years	18,718	13,210
High School:		
1-3 years	22,653	12,166
4 years	30,958	20,263
College:		
1-3 years	37,324	25,115
4 years	50,908	36,568

Source: Diana M. DiNitto, Social Welfare, Politics and Public Policy. 1991, pp.58.

Employment circumstances can be interpreted on local levels as well. With the closing of some industrial plants, such as Kaiser Steel in San Bernardino, California, many laborers became part of the growing number of unemployed. In 1990, the economic dilemma in San Bernardino County is represented by the unemployment rate for males age 16 years old and over. For African-Americans, it was 7.2%, compared to Anglo-Americans at 5%. Non-participation in the labor force for African-Americans was 31.8%, and Anglo-American, 23%. Using poverty level rates for males and females in

each population between the ages of 18 and 64 revealed that African-Americans were 16% below the poverty line, compared to Anglo-Americans, 8.7%. (State Census Data Center, 1990). On both the national and local levels, African-Americans fair worse in the job market which influences their overall economic status and ability to support a family.

What is illustrated here is that when comparisons are made, African-Americans tend to fair worse than Anglo-Americans in their physical well-being; as well as in science, economics, and education. Several suggestions have been made as to the causes of these disparities. The purpose of this study is to explore the underlining cause of these gaps between the adult males of the two populations.

PROBLEM FOCUS

Ideology

There are at least four theories regarding the contrib-
uting causes of the physical, psychological, social and
economic problems experienced by African-Americans. They
are: 1) Pathological-pathogenic; 2) cultural determinism; 3)
biological determinism; and 4) social environmental. The
assumption of the pathological-pathogenic approach (Karenga
1988) is that the African-American family is either patho-
logical or pathogenic or both. The family is not only
considered dysfunctional and a sick social unit, but also
produces sick and dysfunctional members of society. Karenga
cites the research of E. Franklin Frazier as laying the
basis for the pathology school of thoughts regarding the
African-American family. According to Frazier's conclusion,
slavery, urbanization, and racism prevented the perpetuation
of African-American family relations and imposed severe
strains on the family's ability to function effectively.
Thus, the family developed negative situational adaptation
to handle the legacy of oppression and exploitation. The
results are believed to be matriarchal characteristics of
the family, marginal men; unstable marriages, the tendency
towards casual sex, and the loss of folk culture cohesive-
ness in the urbanization process. Daniel Moynihan's (1965)
statistical report supported the pathological-pathogenic
concept. By using census data, Moynihan concluded that the

fundamental weakness in the African-American community is
the deterioration of the African-American family. This
lends support to the charges held regarding African-Ameri-
cans: almost one-fourth of all families in this population
were headed by females, nearly one-quarter of births are
illegitimate, and the breakdown of the family has led to an
alarming increase in welfare dependency. This argument
agrees with the notion of *cultural poverty* which claims that
poverty is a way of life passed on from generation to gener-
ation in a self-perpetuating cycle, a pathological condition
of the individual, (DiNitto, 1991).

The Adaptive-Vitality approach is a cultural determin-
ism concept. It contends that adaptation by African-Ameri-
can families to social and economic pressures and limita-
tions are not symptoms of pathologies, rather of strengths,
or adaptive vitality, (Karenga, 1988). As such, African-
American families are unique and cannot be evaluated by an
Anglo-American formula for analysis. The fiber of the
family was not totally destroyed by slavery. These families
have proven their durability and adaptive vitality as they
confront severe oppression. Using information ascertained
from the government sponsored Federal Writers Project,
Billingsley (1992) posits that neither the ideal nor the
experience of the family was obliterated by slavery. In-
stead the family was "re-created and reconstructed based on
family ideals, values, and yearnings that Africans brought

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with them in their memories and sustained through the harsh realities of slave life in European oriented North America," (p.106). From this point of view, the African-American family is considered a strong and functional unit.

The third theory is biological determinism. According to this approach, attributes such as employment, income, welfare dependency, divorce and quality of parental behavior are determined by an individual's intelligence which is the results of genetic factors. Genetics are used to explain African-Americans' "low average IQ" relative to Anglo-Americans, (Kamin, 1995). Race is seen as determining human traits and capacities, and that Anglo-Americans are inherently superior to African-Americans. This concept is directly related to the Americans' hatred of "outsiders" or people who are different and to the Protestant work ethic. Historically, the Protestant religion legitimized Anglo-Americans' pursuit of wealth, and their idea that people of color were not as human as they were, thus allowed the dehumanization and exploitation of African-Americans, (Day, 1989).

The fourth theory, social and environmental, focuses on institutional discrimination. Based on irrational attitudes of hostility that have become reified in rules, regulations, and procedures, forms of institutional discrimination deny equal rights and opportunities to groups of people even when no individual prejudice is involved, (Day, 1989). According

to this theory, the plight of African-Americans is directly related to the economic and social discrimination that is built within the structure of society. Hilliard III (1986) points out that the African-American man is seen as being a victim of a hostile and none supportive environment, poverty, criminal *injustice*, and unemployment; as well as inequitable educational opportunities, and negative media images.

African-Americans have been viewed and judged by most social scientists with the same worldview applied to the dominant culture. Consequently, differences from established dominant norms have been interpreted negatively or neutralized, (Daly, et al, 1995). This reinforces negative stereotypes and promotes rejection. The institutional and structural components of society may foster oppressive conditions that contributes to the social and economic disparities that exist between African-Americans and Anglo-Americans. Practices that are deeply embedded in the schools, the criminal justice system, and other organizations that serve "gatekeeper" functions in society may be a reflection of oppression. For example, poor school districts generally have fewer resources which can be used to promote adequate educational opportunities for students than schools in middle and upper class districts, (Day, 1989). Since African-Americans are more often poor, they are most likely to be effected. There is a need for methods of studies that are sensitive to African-Americans, especially

the males. A Critical Theory paradigm was adopted to gain more insight into issues of discrimination, oppression and exploitation in relation to African-American males and their social and economic experiences.

Inquiry

The inquiry of this research project was to seek a better understanding of the psychological, social and economic experiences of African-American men. Through individual interviews, respondents were asked what their experiences and/or perceptions were regarding their social and economic situations; and what correlations these experiences have, if any, to racial discrimination, education, job opportunity, and employment. What effect have these had on their social and economic status, as well as family stability? What effects have these had on their choices in assuming the role of husband and father? In addition, they were asked what social action they believe would be most beneficial in helping African-American men achieve satisfying social and economic stability.

Evaluation of Social Work Practice

The results of this study will contribute to the evaluation of social work practice on both the micro and macro levels. On the micro level the focus was on beginning where the client was, and allowing African-American men to identify what their own social and economic problems were, as well as the causes. After the problems and their causes are

identified, the social work profession can then help these individuals achieve *personal* and *social* empowerment.

The dynamics of personal empowerment are similar to traditional self-determination whereby clients give direction to the helping process, take charge of their personal lives, learn new ways to think about their situations, and adopt more assertive behaviors. These personal dynamics are connected to social empowerment, where individual behavior and identity is socially derived through social involvement. Thus, a person achieves personal and social empowerment simultaneously, (Cowger, 1994).   From this perspective, Cowger suggests that social work should be an "Empowerment-based practice" which encompasses social justice, recognizes that empowerment and self-determination are dependent on people making choices, as well as people having available choices. Available choices often means structural changes within society. This requires social work practice that advocates for and with African-Americans for legislative policy changes at both the micro and macro levels.

Literature Review

No studies were found that involved inquiry made to African-Americans, across strata, regarding their experiences and perceptions in relation to the social and economic decline among their population, and the wide discrepancy in income levels between African-Americans and Anglo-Americans. Liebow (1976) points out that lower-class African-American

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men are especially neglected as a subject of African-American research simply because they are more difficult to reach than women, youths and children. "He is no more home to the researcher than he is to the case worker or the census taker." If he has had no reason for contact with the police, then he is less likely than women and children to gain the attention of the authorities. Popular information known about African-Americans is more often based on families in poverty, and biased toward women and children with corresponding neglect of adult males.

Gill (1983) supports Liebow's view by suggesting the need for mid-life career development. The system at present concentrates on preparing the young to enter occupational careers, therefore short changing adult education by ignoring the potential of many adults who have a high probability of success. He recommends finding ways to better utilize the resources of middle-age workers, between 35 and 55 years of age. These resources are needed for several reasons. First, as the American population ages the work force will age. Second, considering the declining birth rates and increased longevity, employers will depend more on older employees. Third, because people are living longer and having to confront the effects of inflation, more workers are likely to opt for staying in the labor force longer. From this perspective, society needs to re-think and confront racial and age biases, especially as they relate to

African-American men.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design

A critical theory paradigm has been adopted to study the personal experiences and perceptions of African-American men, between 25 and 55 years of age, in regards to the inequality distribution of income and its relationship to racial discrimination, education, job opportunity, and employment. The critical paradigm effectively addresses these issues because of its ideological-oriented inquiry which reflects the social needs and aspirations of an individual, a group, a class, or a culture. Dialogue and change eliminate false consciousness and energize and facilitate transformation, (Guba, 1990). The purpose of this inquiry was to explore through dialogue with African-American men their experiences and perceptions regarding their social and economic situations, and to eliminate internalized negative messages. This can raise them to a level of "true consciousness" in the belief that when they appreciate how oppressed they are, they will be energized and facilitated toward transformation.

Traditional social science research such as Positivism, unlike the Critical Theory, is neutral in that it seeks to expand knowledge for its own sake. Previous studies of the social and economic problems that exist among African-Americans have tended to formulate a hypothesis, then collect data for statistical analysis to determine the cause and

effect of a problem. This method, however, does not tap all

the complex dimensions of the quality of life. This criti-

cal research will explore with the respondents, across

strata, their social and economic experiences, and their

understanding of these experiences; toward, gaining novel

and fresh slants regarding this population.

There are, however, some limits in the critical ap-

proach. Chances of the interviewer inadvertently influenc-

ing the respondents answers are possible. The type of

answers respondents give may be influenced by the interview-

er's gender, cultural or social background. A respondent

may give answers which he believes the interviewer wants to

hear. He may also avoid giving genuine and candid answers

because revealing certain information may provoke some

emotional discomfort. Caution was used to reassure the

respondents of confidentiality and by taking a non-judg-

mental approach.

Collection

Data was collected from a convenient sampling which

included 26 African-American males between 25 and 55 years

of age. This is a convenient sampling because it consisted

of volunteers who were drawn from among family, friends,

acquaintances and others who were solicited through network-

ing with churches and various local African-American organi-

zations. The sample subjects were drawn from the African-

American population living within the counties of Los Angel-

es, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego in the State of California.

Determining Instrumentation

The qualitative and exploratory method of research was adopted in order to gain a deeper understanding and meaning of African-American men's social and economic situations from their own perspectives. Exploratory research is a study on persons' lives, stories, or behaviors; or in other cases, a study of organizational functions, or social movements. Findings are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Rather, exploratory studies are conducted to explore concepts, topics, and to seek answers to critical questions. Such studies are not concerned with hypotheses. Instead, the purpose is to collect and interpret data.

The qualitative aspect of the research method focused on planning data collection by means of interviews. The area of study began with African-American men's social and economic experiences and their perception of these experiences. Data relevant to this area of study was allowed to emerge. This approach does not begin with a hypothesis, then try to prove it. Instead, it focuses on data collection and interpretation.

Planning Data Collection and Recording Modes

In order to conserve time, data was collected by an *interview guide approach*, (Rubin and Babbie, 1993). Inter-

views were planned in advance and more structured than informal conversational types. In outline form, a list was provided with the topics and issues that the interviewer would cover during the interview. This ensured that the interviewer would cover the same major topics and issues with each respondent, while at the same time permitted enough flexibility for the interviewer to probe into unanticipated circumstances and responses.

Interviews, approximately one to one and one-half hours each, were scheduled over a three month period. Questions were open-ended because the respondents were asked to provide their own answers to the questions, and they were free to express their own perspectives in their own words. Because of the in-depth, open-endedness of qualitative interviews, a tape recorder was used to record respondents' answers. This freed the interviewer to focus full attention on respondents for the purpose of observation. In addition to tape recording, paper and pen was used by the interviewer for taking brief notes to facilitate later analysis of the tapes. Data was then processed for analysis.

To guard against unethical research practice, this project followed the California State University's human subjects committee guidelines which served to evaluate the treatment of human subjects for research proposals. This protects each respondent from unwarranted physical or mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger, or deprivation. To

avoid unnecessary invasion of privacy, probing was limited to questions that were relevant to the topic. Sensitivity to the issues and experiences of respondents was given the utmost of care. The code of ethics governing scholarly research, guidelines of anonymity and confidentiality was followed. All respondents were given a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research, and their right not to participate. Each participant was then asked to sign a consent form.

Data Analysis

For analyzing data, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) open coding method was implemented. Open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. It is the portion of the analysis that pertains particularly to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data. Following this process, each interview was broken down into sentences, and paragraphs. Also, each incident, idea, or event was given a name which represented a phenomenon of the research inquiry, "African-American men's psychosocial and economic experiences and their perception of these experiences." The analytic procedure for doing this was by asking questions about the data, and making comparisons for similarities and differences between each instance of phenomena. Similar events and incidents were labeled and grouped to form categories. Categories were developed in terms of their properties and

dimensions. Properties are the characteristics or attributes of a category. Dimensions represent locations of a property along a continuum. Each category has several general properties, and each property varies over a dimensional continuum. The collected data was processed according to the above analytical guidelines.

DISCUSSION

Results

The Research Question: To what extent has class or racial discrimination been experienced by African-American men, and to what extent have these experiences effected their social and economic stability? The majority reported experiencing some form of racial discrimination on numerous occasions, and generally experience racial and class discrimination synonymously. Though a majority of the respondents struggled with various aspects of racial discrimination during some portions of their lives, most managed to establish social and economic stability.

Evidence in this study contradicts the pathological-pathogenic theory (Karenga, 1988) which states that African-American families are dysfunctional social units and produce sick and dysfunctional members of society. Likewise with the biological determinism theory (Kamin, 1995), which used genetics to explain African-Americans' "low average" IQ relative to Anglo-Americans. Neither of these theories are able to explain how the majority of these respondents in this study overcame racial oppression to become socially adjusted and successful.

Results of this study do support the adaptive-vitality theory (Karenga, 1988) which states that adaptation by African-American families to social and economic pressures and limitation are not symptoms of pathologies, rather they

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are symptoms of strengths, and adaptive vitality. Results

also support the social and environmental theory (Day, 1989)

which posits that the plight of African-Americans is direct-

ly related to the economic and social discrimination that is

built within the structures of society. Results indicates

that African-American men are resilient in dealing with the

complex, multidimensional effects of racial discrimination

by creatively adapting coping responses.

Demographics

Demographics of sampling were divided into 5 catego-

ries: demographic profile; correlation between African-

American history and social adjustment; respondents' current

family's economic stability; respondents' primary caretaker

in family of origin; and interview responses related to

needs for achieving stability.

The demographic profile (Table 4) is presented under 7

headings: age range, ranges of age, marital status, employ-

ment status, annual income, business ownership, and educa-

tion. Age: the youngest respondent was 26, and the oldest

was age 50; the average age was 38.3, and the median age was

40.5. Ranges of age: 10 were between the ages of 25-35, 12

were between the ages of 36-45, and 4 were between the ages

of 46-55. Marital status: 13 were single, six were married,

four were divorced, two were remarried, and one was widowed.

Employment status: 19 were employed, five were unemployed

(of which two were full-time graduate students, three were

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homeless), two were retired. Annual family income: highest,
$100,000.00; lowest, no income (student status or homeless);
average, $35,650.00; median, $35,500.00. Business owner-
ship: three respondents owned their business. Education:
the highest educational level was a post-graduate degree,
the lowest number of years was 11, the average number of
years was 15.3. Except for one, respondents were born and
reared in various locations of the United States. Of the 26,
ten were reared in the South, eight in the West, five in the
Mid-West, two in the East, and one was born and reared in
Africa until approximately age 12 when he came to live in
one of the eastern states.

TABLE 4.	DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE		
AGE RANGE			**RESPONSES**
Youngest			26
Oldest			50
Average			38.3
Median			40.5
RANGES OF AGE	25-35	36-45	46-55
Responses In Each Range	10	12	4
MARITAL STATUS			
Single			13
Married			6
Divorced			4
Remarried			2
Widowed			1
EMPLOYMENT STATUS			
Employed			19
Unemployed			5
Retired			2
ANNUAL INCOME			
Highest			$100,000.00
Lowest			000,000.00
Average			35,000.00
Median			35,500.00
BUSINESS OWNERSHIP			3
EDUCATION			
Highest			Post-graduate degree
Lowest Number Of Years			11
Average Number Of Years			15.3
Respondents: N=26 African-American Men			

Analysis of the data revealed that 24 (92%) of the 26

respondents reported they had experienced, on numerous

occasions, some form of racial discrimination. The remain-
ing two (8%) were not sure. Of the 26 respondents 18 (69%)
reported experiencing racial discrimination specifically in
the job market, while eight (31%) reported they had not.
Four (15%) of the respondents reported experiencing racial
discrimination as early as grade school, grades 1-6. An
additional 5 (19%) of the respondents reported experiencing
racial discrimination during junior high school, grades 1-9.
A total of 11 (42%) reported experiencing some form of
racial discrimination during high school, grades 10-12.
African-American history was notably absent from the curric-
ulum of respondents' education.

A closer examination of the data showed that most of
the respondents had socially adjusted despite their experi-
ences of racial discrimination, illustrated in Table 5. Of
the 26 respondents, eight adjusted early while 12 adjusted
later with difficulty, three continued to struggle, and
three had inadequately adjusted. Further analysis indicated
a correlation between African-American history and social
adjustment, illustrated in Table 5. The seven respondents
who socially adjusted early without difficulty reported
receiving, in their home or in school, a good foundation in
African-American history during their developmental years
before age 15. The single respondent who adjusted early
with difficulty and was first taught African-American histo-
ry in college, reported he transferred to a private high

school where his African-American peers were positive role models. Of the 12 who socially adjusted later with difficulty, ten were first taught African-American history while in college, the remaining two were not taught African-American history. Of the three who continued to struggle towards social adjustment, two were first taught African-American history while in college, and the remaining one was not taught. The three who inadequately adjusted socially, two were not taught African-American history, and the remaining one studied it while in prison (incarcerated at age 15). All of the 19 respondents who were not taught African-American history until after age 15 had difficulty adjusting. Only one adjusted early, and the remaining 18 adjusted late during adulthood or continued to have difficulty. Results indicate African-American history is a vital component in social development and adjustment.

TABLE 5.   HISTORY AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

	Was Taught AA History By Age 15	First Taught AA History In College	Was Not Taught AA History
Early Adjustment Without Difficulty	7		
Early Adjustment With Limited Difficulty		1	
Late Adjustment- With Difficulty		10	2
Continues To Struggle		2	1
Inadequate Adjustment			3

N=26: African-American history as it relates to respondents' social adjustment.

There were significant differences between cohort group experiences. Of the eight respondents who adjusted early (Table 6) five (63%) were between 25-35, and the remaining three (37%) were between 36-45. Comparing groups: Of the 12 respondents in the 36-45 cohort group, only three (25%) adjustment early without difficulty, and the remaining nine (75%) adjusted later with some type of difficulty; of the ten respondents in the 25-35 cohort group, five (50%) ad-

justed early without difficulty, 1 (10%) adjusted early with
limited difficulty, and the remaining four (40%) adjusted
later with some type of difficulty in adjustment; No co-
horts between 46-55 years of age adjusted early. Of the
four cohorts between 46-55 all adjusted later with some type
of difficulty. Study results revealed that the younger
group had more respondents who adjusted early 50% compared
to the middle group's 25%, and the elder group 0%. Differ-
ences in cohort group social adjustment are indicators of
societal influences.

Respondents' report of their family's current economic
stability is presented in Table 6. Of the 26 respondents,
17 reported financial stability, four continued to work
towards stability, and five reported financial instability,
(two students and three homeless). Respondents' report of
economic stability agreed with their report of annual in-
come. Table 6 illustrates respondents' resilience in over-
coming racial discrimination with subsequent economic sta-
bility.

TABLE 6. RESPONDENTS: CURRENT FAMILY'S ECONOMIC STABILITY	
FINANCIAL STABILITY	RESPONSES
Stable	17
Working Towards	4
Unstable	5
Respondents, N=26, report their current financial status	

Data results indicate there is a correlation between

cohorts and primary caretaker in family of origin, il-
lustrated in Table 7. Respondents are grouped in three age
ranges and three categories. Of the 26 respondents, four
between the ages 25-35 were reared in a two parent family;
nine between ages 36-45 were reared in a two parent family,
two between the ages of 46-55 were reared in a two parent
family. Of those reared by their mother, a single parent,
four were between 25-35, two were between 36-45, and there
were none between the ages of 46-55. Those reared by their
father, a single parent were, one between 25-35, none be-
tween 36-45, and one between 46-55. Those reared by grand-
parents were, one between 25-35, one between 36-45, and one
between 46-55.

TABLE 7. RESPONDENTS' FAMILY OF ORIGIN: PRIMARY CARETAKER.		
AGE RANGES AND RESPONSES		
Age Range (cohort groups) 25-35	36-45	46-55
Primary Caretaker:		
Both parents 4	9	2
Mother (single parent) 4	2	0
Father (single parent) 1	0	1
Grandparents 1	1	1

N=26   Respondents are divided into 3 groups according to age
and primary caretaker.

Looking at cohort groups and whether they were reared
in single or two parent families (Table 7) showed that nine
(75%) of the 12 in the cohort group between ages 36-45 were

reared in two parent families, and the remaining three were reared by single parents or by grandparents. Whereas, of the ten cohorts between ages 25-35, less than half (40%) were reared in two parent families, five (50%) were reared in single parent families and the remaining one (10%) was reared by grandparents. Of the four cohorts between 46-55, two (50%) were reared in two parent families, one (25 %) was reared in a single parent family, and one (25%) was reared by grandparents. Results show that the two older cohort groups tended to be reared by two parent families, while the younger group tended to be reared in single parent families. This is another indicator that there are societal influences that may be effecting African-American families.

Whether a respondent was reared in a single parent family did not seem to have negative effects in the outcome of their social adjustment. Of the eight who adjusted early five were from single parent families, and the remaining three were from two parent families. The pattern in the other categories showed equal division between single parent, both parents, and grandparents. Presented in Table 8 are 12 categories which were organized according to responses related to what respondents believed would help African-Americans achieve social and economic stability. Nearly all (25) of the 26 respondents indicated that African-American history was an integral part of developing self-identify, a component for achieving stability. A majority (22) of the

26 respondents indicated that education was the key. A collective struggle was indicated by 11 of the 26 respondents. Of the 13 single, not married respondents, ten were interested in a compatible relationship with a female, and the other three respondents were gay. Identifying a power base/God was indicated by seven of the 26 respondents. Avoid the dependent role was suggested by six of the 26 respondents, six of 26 suggestions that individuals need to start their own businesses, six of 26 suggested that individuals should provide stable home environments; and six of 26 suggested that various types of training programs should be available. Federal aid was suggested by only two of the 26 respondents. The theme of these suggestions are "Self-empowerment and self-determination." According to the respondents, a collective struggle means African-Americans taking responsibility, the initiative to do for themselves; changing their mind set from the "victim's role" of "can't succeed." Rather, "Do not depend on the white man." If we take charge of our destiny, "we can make it, we're our own solution."

TABLE 8. INTERVIEW RESPONSES: NEEDS FOR ACHIEVING STABILITY	
CATEGORIES	RESPONSES
Self-identity/African-American History	25
Education	22
A collective struggle/Successful African-Americans return and help rebuild community (do not wait for next generation)	11
Compatible relationship with a female	10
Identify power base/God	7
Avoid dependent role	6
Various types of training	6
Start own businesses (base community around)	6
Job opportunities	4
Federal aid	2
Media exposure of middle (average) African-Americans	1
Stability impossible under the existing power structure	1
Categories of suggestions with the number of respondents who made suggestions related to achieving social and economic stability in the African-American community.	

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative research conducted here did not support either the pathological-pathogenic (Karenga, 1988) or the biological determinism (Kamin, 1995) theories which are often cited to explain the social and economic disparities that exist between African-Americans and Anglo-Americans. It does, however, support the adaptive-vitality, and the social and environmental theories. To better understand the complex dimensions of the quality of life African-American men experience, this study explored with respondents, across strata, their experiences and their understanding of these

experiences. Results are presented in three categories:
bias treatment; coping responses, and adjustment patterns.

Bias Treatment

Some form of racial discrimination was experienced by
24 (92%) of the 26 respondents. The remaining two (7%) re-
ported they were not sure if they had experienced it or not,
and if so it was subtle. One stated that his struggles "may
be me or it may be discrimination."

School Experiences:

Some respondents remembered experiencing racial dis-
crimination as early as grade school, grades 1-6 (Table 5).
A respondent remembers riding a school bus caring all Afri-
can-American students through an Anglo-American neighbor-
hood. The children from the neighborhood threw rocks at the
bus and yelled "niggers". Another respondent reported
experiencing forced integration while in grade 6. He stated
that he became sensitive to the differences in mannerism and
speech, "theirs (Anglo-Americans) were correct, ours wer-
en't." Respondent believes that such experiences resulted
in his struggles with previous identity problems.

Similar incidents were cited by other respondents
during junior high school, grades 7-9 (Table 5). A respon-
dent "saw difference and felt racial tension" and con-
sequently, his "grades weakened." Efforts were made by
school official to put him in remedial classes. However,
his mother intervened, and later he qualified to be placed

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in advanced classes. This incident supports another respondent's perception that Anglo-American teachers do not expect African-Americans to do well. They immediately assume African-Americans are not capable.

On other occasions, respondents who had done well during grade school began to have behavior problems during junior high school. A respondent who had experienced racial discrimination during grade school developed a "conduct problem." Another respondent, who had attended a predominately Anglo-American private school for eight years, stated he started "messing up in 9th grade" when he was promoted and transferred to a mixed school. He was eventually "kicked out. I just wanted to be bad. It had nothing to do with racism." This same respondent, on the other hand, reported that looking back he realized that he was struggling with identity problems, and that if he had been taught African-American history, it would have "strengthened" him "to compete" in a positive way.

Increased incidents of racial discrimination were experienced by respondents during high school, grades 10-12 (Table 5). A respondent reported that after attending an all African-American school during grades 1-10, he was bused to a predominantly Anglo-American school. He was "shocked" to find that subjects were being taught which African-American students "had never even heard of." He stated African-American students were academically behind two years. Other

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respondents reported similar experiences. Others related
how they had not been academically challenged in all Afri-
can-American schools because they were substandard and
deprived. Others remembered positive experiences while
attending all African-American schools. It appears, ac-
cording to this study, that African-American students who
should be challenged to perform academically are often
burdened with defending their skin color and protecting
themselves from the prejudice connotations connected to it.
African-American History:

African-American history is considered bias treatment
in this study because it is notably absent from the overall
primary academic curriculum. Among the respondents, the
general perception is that African-American history is a
major component for developing a positive self-image and an
appreciation of self-worth. Of those who received an in-
depth education, whether formally or informally, tended to
make transitional adjustments much easier during their
primary education. Several commented on their early educa-
tion in African-American history: "good foundation...good
self-image...never felt ashamed;" develop a "strong self-
image;" "knew who I was."

Many of the respondents reported that their exposure to
a well rounded education in African-American history was
first experienced in college. The resulting effects of this
education are expressed by respondents: "impact on my think-

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ing maturely;" "stimulated interest...grades improved;"
"more conscious as a Black to do well;" before African-
American studies, "initially thought Black was something I
was stuck with, African-American history was not needed, I'm
an American." Others expressed feeling a void left by the
absence of African-American history: "It would have helped
if I knew about my own race, its contribution to soci-
ety...not much good learned about Blacks." This study
indicates that African-American history had a profound
impact on African-Americans who studied it.

Employment Experiences:

Over half of the respondents experienced racial dis-
crimination specifically in the job market, Table 4. Many
report they have the necessary qualifications, but are often
denied the position. Illustrations of this: One respondent
reported being qualified for a position with three years of
experience, but a new graduate student got the position;"
another "qualified to have access to information for promo-
tion, but the information was withheld." Yet another re-
spondent reported that he was initially denied a position by
an assistant manager, then was later interviewed by the
manager who was impressed with his qualification and hired
him. The Respondent believed that he was initially denied
the position by the assistant manager because of racial
discrimination, not because he did not qualify.

There were instances when respondents, working as

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service representatives, were initially accepted over the telephone by customers whose attitude changed when they realized the representatives were African-Americans: "phone customer accepted my advice until he realized I was Black;" yet another, "a telephone request for a service representative, but when I showed up, he refused the service." Respondents perceive these incidents as racially motivated.

Social Environment:

Respondents often had to deal with racial slurs. Example of racial slurs: A respondent reported that other African-American students told him "You're acting white" because they considered "I was smart." An Anglo-American co-worker was over heard saying "work with vigor, you may be replaced by a nigger." Other respondents reported being "called nigger by the police." Others have been told by an Anglo-American, "You don't sound Black." Respondents perceived these incidents racially motivated. Some respondents reported feeling socially ostracized by their own African-American peers during their primary educational years because of their fair skin complexion, they were smart, or their family was financially well off.

Coping Responses

Respondents report various coping responses to racial discrimination. Many have chosen to return to school to improve their chances in the job market. Respondents who were not married, many explained they remained single be-

cause they had chosen to "focus on getting an education."
Others stated they had waited until they were financially
stable to support a wife and family. Examples of individual
strategies for coping included: "developed good work hab-
its...poor study habits;" "did well in school to overcome
stigma of being black in a white school;" "Came to live
with discrimination as a part of life;" "have become use to
discrimination, instances of it no longer resinate. I try
to address them, then get rid of;" "...studied more in
depth African-American history;" "challenged" unfair prac-
tices.

Some respondents expressed negative responses to exper-
iences of discrimination. For example, a respondent stated
that during his early school years, "I fooled around, par-
tied,...got suspended from school...didn't want to appear a
nerd---smart, acting white or a sissy...I tried gang-bang-
ing." Such "acting-out" behavior was demonstrated by the
consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs, and getting into
problems with the legal system. Another respondent reported
he dropped out of school in the eleventh grade because he
was denied entrance into his school of choice, and the
school he subsequently attended was not "academically chal-
lenging."

It appears that the underlining motivation of negative
behavior is defeatist self-messages. A reoccurring theme
among the respondents was that it was unpopular to be smart.

If one was smart, he was "acting white," or he was "differ-
ent, better, not like other Blacks." Those who did not
internalize this concept indicated good self-worth: good
self-images, and knew who they were.

Adjustment Patterns

In efforts to deal with bias treatments in academic,
employment and other social settings, and the void left by
the absence of African-American history, respondents devel-
oped various coping responses which resulted in different
types of adjustment patterns. Categories of adjustment
patterns are listed and defined below.

Early adjustment: Respondents in this group went through
primary education without a run-in with the legal system,
substance abuse, or became a behavior problem in school.
However, they were progressive and went on to pursue a
secondary education and professional career.

Early adjustment with limited difficulty: Respondents in
this group developed behavior problems that were demon-
strated in school during the first two-thirds of primary
education, but ceased during the last third. No history of
substance abuse nor a run-in with the legal system was
reported. They too, were progressive and went on to pursue
a secondary education and professional career.

Later adjustment with difficult: These respondents experi-
enced difficulty in school through-out their primary educa-
tion. Adjustment occurred during early adulthood. They

later returned to school to pursued a secondary education and some pursued a professional career. Some reported a history of substance abuse and/or a run-in with the legal system, while others denied such experiences.

Continues to struggle: Respondents continue to struggle towards social and economic stability. They have had legal system involvement and a history of substance abuse.

Inadequate adjustment: Currently is homeless, and self-medicating with alcohol and/or illegal drugs. They have had legal system involvement.

According to these categories, there are coping responses to racial discrimination that individuals used successfully for social and economic adjustment. Specifically identifying these components of success would be beneficial within the African-American community.

A majority of respondents reported struggling with various aspects of racial discrimination, however, most managed to establish social and economic stability. Neither the pathological-pathogenic or the biological theoretical approaches explain how the majority of these respondents in this study overcame racial oppression to become socially adjusted and successful. Results of this study showed that African-American men are resilient in dealing with the complex, multidimensional effects of racial discrimination by creatively adapting coping responses, thus supporting both the adaptive-vitality and the social and environmental

theories. Analysis of the data revealed differences in cohort social adjustment which suggested societal influences. Shifts in family make-up between cohort groups were also indicators of societal influences.

African-American students who should be challenged to perform academically are often burdened with defending their skin color and protecting themselves from prejudicial connotations connected to it. Specifically identifying successful coping responses to racial discrimination would be beneficial within African-American communities. Respondents who learned to appreciate African-American history realized it had a profound impact by helping them develop a sense of self-worth.

Summary

A powerful slave labor control system was initiated by Anglo-Americans to maintain their labor supply for agricultural expansion. Thus Africans were forced into slavery and their dark skin became synonymous with inferior status. Such racism continues to exist in the United States. Subsequently, African-Americans, especially the men, continue to be subjected to social and economic disparities. Scientific studies and philosophical approaches have attempted to label the causes of these disparities.

The inquiry of this study sought a better understanding of the psychological, social, and economic experiences of African-American men and their perceptions of these exper-

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iences through a qualitative, exploratory approach. The purpose of this study is to contribute to social work practices by starting where African-American men are by allowing them to identify the causes of their social and economic struggles. The social work profession can then work with these individuals to help them achieve personal and social empowerment.

In addition to contending with life's demands, as every other American citizen must do, the African-American male must continually struggle with defending the color of his skin and the prejudicial connotations that come with it. Many have been successful despite barriers placed along their paths. Results of this study show that several respondents overcame psychological abuse imposed upon them while in a racist environment. Despite racial biases, the majority of the respondents moved on to become socially and economically stable (probably not equal to their Anglo-male counterparts). Comparison of cohort groups indicated that there have been societal influences which have effected African-American families. Majority of the respondents perceived class and racial discrimination as synonymous.

Respondents believe the solution for African-Americans to achieve social and economic stability requires a collective struggle in which African-Americans must change their mind set from the "victim's role" to responsible self and societal actualization. African-Americans need to take

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charge of their own destiny.

Conclusion

Historically, the socio-econo-political forces and values systems, along with social welfare responses to them have influenced the definition of African-Americans. Racism still exists in the United States and continues to place many African-American men under severe stress. Results from this study revealed that as early as grade school (grades 1-6) respondents experienced racial discrimination. Many reported experiencing racial discrimination during various phases of their lives.

Despite social and economic barriers, study results showed that the majority of respondents developed successful coping responses which enabled them to overcome many of these barriers. Respondents suggested ways African-Americans can achieve social and economic stability which is based on education with focus on African-American history to support self-identity, business achievement; and a collective struggle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research

Generalizing from the present sample to the population of African-American men is problematic because of the sample size and method. Since respondents were a convenient sampling, this study did not include a wide range of experiences which may account for the majority of respondents reporting economic and social stability.

More definitive examination is needed of the issues raised in this study relative to African-American men's coping responses, and comparison of cohort experiences. To further examine these issues, a combination of exploratory, grounded qualitative, and action research framework is recommended. The purpose for exploratory research would be to explore with African-Americans in their communities to determine needs, and methods for empowerment, and self-actualization. A grounded qualitative study would be to discover, develop, and provisionally verify the successful strategies many African-Americans have adopted to survive in a racist and competitive society. Action research would be implemented to expose social problems in the interest of linking research with action for social change. Action research would involve joint efforts of concerned professionals and members of the African-American community to seek and document problems and effect change.

Implications For Evaluation of Social Worker

On the micro level social workers involved in direct practice with African-American men should be educated and specifically trained in treatment models developed for working with African-American men and their families in regards to their unique experiences related to being Black males living within a White, male-dominated society. Counselors should select a self-help approach and emphasize the competence of the individual, a therapeutic method which affirms cultural uniqueness and self-direction.

On the macro level, social workers need to be familiarized with Action Research (Wagner, 1991) which exposes social problems in the interest of linking research with action for social change. This approach is a joint effort of people from various talents, credentials, experiences to create a self-help organization. Acting as mediator would be a main function of the social worker whose role would be linking people, and groups together. Making a needs assessment in the framework of action research, starting similarly to Table 8, requires systematic gathering of information by people who are both affected by a problem and want to solve that problem.

APPENDIX A

QUALITATIVE AND DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXPERIENCES

    A. Class or Racial Discrimination

        1. Do you ever remember experiencing what you believe to be racial discrimination? Example.

        2. Do you ever remember experiencing what you believe to be class discrimination? Example.

    B. During Developmental Years and Educational Experiences

        1. As a child growing up, what type of support system did you have? For example, people you could count on.

        2. As a child growing up, was there a role model who you admired and wanted to be like?

    C. Employment Experiences

        1. What have been your experiences in the job market?

        2. How have your past social experiences effected your choices in assuming the role of husband and father? Example.

        3. How have your past educational experiences effected your choices in assuming the role of husband and father? Example.

        4. How have your past job related experiences effected your choices in assuming the role of husband and father? Example.

        5. How have these experiences effected your family's stability? Example.

    D. Current Social and Economic Status Now Experiencing

        1. Looking back, what do you believe has had the most significant influence in contributing to your social and economic status which you are now experiencing?

2. What do you think could be done in helping African-Americans achieve satisfying social and economic stability?

3. If you could make some changes, what would be the one thing you would change about your life?

II. DEMOGRAPHICS

A. <u>Vital Statistics</u>

1. What year were you born:
2. What year were you born:
3. What county do you live in:

B. <u>Family History</u>

1. Raised by:
2. Number of siblings in family:
3. How were things for you economically as a child growing up?

C. <u>Education</u>

1. Highest grade completed?

2. Special training:

3. What were your educational experiences like in Elementary school?   Public   Private

4. What were you educational experiences like in Jr. high school?   Public   Private

5. What were your educational experiences like in High school? Public   Private

6. What were your educational experiences like in College?   Public   Private

7. Were you taught African-American history in school? If so, during what grades, and in which states?

D. <u>Employment</u>

1. What type of employment do you usually hold? How long:

2. Previous employment: How long:

3. Last year, what was your gross income for your entire family?

E. <u>Marital Status</u>

1. Single Married Widowed Divorced
   Separated   Other:

2. Current living arrangements:
   With whom:

F. <u>Health</u>

1. Basic health:
2. Disability:
3. Substance abuse
4. Other:

G. <u>Legal History</u>

1. Never arrested or jailed:
2. Other:

H. <u>Religious Affiliation</u>

1. Protestant Catholic Methodist Other

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to investigate African-American men's experiences and/or perceptions of class or racial discrimination in relation to their social and economic status, education, job opportunity, and employment. This study is being conducted by Mellace S. Thomson under the supervision of Dr. James Bush, professor of Clinical Social Work at the California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB). This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of CSUSB.

In this study you will be interviewed by Ms. Thomson. The interview is expected to last approximately 1 to 1-1/2 hours. Questions will be limited to the above stated issues as they relate to African-American men.

Please be assured that any information you provide will be held in strict confidence by the researchers. At no time will your name be reported along with your responses. All data will be reported in group form only.

The reason for conducting this research is to explore with African-American men their social and economic experiences, and their understanding of these experiences; thus, gain novel and fresh innovative information regarding this population. The intent is to focus on beginning where individuals are, thus allowing African-American men to identify what their own social and economic problems are and

their causes. To avoid creating bias responses, we are asking that you do not reveal the nature of this study to other potential subjects.

At the conclusion of this study, you may receive a report of the results. To obtain results, please make your request known to the interviewer at the time of your interview. Should you have any questions or concerns as a result of your participation in this study, please contact either Ms. Thomson or Dr. Bush through the:

Social Work Department

California State University, San Bernardino

5500 University Parkway

San Bernardino, CA 92407.

Telephone: (909) 880-5501

Professional mental health resources are available through your county's Department of Mental Health, should you have mental health related concerns as a result of your participation in this study:

Los Angeles County Dept. of Mental Health

(213) 738-4961

Orange County Dept. of Mental Health

(714) 935-6061

Riverside County Dept. of Mental Health

(909) 358-4500

San Bernardino County Dept. of Mental Health

(909) 387-7171

San Diego Department of Mental Health

(619) 557-0500

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and under-
stand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely
consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18
years of age.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

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