

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PEER INFLUENCE AS FACTORS
CONTRIBUTING TO HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION
AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

by

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ABSTRACT

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The study employed a non-experimental survey design to assess social support and peer influence as contributing factors to high school completion among 203 African American males between 18 and 24 years old. The participants completed a paper and pencil or online self report survey comprised of demographics, past psychosocial factors, the friends measure of the Texas Christian University/ Prevention Management and Evaluation System scales on family, friends, and self (TCU/PMES), and the Young Adult Social Support Index (YA-SSI). T-tests were used to evaluate the differences between participants who completed high school and participants who did not. A step-wise logistic regression model was used to determine which variables remained

significant while controlling for certain past psychosocial factors. Of the social support networks, social support from teachers, counselors, and administrators followed by spiritual beliefs were the most significant predictors of high school completion. The single best predictor of high school completion among the participants was peer influence. Based on these findings, implications for social work practice, policy and future research are presented.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

High school graduation is a fundamental first step toward having positive life choices and economic opportunities (New Jersey Sustainable State Institute, 2000). High school drop out in the United States continues to be a serious problem. This is especially problematic given that completing high school is vital in order to access jobs that pay above the minimum wage and to continue to post secondary education for the labor force (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2005):

a dropout is a student in grades nine through 12 who fits any of the following criteria: was enrolled in the district during the previous school year; was not enrolled at the beginning of the succeeding school year; has not graduated or completed a program of study by the maximum age established by the state; has not transferred to another public school district, to a non-public school or to a state-approved educational program; or a student who has left school for reasons other than death, illness, or school-approved absence (para 5).

There is a high school dropout epidemic in the United States (U.S). The rates are alarmingly high. The national average dropout rate is 14 percent. This implies that 14 percent of 16 to 24 year olds who are not enrolled in high school, did not graduate. According to Orfield, Lonsen, Wald & Swanson (2004), of those students who enter the ninth grade, only 68 percent

will graduate. Each year, nearly one-third of students and half of African American students fail to graduate with their class (Bridgeland, DiIulio, Morison, 2006). In the last 15 years, almost 500,000 10th- through 12th-grade students left school each year without graduating (Institute of Educational Services, 2002). Since the United States is the wealthiest and one of the most industrialized countries in the world, one could assume that the U.S. would be in the lead in regards to school completion, but this is not the case. The United States is in 10th place in terms of high school completion around the world (Barton, 2005). Initially, this might not seem problematic, but according to Diplomas Count, 1.2 million United States 12th graders did not graduate high school in 2006 with their peers (Maurer & Lillie, 2006). This implies that either these youngsters dropped out or had to repeat a grade.

There is no single reason why students drop out of high school. Reasons range from, being bored at school, to having life situations come up, to lack of support from school personnel. Regardless of the reason, dropping out of school leads to frightening outcomes, which include unemployment, lower wages for those who are employed, incarceration, mental health problems and other family and societal problems.

Consequences of School Dropout

High school dropouts are 72 percent more likely to be unemployed because having a high school diploma is a necessity for being employed (Civil Rights Project, 2005). The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) reveals that dropouts are less likely to be employed within one year than high school graduates. Additionally, only 40 percent of those who dropped out are employed at any give time (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003). Employment projections indicate that in 2008 there will be a nine percent increase from 2003 in jobs requiring a high

school diploma (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e). However, unemployment is not inevitable.

As previously mentioned, 40 percent of dropouts are employed at any given time, but the rate of pay is far less than that of a high school graduate (Rumberger, 2001). In 2005, the average income for high school dropouts was \$17,299 compared to the average income for high school graduates being \$26,933 (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). This is a difference of \$9,634 for completing the 12th grade, which is quite significant. Additionally, dropouts are three times more likely to live below the poverty level than are graduates. These meek wages might not be enough for survival, thus possibly leading them to the next consequence; imprisonment.

Most are not prepared for unemployment or making the minimum wage, thus potentially leading these individuals to the involvement in illegal activities (Orfield, Losen & Wald, 2004). Some of the illegal activities include but are not limited to illegal drug sales, theft, and forgery (Somers & Piliawsky, 2004; Lever, Sander, Lombardo, Randall, Axelrod, Rubenstein. & Weist, 2004).

There is a very strong correlation between school dropout and imprisonment. Seventy-five percent of America's state prison inmates and 59 percent of the federal prison inmates are high school dropouts (Harlow, 2003; National Education Association, 2003). Studies reveal that a mere one percent increase in high school graduation rates could possibly save the U.S. \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs, or approximately \$2,100 for each male graduate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003). In addition to imprisonment, dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than graduates to be arrested (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003). Studies also reveal that a one-year increase in education levels could reduce arrest rates by approximately 10 percent

(Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003), thus confirming the importance of graduating from high school.

Being unemployed, earning the minimum wage and going to prison can all have detrimental affects on one's mental health (McNeal, 1995). This poorer mental health could be caused by various situations such as the stress of looking for a job, not having enough money to pay the bills, and having lower self esteem from not having the basic essentials required for decent employment. Dropping out of school can only lead to bleak outcomes for those individuals but there are also major societal consequences to dropping out of high school.

Studies suggest that individuals who do not complete high school are costing the United States a great deal of money. For example, if the students who dropped out in 2007 had graduated, the economy would have had an additional \$329 billion dollars in tax revenue and earnings over their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). School dropouts are two times as likely as high school graduates to receive public assistance (Rumberger, 2001). Dropouts drain even more money from tax revenues, because they are more likely to receive unemployment, public assistance and other tax-funded social services. Since dropouts are more likely to wind up in jail, this too is another cost because incarceration is quite expensive (Moss, 2001). These detrimental consequences have not gone unnoticed.

Educational outcomes, in particular school completion, have been such an area of concern that in 1990 state governors and the United States president adopted six educational goals which were later expanded to eight in the year 2000 (Rumberger, 2001). Specifically, one of the goals was that the graduation rate in the U.S. by the year 2000 would be at least 90 percent. To assist with the goals, the government established the Goals 2000: Educate America

Act, which has awarded over 1.2 billion dollars to participating states to implement new activities and approaches to encourage school completion (Rumberger, 2001). Even though great strides were made, the high school completion goal was not quite met. According to Green & Winters (2002) who analyzed statistics from the US Department of Education database, the graduation rate in 2000 for public high schools was 69 percent.

Despite these efforts by the governors, the problem still remained. In January of 2002, President George W. Bush, who was then one of the governors involved in creating these goals, signed the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. This would require high schools to show adequate progress in graduation rates (Chudwosky & Gayler, 2005). NCLB aims to increase achievement for every student, encourage the education community to use proven teaching methods, and it holds schools accountable for student learning.

Based on a recent study by the Harvard Civil Rights Project, NCLB “has not had a significant impact on improving reading and math achievement across the nation and states [and] the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and math achievement, continues to persist after NCLB.” (Lee, 2006, p.10). Former secretary of education, Rod Paige, said that the “high school system is not serving some kids well. We are facing an unrecognized educational crisis in this country.” So, despite the governors coming together and President George W. Bush implementing NCLB, school dropout continues to be a serious problem, especially for African American males.

Statement of the Problem

African American males have the lowest graduation rate of any subgroup (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2006). Nationally, the graduation rate for African American

males is around 50 percent (Orfield, 2004; Green & Winters, 2002), which is about 20 percent lower than the rate for White males (Schott Foundation, 2006).

The aforementioned consequences of high school dropout are severe, but for African American males, the outcomes are even bleaker. In 2002, the unemployment rate of African Americans 20-24 years old who did not graduate from high school was 32 percent (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).

Incarceration not only is a consequence of school dropout, it greatly affects the African American male community. African American males only make up about six percent of the nation's population, but make up over half of the male prison population (Mauer, 1999; Shaw, 2000). Over half of African American male high school dropouts have prison records (Jones, 2003), revealing a strong correlation between being an African American male school dropout and incarceration. Gay (2003) stated that the Justice Policy Institute examination of recent U.S. Justice Department statistics revealed that 13 percent of White male school dropouts had prison records by the time they were in their early 30s, and an astounding 52 percent of African American male dropouts in the same age bracket had records. Statistics also suggest that African American males born in the early 90's have a 29 percent chance of spending time in prison, while the imprisonment percentages for White and Hispanic males respectively are four and sixteen (Mauren, 1999). In fact, one in three African American males between 20 and 29 years old is under some type of criminal supervision on any given day. These men are either on parole, probation, or are incarcerated. Incarceration is one of the more severe consequences of high school dropout, but there are others for this population.

A presentation by Mosby and Esters (2006) for Morgan State University revealed that over 40 percent of African American men are technically illiterate. This means that these men are not reading above the fourth grade level. Adult illiteracy potentially costs taxpayers \$224 billion and companies \$40 billion per year (National Reading Panel, 1999).

The Morgan State University presentation also revealed the fact that suicide in the African American community has increased 146 percent and most of this increase is due to African American males. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, a common reason for suicide given by suicide survivors was school problems.

Extensive research conducted by the Schott Foundation for Public Research (2006) focused on African American male students across the country revealed that African American males students being suspended, expelled, and placed in special education was disproportionately higher than that of White male students. Each of these is important to consider when examining graduation rates, because each could lead to school dropout. One could argue that these are affects of institutional racism. Jones (1997) defined institutional racism as “laws, customs, and practices that systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in American society” (p.438). Regardless of the reason, African American male school dropout is a major phenomenon that requires much attention.

The facts and statistics previously mentioned reflect serious issues associated with school dropout. The dropout rate remains prevalent, especially for African American males, revealing a need to identify the strongest factors that contribute to high school completion among African American males. Efforts to reduce the dropout rate require an understanding of protective and risk factors that may mitigate these youth from dropping out of school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine whether social support and peer influence are critical factors in promoting high school completion among African American males. While the literature is robust with various factors associated with dropout rates, there remained many unanswered questions associated with solutions to this problem. Chapter two will present an overview of current empirical and theoretical literature addressing this topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

School dropout has been a baffling issue for some time. The factors associated with the problem are complex and impact the individual, family, peers, school, and community . A discussion of theoretical literature as well as a review of empirical literature regarding high school dropout risk and protective factors relevant to African American males will be presented.

Definition of terms

Protective factor is a specific circumstance or behavior (i.e. having a mentor) that decreases the likelihood of negative outcomes (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001).

Risk factor is a specific circumstance or behavior (i.e. having parent who dropped out of school) that increases the likelihood of a negative outcome (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001).

Social Support is caring and supportive interpersonal transactions that protect from negative occurrences. These transactions come through various networks (i.e. family, peers, school, community) (Lu, 1997; Lacy, 2005). This support is accessible to individuals through social ties to individuals, groups and the community (Lin, Simeone, Ensel, & Kuo, 1979).

Peer Influence is the influence one's peers have on decision- making based on the types of activities in which they participate (Brown, 1999).

A systematic literature search was conducted to identify risk and protective factors related to high school drop out. Descriptors such as “dropout”, “dropping out”, “school

withdrawal” “school dropout”, risk, protective and other synonyms were used to search various reference databases. These computer databases included: Education Research Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, and PsycInfo. The initial search yielded an abundance of literature pertaining to high school drop out. It was then decided that only those empirical and theoretical articles that were published between 1996 and 2007 would be reviewed.

Although this review is lengthy, it is not exhaustive. A number of theories have been used to explain school dropout and currently there is not one single theory that can best explain this phenomenon, especially as it relates to African American males. Understanding what variables contribute to a student dropping out of school is very important but extremely complex since many distal and proximal factors influence this action.

Theoretical Review

Numerous theories and perspectives have been used to explain and assess school dropout. This section will present a review of certain theories and perspectives used to explain dropping out of school that encompass individual and environmental factors. The author has chosen to review the individual perspective, the ecological perspective, and social support theory as they pertain to school dropout.

Individual Perspective

The most common explanation for dropping out of school focuses on the characteristics of individual students. The construct of risk is common as it relates to school dropout. Often this construct is divided into two categories: social and academic (Anness & Wichterle, 2001). The individual perspective focuses on factors associated with the individual in regards to a certain

behavior (dropping out). Risk factors associated with school dropout will be discussed in detail later, but a few examples will be given.

Academic risk factors (disengagement). Academic disengagement is perceived in the attitudes and behaviors with respect to two aspects of school: formal (e.g., classroom) and informal (e.g., peer relationships at school) (Rumberger, 2001). For example, lack of self-determination and lack of motivation have been found to be risk factors related to school drop out (Hess and Copeland, 2001). Also, students who have high levels of absenteeism (Reyes, 1993; Vitaro, Larcque, Janosz, & Tremblay, 2001; Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo & Hurley, 1998; Hunt, Meyers, Meyers, Rogers & Neel, 2002; Crowder & Teachman, 2004) and grade level retention (Bowman, 2005; Jimerson, Gabrielle & Whipple, 2002; Lagana, 2004) are likely to dropout.

It has also been suggested that students who have peer relationships at school with conflict are less likely to be academically successful (Bounds & Gould, 2000). When there is conflict, the student may spend more time thinking about the conflict than his or her schoolwork.

Baker (1999) found that students with negative feelings toward their teachers and classroom had low school satisfaction. In this situation, a student could display his or her feelings through various behaviors, such as not participating in class, skipping class, not showing respect to his or her teacher and then ultimately dropping out of school. This study also found the opposite to be true. Students who perceived their teachers as supportive and had positive classroom feelings had high school satisfaction, which is a protective factor associated with dropping out. Moving from academic engagement, social risk factors (disengagement) will be briefly addressed.

Social risk factors (disengagement). Social disengagement is reflected in the student's attitudes and behavior in terms of family, peers, and the community. For example, one could see a student and be able to tell if there is a positive relationship between him and his family. Signs of this could include; not wanting to go home, hiding things from parents, always being closed off in the bedroom, or not showing respect to family members.

While this theory provides a useful framework for analyzing reasons students drop out of school, it does have its limitations. It accounts for the student's feeling but does not account for the environment in which the student is surrounded. A different theoretical perspective is required to explain this aspect. The ecological perspective explains some of this aspect of the problem.

Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective stresses the idea that development is affected by the environment in which it occurs (Conard & Novick, 1996). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological-developmental model allows one to view the effects of individual–setting relationships and societal interactions that may not directly impact the individual. This perspective also emphasizes the numerous contexts in which development occurs. It distinguishes between general features of a context (e.g., two-parent vs. single-parent household) and the interactions (e.g., teacher–student interactions) that take place within that particular environment. Related to this orientation, is work done by the Search Institute.

The Search Institute (2006) has developed 40 developmental assets that have the capability to influence choices of adolescents to become productive adults. There are eight asset types under which the developmental assets fall. One of those asset types that is extremely

related to this research is ‘Support’. The developmental assets in this asset type are family support, positive family communication, other adult relationships, caring neighborhood, caring school climate and parent involvement in school, a community that values youth, and a caring school climate. These assets were developed utilizing the ecological perspective as the central framework.

Through the ecological lens, the community in which a student resides becomes a central part of the students environment and can positively or negatively influence dropout rates by providing student friendly jobs, after school programs, drop-out-prevention programs and more. Additionally, peers can greatly influence one another. Peer interactions are essential in exploring school dropout, especially among African American males. Peers can positively influence one another by merely participating in certain activities, such as sports, preparing for college, completing homework, and not getting in trouble with the law (Simpson, 1998). Conversely, peers can have negative influence on each other, by getting in trouble with the law, skipping class, dropping out of school, and not completing homework (Byrk, 2004). A student is more likely to make positive choices and graduate from high school if he has more friends who participate in positive activities.

The ecological perspective, like the individual perspective, also takes into account the individual’s internal feelings. These feelings are important and impact the individual’s interactions with the environment. For example, two studies found that students who had negative feelings toward school were less likely to be engaged in any school activities, thus potentially leading to school dropout (Blasco, 2004; McCall, 2003). By applying the aforementioned tenets, researchers have attempted to explain dropping out of high school. Hess

(2000) reviewed dropout literature through an ecological lens. She noted that much research has primarily focused on demographic and socioeconomic factors and stated the importance of examining dropping out through this lens. This perspective is appropriate for looking at dropping out since the environment is a very important influential factor (Murry et al., 2001). This is a critical perspective since the dropout rate is so vastly different between Caucasian and African American males.

Research testing the ecological perspective in regards to high school dropout has primarily focused on the interactions between the parents and the student in various settings. Baker (1999) conducted a study where she examined the interactions between students and teachers through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. She found that students who had positive feelings about their teachers had positive school outcomes.

Another study, to be discussed in further detail later in this paper, suggested that students who attended schools that used temporary buildings or had broken windows were more likely to drop out of school (Branham, 2004). This study speaks to the relevance of the school environment on student's attitude toward school. Students have no sense of pride being in a structurally run down school. Schools that have these problems are more often in urban areas where the majority of the students are low-income and minority thus, African Americans students are more likely than Caucasian students to attend these types of schools.

While the ecological perspective can be used to explain many aspects of school dropout, it too has limitations that prohibit it from explaining all of aspects. According to the ecological development model, attention to broad demographic features of contexts alone offers limited explanatory power, which highlights the need for other theoretical perspectives used to assess the

issue of school drop out. Although characteristics and concepts can be identified through the ecological and individual lens that promote or cause constraints on the individuals in regards to dropping out of school, these concepts require further explanation. Social support is one such concept that has been established as essential in protecting from adverse effects.

Social Support

Social support is a commonly studied concept as it pertains to adolescents. Social support is viewed as foremost means to well being (Cook, Rossmann, McCubbin, & Patterson, 1988). It is a transactional process within the ecological context (Vaux, 1988). The linkage between support resources and behavior are of theoretical importance. Social support is a multidimensional concept that is communicated by support providers and perceived by the recipient in ways that enhance his well being (Richman, Rosenfeld, Bowen, 1998).

Cook et al. (1988) and Richman, Rosenfield, & Hardy,(1998) established various types of supportive behaviors which are divided into four broad categories which include: 1. emotional support-providing caring, love, trust, and listening. 2. Instrumental support-tangible assistance, personal assistance, or any direct help. 3. Informational support: Advice, suggestions, 4. Appraisal Support- providing affirmations, self-evaluation, and feedback. These types of support are received from various social support networks (family, peers, school, community, church). Cook et al. (1988) defined social networks as a social structure consisting of individual or groups and support is contingent upon ties to these networks.

Richman, et al. (1998) maintain that social support serves two majors roles: contributing to development and adjustment, and providing a buffer against stress. After evaluating results collected from a study assessing levels and types of support, they found that peers and parents

were major sources of support for students. Social support has been empirically proven to be important to students. With students facing so much, having a buffer against stressors and negativities that are faced is essential. Davis (1991) states that African American students can use social support systems to assist them in overcoming many social and psychological difficulties.

Literature assessing social support among African American males has found social support to be an important factor in their well-being. Lack of social support potentially leads to detrimental outcomes such as high school dropout. Although there is limited research evaluating social support among African American males regarding high school completion, literature has established the importance of social support on decision making among high school students especially school completion or dropout (Rumberger, 2001; Lange, 2001; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; (Anness & Wichterle, 2001; Scanlon & Mellard, 200).

Conclusion

The theories reviewed; individual perspective, ecological perspective, and social support, each contribute to explaining aspects of school drop out, however together they provide a more comprehensive explanation of school dropout among African American males. Although research has been inconclusive in identifying a single theory that explains school drop out among African American males, the ones mentioned have combined to provide a framework that addresses important factors. A large body of research has identified many factors related to school drop out and school completion. Next, some of these risk and protective factors will be discussed.

Empirical Review

The empirical review yielded several risk and protective factors related to high school drop out. There are various ways in which risk and protective factors are defined. Some have defined these factors as being the opposite ends of the same variable (Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington, Wikstrom, 2002). For the purposes of this review, a protective factor is a specific circumstance or behavior that decreases the likelihood of negative outcomes. A risk factor is a specific circumstance or behavior that increases the likelihood of a negative outcome (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001). For students who have high levels of risk factors, it is imperative that protective factors (social support) be developed at all levels: individual, family, school, peer, and community.

Research is limited in regards to African American males and school dropout. Most of the studies found that examined this group, compared them to other racial groups or assessed reasons for dropping out. This section will present some of the risk factors related to dropping out of high school that are relevant to African American males. A review of protective factors in regards to social support systems and peer influence as they relate to school completion will follow.

The empirical review revealed many risk factors related to school dropout among all students and a few to be highlighted include factors related to race, sex, family income, household composition, and parent education background. Being a racial minority, in particular African American, (Ellickson, Saner, & McGuigan, 1997; Orfield, Losen, Wald & Swason 2004; Civil Rights Project, 2005; McCall, 2003; Brown, Higgins, Pierce, Hong, Thoma, 2003) and male (Baker, 1999; Hauser, Simmons, & Pager, 2000; Marjoribanks, 2002; Brown, Higgins,

Pierce, Hong, Thomas, 2003) are two very strong risk factors that contribute to dropping out of school. Residing in low-income households (McGranhan, 2004; Blasco, 2001; Martinez, DeGarmo, Eddy, 2004; Civil Rights Project, 2005; Lan, & Lanthier, 2003; McCall, 2003; Hunt et al., 2002; Majoribank, 2002; Vitaro, 2001) and single-parent households (McGranhan, 2004; Bateman & Kennedy, 1997; Hauser et al., 2000; McCall, 2003) are also associated with dropping out. Students from families in the lowest 20 percent of family incomes are six times more likely to dropout of school (U.S Department of Education, 2001). Reasons for this vary but include, having to work while in school and having to deal with various issues at home. Research has also found that students whose parents did not complete high school were more likely to dropout (Lange, 2001; McNeal, 1997). The previous risk factors discussed are a few of the more established factors related to school dropout, but there are various factors that require further discussion such as academic and school related risk factors.

Academic and School related Risk Factors

Numerous studies have suggested that the one of strongest indicators of school dropout is poor academic achievement (Carbonaro,1998; Balfanz, & Legters, 2001; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Majoribanks, 2002; Vitaro, et al., 2001; Hunt et al., 2002; Bounds & Gould, 2000). Making failing grades prevents students from being promoted to the next grade and some students would rather drop out than be held back. Related to this issue is high school exit exams (Chudowsky & Gayler, 2003), which could prove to be a risk factor. These exams determine whether a student is promoted to the next grade or permitted to graduate from high school (Thurlow & Johnson, 2000). Students who believed they have little chance of passing these exams may choose to leave school because they would not have been promoted to the next grade or been able to graduate.

For example, The TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) is an exit exam required for graduation that has been causing some controversy because many students are not passing the exam in its entirety. In 2005, 15 percent of African American high school seniors did not pass the exam compared to five percent of Caucasian students (Texas Education Agency, 2005).

Teachers play a significant role in the preparedness for this exam as well as the student's academic achievement, thus making it essential that teachers and school administrators implement alternative methods to help African American students achieve success. The student must believe that his teacher cares about his academic success, which leads to another risk factor.

The student's belief that his teacher(s) does not care about his academic success (Blasco, M., 2004; McCall, H., 2003) and the thought of his teachers as bad (Wonacott, 2002) are additional risk factors related to dropping out of school. But, some students who have dropped out of school believe dropping out was unavoidable.

Jancek (1999) conducted a study where 11 male school dropouts were interviewed. He conducted a focus group and some interesting findings were developed. They were asked what could have prevented them from dropping out. The majority stated *nothing* could have prevented it. When asked why they dropped out, the first most common response was *personal situation* meaning that something was occurring in their life that caused them to drop out and the second most common response was *lack of effort*. Truancy (Reyes, 1993), and cutting (skipping) class (Fallis & Opotow, 2003) are also associated with school drop out. Each of these factors seemingly implies that the student is not showing up for class. For instance, if one does not show up for class, he or she does not know what to study. If the student does not know what to

study then a passing grade is difficult to obtain, thus leading to grade retention or dropping out of school.

Reyes (1993) conducted a follow-up study where minority high school students were tracked for one year after their expected graduation date. This study proved to be valuable and unique in the body of dropout literature. Participants in the original study were 10th grade students attending a large public high school. The students were paired based on the classification of low or high risk. For the present study, school records and exit interviews were examined. Results indicated that 15 fifteen of the 24 (62.5 percent) high-risk students dropped out of school. Based on the analyses, the top reasons given for leaving school were excessive absenteeism. High absenteeism is associated with students not having transportation to school and skipping class. Students stated that the reason they skip class is because their teachers do not care about them and they see no reason to attend classes. One point to be highlighted is when graduates were compared to non-graduates there was only a significant difference in Overall School Satisfaction. This indicates that these students are more similar to one another than anticipated which dispels the thought that students who dropout of school are totally different from their counterparts.

Branham (2004) found that students attending a school that needed repairs or a school that used temporary buildings were more likely to drop out of school, which is most likely to occur in low-income areas where the majority of the student population is African American or Hispanic. As the ecological perspective suggests, one's environment and atmosphere influences one's beliefs and behaviors. Also, schools that were more likely to have trash on the floor and graffiti on the walls, most being in urban areas, proved to be an additional school drop out risk

factor (Institute of Education Sciences, 2005). The next link to the discussion of risk factors associated with dropping out of high school is family risk factors, which will be briefly discussed below. Typically, regarding the aspect of risk factors, family serves as a vital network in a student's school outcomes.

Family Risk Factors

Ones family not expressing love (Boveja,1998; Bickel, Weaver & Williams, 2001) and high family dysfunction (Franklin, 1992) were found to be risk factors associated with dropping out of school. Family pressure (Blasco, 2004; Hunt, Meyers, Meyers, Rogers & Neel, 2002), and communication gaps (Boveja, 1998) were also suggested as risk factors (Dorn, Bowen & Blau, 2006). In regards to family pressure, when a young person is pressured as opposed to encouraged to make better grades or do better on the playing field he or she will either give in or retreat. Many studies suggest that living in a single parent household is a risk factor of dropping out, leaving the assumption that the father is not involved. However, a young man's father can still be a role model without living under the same roof. Which leads to the discussion of protective factors. In particular, social support and peer influence are discussed from the perspective that these are both contributing factors to high school completion and dropout among African American males.

Social Support

Social support is seen as a critical protective factor for African American males in fostering positive outcomes in relation to school completion (Rosenfield & Richmand, 2002). Social support from family, peers, school, and other professionals has been found to be

extremely important for in general as well for African American males (Williams, Davis, Miller, Saunders, Williams, 2002)

Family support

Family support, in particular parental support, is recognized as the most important contributor to school success or failure (Rumberger, 2001; Lange, 2001; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Lange (2001) evaluated family involvement within the school. Fewer parent–child interactions in school-related matters appeared to precipitate disengagement from high school. The findings suggest that students whose parents were not involved with their school or extra curricular activities were more likely to dropout because there is essentially no one checking up on or supporting them.

A parent’s role is very pivotal as study findings revealed. Bouvery (2004) found that having authoritative parents contributed to a student’s decision to drop out of school. When young people feel as if they have no choices, they tend to shut down.

The most frequently found parental protective factor was parental encouragement and or support (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Murry et al., 2001; Alexander & Entwisle, 2001; Alexander et al., 1997; Hunt et al., 2002). Types of parental support included helping with homework, attending extra-curricular activities, encouraging the student, and providing positive reinforcement. Anguiano (2004) found parental school involvement and advocacy to also be protective factors. Types of parental involvement included attending PTA meetings, frequently checking the student’s grades (Easton, J. & Allensworth, E., 2001) and meeting with the teachers. The student’s parent having post-secondary education (Mahoney, J. & Cairns, R. 1997;

Anguiano, R., 2004; Hauser, R., Simmons, S., & Pager, D., 2000) also proved to be a deterrent to high school dropout.

Although parental support is extremely important, support from other family members is also essential. Marjoribanks (2002) found sibling support to be necessary and Anguiano (2004) found that extended family support was an important protective factor of high school drop out. Today, many grandparents and extended family members are raising children. Even if a student lives with his or her mother or father, extended family support could prove to be quite beneficial. This is especially relevant when considering the number of African American children being raised by their grandparents. Seventeen percent of African American children currently are being raised by grandparents (Henderson, & Stevenson, 2003).

East, Weisner, & Reyer (2006) found that students who cared for their sibling's child or children were more likely to graduate (East, Weisner, & Reyer, 2006). The students caring for their niece or nephew realized that an education was essential. While finding the importance of assisting family, these students did not want to have a child during their adolescence and have the attendant responsibility.

Bryan & Zimmerman (2003) surveyed 679 African American students about their role models. Their study found that African American males who identified their fathers as their role model had higher grades and had lower occurrences of truancy than their peers who identified another family member as a role model or stated that he did not have one. The study also suggested that those with a paternal role model were more likely to believe that they would complete high school than peers who did not have a male role model. And those who had no role models had the most negative outcomes. Role models can also be teachers and other school

officials. The fact that teachers and other school officials often serve as significant role models for students is an important resource. Research in this area supports this view, which leads to school as a support network.

School Support

Having a positive relationship with teachers was found to be a protective factor (McCall, 2003; Bounds & Gould, 2000). A positive relationship included the student feeling that he could turn to the teacher for support thus fostering a feeling that the teacher was trying to help. Another study found positive relationships with the school staff (principal, counselor) to be just as important (McCall, 2003). This is important, especially for African American males, because those at risk of dropping out may not have support at home or anywhere else, thus making the absence of school staff support a cause of dropping out of school.

Empirical literature has confirmed that dropout rates from private schools are significantly lower than those from public school (Rumberger, 2001). Private schools in general are smaller and studies have suggested that students attending small schools (less than 2000 students) were less likely to drop out than students attending large schools (more than 2000 students) (Anness & Wichterle, 2001; Scanlon & Mellard, 2002). Specifically, students in smaller schools are able to receive more attention and the student- teacher ratios and class sizes are smaller (Anness & Wichterle, 2001). African American male students most often attend large public high schools thus making them likely to become a dropout statistic. Branham (2004) conducted a study where he evaluated the infrastructure of the school as it related to high school dropout. His notion was that if there was one broken window that was not repaired there were many more to come, leading to the belief that the school was not being taken care of. The

implication is that if the school is not cared for, why would the students want to care for it?

Additionally the assumption is that the atmosphere was not conducive to learning. In addition to the teachers and staff playing a role another significant factor is that of peers. Peers support is another vital support network. Research below corroborates that fact.

Peer Support

Peer support, like the other support networks, is extremely important during adolescence. Some student spends more time with their peers than their family. Students tend to consult their peers for advice rather than family or teachers. Peers can greatly influence one another by merely suggesting things. Positive peer support is essential in high school completion. A positive peer relationship could include encouraging one another in regards to academic achievement, and deterring one another from risk behaviors. Research has indicated that students with negative peer relationships contribute to the dropout problem (Lagana, 2004).

Negative peer relationship pertains to the student feeling that he is alienated and or does not have support from his peers. Lagana (2004) conducted a study comparing African American students at various risk levels and results indicated that peer support were predictors of group membership. Peer support, in itself is not enough. Is the peer support aligned with positive activities or negative activities?

The current literature suggests that students who have trouble with peers (Bounds & Gould, 2000) or no peer support (Lagana, 2004) were at risk of dropping out of school. Research revealed that positive relationships with peers (Byrk, 2004). In addition to family, school, and peer support, the community sets the culture of conduct and accountability and is where the student resides as well as gets feedback on acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Community Support

The community can also impact dropout rates in a positive manner by providing student friendly jobs, after school programs and drop-out-prevention programs. A student friendly community that provides jobs is one where the student is scheduled to work after school hours and that allows for some flexibility respecting the importance of education as well as other life skills such as job training. While job training programs and student friendly jobs have been found to be beneficial to school completion, jobs have also been found to be a deterrent to graduation. McNeal (1997) found that those students who did not have a job were more likely to graduate. Those who did not work were seemingly more committed to school. The idea behind this finding may be that when a student has a job there is less available time to dedicate to studies. In addition to student friendly jobs, the community can also provide various types of after-school programs.

Somers & Piliawsky (2004) and Lever (2004) evaluated dropout prevention programs and their findings revealed that being involved in a program where the staff was very active with the participants and there were monthly guest speakers amongst other things contributed to high school graduation. Huang, et al. (2005) stated that after-school programs were found to benefit students by providing the students with supervision during a time when they could fall prey to deviant or anti-social behaviors—research has revealed that the rates for juvenile crimes peak during after-school (Forx, Flynn, Newman, & Christeson, 1999). Somers & Piliawsky (2004) and Lever (2004) evaluated dropout prevention programs and their findings revealed that being involved in a program where the staff was active with the participants and the participants had a sense of worth amongst other variables contributed to high school completion. These factors

motivated the students to continue participating in the program instead of getting involved in deviant acts. The programs provide avenues that may improve social skills, study technique and self-esteem.

Finally, along with or aside from these after school programs, tutoring programs assist in improving the student's academic achievement, which adds another protective factor against school drop out. Often times, classrooms are overcrowded and the teacher may not be able to assist each student, potentially leaving students behind and this is where tutoring programs shine. The absence or inadequacy of these programs is most likely to occur in urban areas. Many of the programs just provide a location for the students to wait until parents pick them up, but no teaching or educationally productive activities.

The community in which a student resides is a central part of an individual's environment and can positively influence dropout rates by providing student friendly jobs, after school programs, drop-out-prevention programs and more. There may be a combination of factors that account for these results. For example, these particular students may be having academic and family problems, which overshadow their abilities to meet school requirements.

Research suggests that role models and mentors seem to also be great deterrents for these situations, especially where the role model or mentor is of the same cultural background as the student (Aviles, Guerrero, & Thomas, 1999; Somers & Piliawsky, 2004). Role models and mentors, specifically African American men, are extremely important for young African American males.

Peer Influence

Not to be confused with peer support, peer influence pertains to the activities and affiliations in which one's peers participate. These activities include doing things to get in trouble, having college aspirations, one's parents knowing the peers, etc. Association with deviant peers has been found to be the greatest predictor of delinquent behavior (Kandel, 1985). Vitaro et al (2001) found that students who had peers who committed deviant acts were at risk of dropping out of high school. Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997) conducted an exploratory study with 191 high school students. They were interested in looking at peer affiliations and found that students who dropped out were more likely to have friends who have dropped out, more working friends, fewer school friends, fewer friend involved in extra curricular activities and fewer same sex friends.

Peers can also positively influence a student's commitment to stay in school and eventually graduate by their involvement. Involvement in positive social activities (Hess, R. & Copeland, E, 2001), and parents knowing the peers (Carbonaro, 1998) were all found to be protective factors from high school dropout. The parent knowing the peer suggests that the student will be less likely to engage in risky behaviors with the friend since the parent is familiar with him or her. Williams, Davis, Cribbs, Saunders, Williams, & Herbert (2002) conducted a study and discovered that African American youth who had peers who attended church, were more likely to have positive academic outcomes. Individual, family, school, community and peer factors are influential in deterring school dropout among African American males.

Discussion

The risk and protective factors associated with school drop out are very complex. While some of the found factors were not surprising, it is still not clear as to which protective factor is the strongest predictor of high school completion among African American males. The research suggests that parental support plays a vital role in the students decision to stay in or dropout of school. Generally, research suggests that regardless of many of the risk factors, parental involvement with the student's schooling is associated with better attendance, higher achievement test scores, and stronger cognitive skills (Novick, 1996). While, parental factors play an important role, it would be remiss to ignore the other factors; peer, community, school, and peer influence, because each play significant roles for students. The previous theoretical and literature review although extensive, revealed a need for additional research in particular to the African American male population.

Gaps/ Relation to other knowledge

Most of the studies on school dropout evaluate students at risk of school dropout but do not compare them to those who have completed school. None of studies reviewed, compared African American male school graduates to African American male dropouts. What is unknown about this topic is whether or not there is a difference in peer and family support between African American male high school graduates and dropouts. Additionally, the impact of peer influence on school completion among African American males has not been extensively evaluated. Research suggests many risk factors, but does not reveal which are the strongest indicators of dropping out amongst African American males. There are also very few studies where the dropout and graduate were compared. Another gap is the fact that there are essentially

no studies that ask the participants to reflect on their life around the time of school dropout or graduation and link these factors to dropping out of school. Building knowledge in this area will require additional research that answers questions about the why of high drop out rates among African American males. It is the focus of this study to address these gaps and push the literature to a greater level of understanding with this specific population. The proposed study intends to address the following research question:

What is the relationship between social support and peer influence on high school completion among African American males?

The following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: African American males who successfully complete high school are more likely to have positive peer influence as compared to African American males who do not complete school.

Hypothesis 2: African American males who graduate from high school will have more overall social support than African American males who dropped out of school *Hypothesis 3:* African American males with higher levels of social support from each of the social support networks (parents, sibling, peer, other relatives, school, church, and other professionals) are more likely to graduate from high school as compared to African American males with low levels of support.

Hypothesis 4: Of all of the social support networks, social support from family is the best predictor of high school completion for African American males.

Hypothesis 5: Social support from one of the social support networks is a better predictor of high school completion for African American males than peer influence.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design is a cross sectional, non-experimental, retrospective, comparative design. Survey design is appropriate for asking behavioral intentions, reports of past experiences, social background information, and attitudes (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Cross sectional research involves the measurement of variables of interest where the relationships between them are determined (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). Data will be collected at one point in time comparing the differences between high school graduates and high school drop outs.

Sampling Plan

The current study employed a non-random, convenient sampling plan. The sample is comprised of two groups: high school graduates and non high school graduates (dropouts). To ensure the most appropriate sample size, special provisions were made since generalization is not appropriate. This is important in order to ensure that statistical significance levels are interpreted accurately (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). Cohen's (1988) statistical power analysis was be utilized in determining the sample size of 168. Statistical power analysis is a complex mathematical theory that uses effect size, sample size, and significance level. To obtain an appropriate sample size the effect size, level of significance, and power values must be fixed. According to Rubin & Babbie (2001) effect size refers to the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable.

For this study, an effect size of .3, which indicates a medium effect will be utilized in determining the sample size. A medium affect size is appropriate for social science research (Rubbin & Babbie, 2001). The significance level was set at .05, which is in accordance with standard social science levels (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). According to Rosenthal (2001), the power value should be set at .8. With the selected figures, the required samples for the proposed study is 84 participants for each group, which yields a total of 168 accounting for the 84 graduates and 84 dropouts.

Data Collection

The sample consisted of 203 African American males between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who have either graduated with a high school diploma or dropped out of school. Since the study is retrospective, the upper age of 24 was chosen due to the fact that the participants will have to recall events from high school.

The data was collected in several settings: Southwest Behavioral Systems, Inc. of Dallas, Texas, which is a social service agency that provides counseling, GED classes and job training; a church; Boys and Girls Club of Fort Worth, The Urban League of Greater Dallas, which offers various programs such as GED preparation, programs for out of school adjudicated youth, and job training; and the Southside Community Center of Fort Worth Texas. The researcher has a relationship with each social service agency and church and has been granted permission from each entity to approach participants for this study. In addition to these sites, the researcher made a few trips to Houston during the data collection phase and males were asked to complete the survey where available. Shortly after the data collection began, it became evident that other locations and data collection methods would have to be employed, specifically for surveying

African American males who dropped out of high school. The additional data collection method was the use of an internet-online survey tool called Survey Monkey. This proved beneficial for obtaining additional completed surveys from high school graduates but not dropouts.

Forty-four participants completed the online survey, of which five were school dropouts. The additional data collection sites that were employed included apartment complexes, local shopping centers, a youth development center, a local predominantly African American college and parks. Incentives were then utilized at the Dallas and Fort Worth locations to assist in ensuring that the participants complete the survey. The incentive was a VIP pass to a Dallas nightclub. When the incentive was used, all participants (graduates and dropouts) received it.

The researcher made appointments with each data collection site in order to meet with a group of the potential participants. The participants were asked whether they were between 18 and 24 and then solicited as participants. If they agreed to participate they were then given the consent form.

The reason for choosing various settings was to ensure that the desired population was surveyed. Since there is no one location that is adequate to collect the data for the sample size for the desired population, diverse settings must be utilized. After the addition of the data collection sites, the researcher continued to have difficulty in locating males who dropped out of school, thus being the reason for 80 in this group instead of 84.

Variables

The criterion variable for this study is high school graduation, which is measured as a dichotomous variable-either high school graduate or non high school graduate (dropout). There

are several predictor variables that were analyzed in this study. In addition to demographics and psychosocial factors, peer influence and several types of social support were examined.

Measurement Tool

Study participants completed a self-report questionnaire that included current demographic information, past psychosocial factors and measurement tools to gather information about the predictor variables. The measurement tools included the TCU/PMES-FFS (Texas Christian University/ Prevention Management and Evaluation System scales on family, friends, and self) (Simpson, 1998) and the YA-SSI (Young adult social support index) by McCubbin (1984).

Current Demographics and Past Psychosocial Factors

The demographics such as current income, age, and employment were included. Past psychosocial factors pertained to the participant's life while he was in high school, which included whether or not he lived in poverty, type of city in which he resided while in high school, reason for dropping out of school, with whom he resided while in high school and more.

Peer Influence

The measurement tool used to measure peer influence was the friends scale of the TCU/PMES-FFS. This tool is used to assess psychosocial functioning of adolescents (Simpson, 1998). The instrument includes four subscales on friends (peer activity, trouble, familiarity with parents, and conventional involvement), and three scales on self (self-esteem, environment, and school satisfaction). Each of the items of this scale is constructed in a Likert-type format in which the participant is asked to indicate the degree to which a behavior occurred with responses of NONE, A FEW, SOME, MOST, or ALL. The TCU/PMES-FFS-friends scale asks questions

that pertain to the type of friends the participant had while in high school. To arrive at a score responses were added; None= 0, A Few-1, Some 2, Most=3, All=4. The higher the score the more positive the peer influence. The overall peer influence score was evaluated to compare high school dropouts to high school graduates. The TCU/PMES-FFS has been proven to be reliable (Simpson, 1998).

Social Support

The instrument used to examine social support was the YA-SSI by McCubbin, Patterson, and Grochowski (1984). This 60-item measurement tool was normed on older adolescents to identify sources of social support. The YA SSI includes 11 different types of social support; parents, siblings, other relatives, church or synagogue, school faculty, high school friends, co workers, college friends, special organized groups, spiritual beliefs, counselors or administrators, and social service providers. Co-workers and college friends support subscales were not included because it is not likely that the participants had college friends while they were in high school and it is believed that not enough of the participants would have had a job. ‘Special organized groups’ was excluded because of the possible negative group affiliation such as gangs.

The internal reliability is high with a Cronbach alpha of .89 and test re-test reliability of .90. To arrive at the outcome score response items (1 to 3) are added and the higher the score the greater the social support is believed to exist. The responses are NO, YES and YES A LOT.

Permission has been granted by the author to use the YA-SSI for this study.

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a small pilot study in the Spring of 2006 in order to test the TCU scale on the desired population. The study proved to be helpful because some of the

questions had to be deleted, reformatted and additional questions were added to the demographic questionnaire. The researcher also discovered that the TCU survey did not assess various types of social support, which is the reason for the addition of the YA-SSI.

Internal Validity

Internal validity refers to the changes in the dependent variables caused by the independent variables (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). There are various threats to internal validity in this study because it is not a true experiment. Instrumentation and selection pose internal validity threats. Errors in regards to the instrument are possible since the proposed instrument is a compilation of two measurement tools. In order to address some of these issues a pilot study was conducted. Results allowed the researcher to address some of the concerns associated with instrumentation. The next threat is selection since the proposed research design employs a conveniences sample and does not employ random selection or random assignment.

External Validity

It is often difficult to accomplish generalizability for multiple reasons. External validity refers to being able to generalize study findings to an entire population. Since the study employs a non-random sampling method generalizability is not possible. However, many data collection sites were utilized in order to increase the likelihood of gathering data from 164 participants and the numerous sites could ensure some level of diversity. Another threat to external validity is reactivity. Rubin & Babbi (2001) state that reactivity refers to a possible change in the participants' responses due to the fact that they are being studied. Participants might be more prone to complete the survey that will make them look more favorable or in a way in which he believes is preferred by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Statistical Program for Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 was used to analyze and evaluate the data. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the central tendency and variability. Descriptive statistics include the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, degree of variability, and determine if the sample responses are normally distributed or not. After this initial analysis, bivariate statistics were used to determine similarities and difference between the two groups; those who completed high school and those who did not. The hypotheses were analyzed following the procedures described below.

Bivariate analysis was be used to evaluate *Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2*:

Hypothesis 1: African American males who graduate from high school will have more overall social support than African American males who dropped out of school.

Hypothesis 2: African American males who successfully complete high school are more likely to have positive peer influence as compared to African American males who do not complete school.

Bivariate analysis was used to examine each of the sub scales in *Hypothesis 3*

Hypothesis 3: African American males with higher levels of social support from each of the social support networks (parents, sibling, peer, other relatives, school, church, and other professionals) are more likely to graduate from high school as compared to African American males with low levels of support.

Logistic regression was used to evaluate outcomes of Hypothesis 4 and 5.

Hypothesis 4: Of all of the social support networks, social support from family is the best predictor of high school completion for African American males.

Hypothesis 5: Social support from one of the social support networks is a better predictor of high school completion for African American males than peer influence

Logistic regression requires that the criterion variable be dichotomous. The criterion variable for this research is high school completion (0= did not completed high school; 1= completed high school). Logistic regression will be used to determine which predictors (social support and peer influence) increase the likelihood of high school completion among African American males.

Depending on the outcomes of each these analyses, multiple regression was used to further evaluate the influence social support and peer influence have on high school graduation.

Limitations

There are several limitations to be considered. The primary limitation comes from the fact that the proposed study is a non-probability survey research design. The proposed study results cannot be generalized to the entire African American male population. Survey research is susceptible to systematic measurement error since data will be collected at one point in time and requires participants to recall past experiences and feelings. Another limitation of survey research design is that only one method of data collection is utilized. Since the researcher will not use other data collection methods, triangulation is impossible.

Another limitation has to do with the study being retrospective. The participants were asked to recall various things at the time they were in high school and since the participants were asked to recall events from as much as 9 years ago, they might not be able to precisely recall them. Next, measurement error could occur by the participant not telling the truth about a past event or merely misunderstanding the question (Singleton & Straits, 2005).

Protection of Human Subjects

The appropriate steps were taken to ensure the protection of all participants. Informed consent and confidentiality are extremely important. Having the participants, including the researchers sign a statement of confidentiality and the researcher adhering to this element of the Code will protect confidentiality of each individual. No identifying information will be released.

As a requirement of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), informed consent was obtained from each participant. Each form clearly defined potential risks and steps taken to ensure confidentiality. Participants were informed that participation in the study was not required and he could choose to refuse to participate at any time during the study. Each form will also be securely kept in a file cabinet under lock and key for three years after the completion of the study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This chapter begins with a description of the sample, followed by a presentation of the findings. The Statistical Program for Sciences (SPSS 15.0) was used in the analysis of the data. Tables are used to present finding where applicable. This chapter is divided into four sections, description of sample, comparison of groups, hypothesis findings and conclusion.

Description of Sample

Data was collected from African American male subjects across the Dallas/ Fort Worth metroplex and in Houston, TX. A total of 230 participants completed the survey. The first task in reviewing the surveys was to make sure all of the participants were African American. A subject was classified as African American if he selected African American/Black or Bi-racial, where one parent is African American. Five subjects selected “other” and they were eliminated. The next step was to ensure that all of the participants were between 18 and 24 years old. Six subjects were over the age of 24 and they were eliminated. Next, while reviewing the surveys, 11 were incomplete, meaning at least half of the questions were not answered, thus their surveys were not used. The final step was to ensure that the participants dropped out or graduated from high school. Five subjects were excluded because they were still in high school. These exclusions resulted in the final sample of 203 African American males between the ages of 18 and 24 who either graduated from or dropped out of high school.

Comparison of groups on current demographics and past psychosocial factors

Current Demographics

Of the 203 participants, 39 percent (80) were school dropouts and 61 percent (123) were high school graduates. Ages ranged from 18 to 24 for both groups. The mean age for those who did not complete high school was 19.45 and for the group that completed high school, the mean age was 20.03. T-test analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding age ($t=2.651$; $p<.05$). In terms of current income, 57.5 percent (46) of those who did not complete high school and 48 percent (59) of those who completed high school reported making less than \$10,000. Chi square analysis indicated no statistically significant difference ($p<.05$). In terms of current employment status, 50 percent (40) of those who did not complete high school were employed (full or part time) and 50 percent (40) were not employed. For the high school graduates 32.5 percent (40) were not employed and 66.5 percent (83) were employed. Those who reported that they were currently unemployed might have been unemployed because they were a full time student. The chi square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups ($p<.05$). See Table 4.1.

Parent/Sibling high school dropout

In terms of parent and sibling high school completion status, 15% ($n=12$) of the dropouts reported that their mother dropped out of high school and 11% ($n=13$) of the graduates reported the same. This difference was not significant ($p=.21$). Thirty-six percent ($n=28$) of the dropouts and 8 percent ($n=10$) of the graduates reported that their father did not complete high school. When chi-square analyses were run, the difference between the groups in terms of father's graduation status proved to be statistically significant ($p<.05$). In addition to parent dropout,

sibling dropout was reviewed. Of the graduates, 19.5 percent (n=24) and 32.5 percent (n=26) of the dropouts had a sibling who dropped out. This difference was not statistically significant (p=.099).

Past Psychosocial Factors

Poverty Status/ Living Arrangements while in High School

Twenty-seven percent (n=33) of the graduates and 60 percent (n=48) of the dropouts used food stamps while in high school. Chi square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference (p<.05). High school living arrangements were evaluated and the most common living arrangement for the graduates while in high school was living with both parents (41%; n=52) and for the those who did not complete high school living with mother only was most common (32%; n=39). The difference in terms of living arrangements proved to statistically significant (p<.05). See Table 4.1 for full descriptions.

School, City, Extracurricular Activity Involvement

When asked, “how would you describe your school” the majority (74%; n= 59) of the participants who did not complete high school reported that their high school needed some repairs. The most common response for the graduates was that their school was “well kept” (51%; n=63). Chi square analysis indicate a statistically significant difference between the groups (p<.05).

The participants were asked to report in what type of city they lived (city, suburb, small town). The majority of dropouts (74%; n=59) and graduates (55%; n=68) lived in a city while in high school. Chi square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference (p<.05). In terms

of the type of the high school the participants attended there was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

In terms of high school population, 41.5% of those who did not complete high school and 40 percent of the high school graduates reported that their school had 2001 students or more. Chi square analysis indicated that there is not a statistically significant difference ($p = .59$).

In terms of being involved in extracurricular activities, 75 percent ($n = 60$) of the dropouts and 92 percent ($n = 114$) of the graduates reported being involved in these activities. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$). In terms of employment while in high school 69 percent ($n = 55$) of those who did not complete high school and 68 percent ($n = 83$) of those who completed high school reported working. There was not a statistically significant difference ($p = .15$).

Table 4.1 Description of Sample on Selected Demographics and Psychosocial Groups

Demographics	D/n complete high school ($n = 80$)		Completed high school ($n = 123$)		Sig.
	n	%	n	%	
Current Income					7.537
Less than \$10,000	46	57.5	59	48	
\$10,001-19,999	23	29	30	24	
\$20,000-29,999	10	12.5	22	18	
\$ 30,000 or more	1	1	12	10	

Table 4.1 Continued

Current Employment Status					
Not employed	38	47.5	19	15	42.970*
Not employed, full time student	2	2.5	21	17	
Employed, part time	33	41	38	31	
Employed, full time	7	9	45	37	
Mother high school completion status					
Graduate	62	77.5	106	86	2.990
Dropout	12	15	13	11	
Don't know	6	7.5	4	3.3	
Father high school completion status					
Graduate	40	50	99	80.5	25.771*
Dropout	28	35	10	8	
Don't know	12	15	14	11	
Sibling who dropped out					
Yes	26	32.5	24	19.5	4.626
No	49	61	92	75	
Don't know	5	6.3	7	6	
Lived in poverty while in hs					
Yes	48	60	33	27	30.981*
No	25	31	87	71	

Table 4.1 – continued

Living arrangements while in hs					
Mother only	31	39	39	32	16.684*
Father only	7	9	9	7	
Mother and Father	16	20	52	42	
Mother and Stepfather	6	7.5	6	4.9	
Father and stepmother	1	1.3	3	2.4	
Other family member	14	17.5	12	10	
Foster family	0	0	1	.8	
Other	5	6	1	.8	
Up keep of high school					
Well kept	21	26	63	51	26.653*
Ok, but needed repairs	63	45	54	44	
Run down	23	29	6	5	
Type of city in which lived					
City	59	74	68	55	7.570*
Small Town	6	7.5	21	17	
Suburb	15	19	34	18	
Type of high school					
Public	67	84	96	78	12.547*
Private	2	2.5	14	11	
Magnet	4	5	9	11	

Table 4.1 - continued

Charter	4	5	2	2	
Other	3	4	0	0	
Number of student in hs					
0-500	10	12.5	15	12	4
501-1000	11	14	16	20	
1001-2000	26	32.5	39	32	
2001-3000	15	19	31	25	
3001 or more	18	22.5	18	15	
Involved in extracurricular activities					
Yes	60	75	114	93	12.378*
No	20	25	9	7	
Hours worked per week while in hs					
0	25	31	40	32.5	3.356
1-20	37	46	43	35	
21-30	11	14	23	19	
31 or more	7	9	17	14	

Note: * denotes $p < .05$

Reasons for dropping out of school

The final psychosocial factor to be addressed pertains only to those who did not complete high school: reasons for dropping out of school. The most common reported reason was drug and

alcohol related issues (25%; n=20), followed by being kicked out because of their behavior (19%; n=15), followed by being absent too many days (16%; n=13) see Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Reasons for Dropping Out of School

	n	Percentage (%)
Drug or Alcohol Related Issues	20	25
Kicked out because of behavior	15	19
Absent too many days	13	16
Family issues	11	14
Went to jail	6	7.5
Wanted to work	5	6
Grades too low	5	6
Unable to pass the TAKS/TASS	3	4
Became a father	2	2.5
TOTAL	80	100

Hypothesis Findings

The sample was used to measure the reliability of every measure. Frequencies and chi-squares were run on the demographic and psychosocial information. Next, independent t-tests were calculated to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the high school graduates and dropouts regarding peer influence and social support. Additionally, multiple logistic regression tests were run including the demographic and psychosocial

constructs where there proved to be a statistically significant difference. The friends measure Texas Christian University/ Prevention Management and Evaluation System scales on family, friends, was used to assess peer influence and Young Adult Social Support Index (YA-SSI) was used to assess social support.

Measure of Peer Influence

TCU/PMES-FFS

The friends scale of the TCU/PMES-FFS (Texas Christian University/ Prevention Management and Evaluation System scales on family, friends, and self) is an 18-item measure that was developed to assess the influence an individual's friends has on decision making. Each of the items on this scale is constructed in a Likert-type format in which the participant was asked to indicate the degree to which a behavior occurred with responses of NONE, A FEW, SOME, MOST, and ALL. The scale was normed on sixth graders. The higher the score, the more positive the peer influence. The friends scale of the TCU/PMES-FFS has been proven to be reliable (Simpson, 1998) but was normed on sixth graders, thus before using it on this study the reliability was tested on this sample and found it to be relatively reliable. A similar indication was found with this study sample with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.79.

Hypothesis 1: African American males who successfully complete high school are more likely to have positive peer influence as compared to African American males who do not complete school.

In order to test the first hypothesis, t-test analysis was used to evaluate differences in peer influence. Table 4.4 displays the overall mean scores broken down by graduation status. Scores for the high school graduates ranged from 20 to 61 while for the high school dropouts the

range was 14 to 59. The mean for peer influence score among those who did not complete high school was 36.8 (SD=8.1) and 43.2 (SD=7.9) for the graduates. With a t-value of 5.6 and a one-tailed exact significance of .00 ($p < .05$) findings denoted a statistically significant difference between high school graduates and high school dropouts scores. See table 4.3

Table 4.3 Significant Results of T-test Comparing those who Completed High School to Those Who Did Not
The Friends measure of the TCU/PMES Scale

	n	Mean score	SD	t
D/n complete high school	80	36.8	8.1	5.6*
Completed high school	123	43.2	7.9	
Overall	203	40.7	8.6	

Note: * denotes $p < .05$

Measure of Social Support

Young Adult Social Support Index (YA-SSI)

The Young Adult Social Support Index (YA-SSI) developed by McCubbin, Patterson, and Grochowski (1984) is a 60 item instrument that has been tested on senior high school aged youth to assess sources of support . Validity and reliability have been supported and established (Mcubbin, 1984). The overall internal reliability was .89 (Cronbach's alpha). Cronbach's alpha was assessed for the overall instrument and each subscale using the study sample. The alpha for the YA-SSI was .827.

The YA-SSI is made up of 11 subscales, however for this study, seven of the subscales were used. The four subscales “College friends”, “Co workers”, “Special groups I belong to”, and “Reading Books, watching TV and listening to music” were omitted because the students most likely did not have college friends while in high school, might not have worked, and the last two subscales were omitted because both were thought to focus on negative forms of support.

Hypothesis 2: African American males who graduate from high school will have more overall social support than African American males who dropped out of school.

The overall average for dropouts was 69.2 (SD=12.6) and 71.6 for the graduates (SD=12.7). The range of overall scores for dropouts was 40 to 101 and for graduates it was 44 to 102. See table 4.5. There was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p=.094$), but African American male high school graduates did have slightly higher overall social support as compared to African American male high school dropouts.

Table 4.4 Significant Results of test of Overall YA-SSI scores

	n	Mean score	SD	t
Dropouts	80	69.2	12.6	1.324
Graduates	123	71.6	12.7	
Overall	203	70.7	12.7	

Hypothesis 3: African American males with higher levels of social support from each of the social support networks (parents, sibling, peer, other relatives, school, church, and other professionals) are more likely to graduate from high school as compared to African American males with low levels of support.

T-tests were run on the subscales of the YA-SSI to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the participants' responses based on high school graduation status (graduate or dropout). Although the overall support was slightly higher for graduates, they reported somewhat lower non-statistically significant friends support (M=2.08; dropouts M=2.11, p=.33) and the same amount of support from professionals (M=1.66; p=.46) See Table 4.5.

There was a statistically significant difference between two of the subscales. Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators demonstrated a statistically significant difference between graduates (M=1.75, SD=.516) and dropouts (M=1.57, SD=.463) (t=3.1, p<.05). There was also a statistically significant difference between graduates (M=2.23, SD=.554) and dropouts (M=2.07, SD=.512) regarding Spiritual Beliefs (t=2.12, p<.05). The assumption is that African American male dropouts would have lower levels of support than African American male graduates, which was not the case.

Table 4.5 YA SSI Subscales Significant Results of T-Test

	D/n complete high school			Completed high school			t
	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	
Parents and Siblings	80	2.0	.48	123	2.11	.515	1.52
Other Relative	80	2.01	.511	123	2.07	.521	.830
Friends	80	2.11	.488	123	2.08		-.456
Teachers, counselors, admin	80	1.57	.463	123	1.79	.516	3.11*
Other Professionals	80	1.667	.439	123	1.66	.501	-.033

Table 4.5 – continued

Church	80	1.94	.498	123	2.02	.581	1.019
Spiritual Beliefs	80	2.07	.512	123	2.23	.554	2.123*

Note: * denotes $p < .05$; ** denotes $p = .000$. Calculations assume instruments show a normal distribution

To address the following hypotheses, logistic regression analysis and a stepwise approach model to the regression process was utilized.

Hypothesis 4: Of all of the social support networks, social support from family is the best predictor of high school completion among African American males.

The t-test revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference between high school graduates and dropouts regarding family support (parent and sibling $p = .065$; other relative $p = .204$.) However, of the seven YA-SSI subscales teachers, administrators, counselors and spiritual beliefs were the two that presented a statistically significant difference between high school graduates and high school dropouts. These two subscales were used in the regression model.

To arrive at the results, social support from school and spiritual beliefs were first run alone and then together. See table 4.6. Participant's scores on the School subscale alone accounted for 6% ($r^2 = .063$) of the decision to dropout or graduate from high school. R^2 is the proportion of variance accounted for by the predictor over and above the other predictor variables. This association was statistically significant ($\beta = .913$, $p = .003$). For each point increase of school support, the subjects were .4 times as likely to graduate from high school ($B = .401$). Scores on the spiritual beliefs subscale alone accounted for 3% ($r^2 = .030$) of the decision to dropout or graduate from high school. This association was statistically significant ($\beta = .571$,

p<.05). For each point increase of spiritual support, the subjects were .56 times as likely to graduate from high school (B=.565).

Table 4.6 Simple Logistic Regression of School Support and Spiritual Beliefs (Step 1 of Regression Model)

Predictor	β	S.E	Wald	Exp (B)
School Support	-.913	.304	9.008*	.401
Spiritual beliefs	-.571	.273	4.366*	.565

Note: * denotes p<.05 Calculations assume instruments show a normal distribution

See Table 4.7 for steps 2-5 of the step-wise regression model. The next step was to include support from school and spiritual beliefs together in the model. Scores on the two scales accounted for 7% of the difference in high school completion status ($r^2=.072$). When these two were run together, support from school remained statistically significant ($\beta =.802$, $p<.05$) while spiritual beliefs did not ($\beta =.334$, $p=.234$).

The next step of the stepwise approach was to run support from school with the psychosocial factors that showed a statistically significant difference between the groups as controls. The psychosocial factors included were, father's high school completion status ($p<.05$), use of food stamps while in high school ($p=.000$), living arrangements while in high school ($p<.05$), up keep of high school ($p<.05$), city in which they lived ($p<.05$), type of high school they attended ($p<.05$), and involvement in extracurricular activities ($p<.05$). See table 4.7. This model accounted for 30% ($r^2=.298$) of the variation between high school completion and high school dropout high school. Support from school remained statistically significant ($p<.05$) when

the controls were added which leads to The best predictor of high school completion among African American males from all of the social support networks was support from school followed by spiritual beliefs.

Hypothesis 5: Social support from one of the social support networks is a better predictor of high school completion for African American males than peer influence.

Step four of the model included running peer influence and support from school together. Scores on these scales accounted for 20 percent ($r^2=.200$) of the decision to graduate or dropout of school. Support from school did not remain statistically significant predictor of high school completion ($p=.083$) while peer influence remained a significant predictor ($p<.05$).

The final step was to run peer influence with the psychosocial factors. This accounted for 33 percent ($r^2=.331$) of the decision to dropout or graduate over and above the other variables This model correctly predicted 78.3 percent of the subject’s graduation status. Peer influence remained statistically significant ($p<.05$) which leads to addressing the final hypothesis: Social support from one of the social support networks is a better predictor of high school completion for African American males than peer influence. Based on the stepwise regression model, peer influence is the best predictor of high school completion among African American males.

Table 4.7 Multiple Logistic Regression stepwise model (Steps 2-5)

	B	S.E	Wald	Exp (B)
Step 2				
School Support	.344	.289	1.416	.709
Spiritual beliefs	.802	.320	6.292*	.448

Table 4.7 – continued

Step 3				
School Support	-.716	.356	4.052*	.489
Father hs status (control	.578	.235	6.028*	1.782
Living in Poverty (control)	-.454	.306	2.205	.635
Living arrangements (control)	.100	.085	1.390	1.106
Upkeep of high school (control)	.768	.257	8.920*	2.156
Type of city (control)	-.346	.211	2.671	.708
Type of high school (control)	.105	.205	.262	1.111
Extracurricular involvement (control)	.964	.477	4.086*	.489
Step 4				
School Support	-.565	.326	3.002	.568
Peer Influence	-.094	.021	19.771*	.911
Step 5				
Peer Influence	-.069	.022	9.901*	.933
Father hs status (control	.336	.243	1.912	1.399
Living in Poverty (control)	-.561	.308	3.306	.571

Table 4.7 - continued

Living arrangements (control)	.062	.086	.526	1.064
Upkeep of high school (control)	.778	.259	9.030*	2.177
Type of city (control)	-.203	.216	.885	.816
Type of high school (control)	.095	.206	.211	1.099
Extracurricular involvement (control)	.844	.470	3.217	2.325

Note: * denotes $p < .05$. Calculations assume instruments show a normal distribution

Two types of social support were found to be statistically significant predictors of high school completion among the African American male respondents: 1) support from school teachers, counselors, and administrators and 2) support from subjects own spiritual health and well-being. Interestingly, support from family was not a strong predictor of school completion or dropout among the sample. Surprisingly, peer influence was the strongest predictor of high school completion among the sample over social support.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1 was supported in that African American males who completed high school would have higher peer influence. This difference statistically significant

Hypothesis 2 was not supported in that there was not a statistically significant difference in the overall social support between African American males who completed school and those

who did not. However, African American males who completed high school did have slightly higher overall support.

Hypothesis 3 was not supported. African American males who completed high school did not have higher support from each of the types of support. They had lower, not statistically significant, peer support and the same amount of support from professionals.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Of all of the social supports, family was not the best predictor of high school completion among African American males. The best predictors were Support from school personnel followed by spiritual beliefs.

Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Peer influence was the found to be the best predictor of high school completion among African American males.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study was to determine whether social support and peer influence are significant predictors of high school completion among African American males. A sample of African American males between 18 and 24 years old who dropped out of or graduated from high school were evaluated and results were generated. After analysis and evaluation, the best predictor of high school completion among the participants was peer influence, followed by support from teachers, counselors, and administrators, and then spiritual beliefs. Peer influence pertains to the activities in which one's friends participate (i.e. arrest status, doing homework after school, aspirations for college). Participants who reported having more friends who participated in positive activities were more likely to graduate from high school. Similarly, participants who reported more friends who participated in negative activities were more likely to dropout of school. In this chapter the following will be provided; conclusions, limitations of research, implications for policy and practice and recommendations for further research.

Data were collected over a three-month period. It was assumed that the subjects would provide honest responses on the self-reporting survey that was employed for this study. It was also assumed that peer influence and social support would serve as predictors of high school dropout with support from family being the strongest predictor, which was not the case. The research model incorporated a paper-pencil or online self-report survey.

Interpretation of Findings

Before the major findings are presented, other findings will be discussed. Many important demographics and psychosocial findings were found.

School Dropout

Initial analyses indicated several reasons for dropping out of high school. By far, the main reason reported for dropping out of school among African American males was drug/alcohol related issues. One in four of the participants who dropped out of school reported drugs and alcohol as being the number one reason for not completing high school. This finding is not consistent with the literature. Empirical literature has established that main reasons for dropping out of school has been school being boring or getting a job (Pytle, 2006). But, the majority of this literature evaluated a racially mixed sample and not a sample of only African American males. This finding was a surprise because drug and alcohol related issues were rarely discussed in the literature. According to Tarrant County Challenge, Inc , youth in the Dallas/ Fort Worth area start drinking at 12 years old and report using marijuana for the first time between 9 and 10 years old. Additionally, over two-thirds of youth arrested test positive for drugs and or alcohol.

The next two reasons reported for dropping out of school was being absent too many days from school and being kicked out because of behavior. Truancy and behavior issues have been areas of concern for quite some time. Once a student is absent so many days he is kicked out or has to pay a fee. Each of these reasons (absent and kicked out) could have been controlled. It is interesting that these two reasons are school environmental factors. Kicking the student out was the school's response to behavior problems. Seemingly, the schools gave up on the student

and he in turn gave up on himself. The school environment for some African American males is not conducive for learning and is more of a hostile environment (Acsher, 1991).

African American Males are much more frequently behind in school for their age, (Alexander and Entwisle, 1988; Entwisle et al., 1997; Entwisle and Hayduk, 1982; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). African American males are also much more likely to be suspended and to be identified as behaviorally disordered (BD) (Callahan, 1994; Gregory, 1997; McClure, 1994). These experiences are believed to contribute to African American males viewing school as hostile. Feeling frustrated in their academic efforts often leads to academic alienation and disengagement (Saunders, David, Williams, & Williams, 2001).

Another finding to note was that the participants in this study who did not complete school were more likely to have a father who dropped out. ($\chi^2=25.771$, $p<.05$). This finding was not a coincidence according to the literature. African American boys look up to their fathers and in many ways was to emulate him. The relationship between a father and son, especially in the African American community is very important.

Socioeconomic Status

Use of food stamps while in high school was used to establish socioeconomic status. Participants who reported using food stamps were more likely to dropout of school ($\chi^2=30.981$, $p<.05$), which is consistent with the literature (McGranhan, 2004; Blasco, 2001; Martinez, DeGarmo, Eddy, 2004; Civil Rights Project, 2005; Lan, & Lanthier, 2003; McCall, 2003; Hunt et al., 2002; Majoribank, 2002; Vitaro, 2001)

School Factors

In terms of the school structure, participants who reported that their school needed repairing were more likely to dropout of school ($\chi^2=26.653$, $p<.05$). This finding is consistent with the literature (Branham, 2004). This makes sense because individuals are more likely to produce positive results in aesthetically pleasing environment. If the school is broken down and in shambles, the students performance will reflect this. Participants who completed high school were also more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities ($\chi^2=12.378$, $p<.05$). Studies have established that when students are involved in these activities they do not have as much idle time and have goals and motivating factors that facilitate graduating from high school.

Although this study was retrospective and these results are not part of the major findings it is important to mention the similarities and differences between the groups regarding employment, income, arrest status and incarceration. Regardless of why they dropped out, the research supports consequences for not having a high school diploma. Those who graduated from school were more likely to be employed ($\chi^2=42.970$, $p<.05$) and have a higher income (7.537 , $p=.05$), which is consistent with the literature pertaining to consequences of school dropout. Civil Right Project (2005) a division of Harvard Research stated that high school dropouts are 72 percent more likely to be unemployed.

Arrest/ Incarceration

Twenty-nine percent of the participants who graduated from high school and 77.5 percent of those who did not complete high school had been arrested. The majority of those who did not complete high school, (54%), got arrested for the first time between the ages of 15 and 18. Chi square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=57.713$, $p<.05$). Thirteen

percent of those who completed school and 46 percent of those who did not, reported that they had been incarcerated ($\chi^2=27.765$, $p<.05$). Subjects who had been incarcerated made up 26 percent ($n=53$) of the sample population. Current statistics reveal that 1 in 3 Black males will be incarcerated and this study's findings are in line with this. This is also consistent with literature stating that those who dropout of school are more likely to be arrested or incarcerated (Gay, 2003; Maurene, 2002). Over half of African American male high school dropouts have prison records (Jones, 2003). The Justice Policy Institute examination of recent U.S. Justice Department statistics revealed that 52 percent of black male dropouts between 20 and 29 have records while only 13 percent of white male school dropouts had prison records in the same age bracket (Gay, 2003).

There was no statistically significant difference between the groups regarding mother high school completion status ($p=.21$), sibling dropout status ($p=.099$), and hours worked per week while in high school ($p=.34$). These factors seemingly did not play a significant role in the completion or dropping out of high school among the participants.

Demographic conclusions: Many risk factors contributing to high school dropout have been empirically established. The fact that each of the participants was African American and male means that they were born with two risk factors contributing to school dropout according to previous research (Ellickson, Saner, & McGuigan, 1997; Orfield, Losen, Wald & Swason 2004; Civil Rights Project, 2005; McCall, 2003; Baker, 1999; Hauser, Simmons, & Pager, 2000; Marjoribanks, 2002; Brown, Higgins, Pierce, Hong, Thomas, 2003) Like these two, many of the risk factors contributing to high school dropout that this study confirms and extends cannot be helped or controlled, such as father dropping out of school, socioeconomic status, type of city in

which he resided, type of school he attended, and with whom he lived while in high school. The only one that the respondent might have been able to control was the involvement in extracurricular activities.

Major Findings

In terms of the regression analysis; there are three main findings pertinent to this study. There were no statistical differences between the groups in regards to support from family, friends, other relatives, and professionals.

1. Spiritual beliefs were found to be a predictor of high school completion among African American males. This finding supports the literature about the importance of spirituality in the African American community. Research significant to the African American experience has revealed that social support such as religion and spiritual awareness has proven to be protective factors not only for adults but for youth as well (Lacy, 2005). Prior research has also established the cultural significance of spiritual health among African American youth in promoting positive outcomes but there is limited literature linking high school graduation and spirituality (Anderson, Boswerll, & Cohen, 2007).

'Spiritual beliefs' is essentially an unexplored factor in high school completion. In this study, attending church was not found to make a difference in high school completion, but being around peers, family members, and other adults who do attend church or have faith could play a role in their beliefs. Students may not feel comfortable attending church or expressing their faith openly, but may be able to find private time to pray or meditate. Spirituality has been very important in the African American experience for years. A vast majority of African Americans grew up attending church. Faith and spiritual beliefs are passed down from generation to

generation. This can be traced back over 400 years, when, at times, spiritual beliefs were all one might have had. The students' beliefs about God or a higher power were found to play a role in high school graduation. The student may believe that someone is watching over and protecting them.

2. Effective support from school personnel was another significant predictor of high school completion among African American males. The participants who believed that they had more support from teachers, counselors, and administrators were more likely to graduate from high school, thus serving as a protective factor against school dropout. These findings are also corroborated by empirical and theoretical literature.

Baker (1999) established that the more positive one perceives his school environment the more overall school satisfaction. Additionally, the student's belief that his teacher(s) does not care about his academic success and the thought of his teachers as not supportive are additional risk factors related to dropping out of school (Blasco, M., 2004; McCall, H., 2003; Wonacott, 2002). African American male youths' sense of support from school proved to be very essential in their high school completion status. Students spend on average eight hours a day at school with various school staff. African American male youths' sense and experience of support in school is essential in their successes and failures.

3. Peer influence was found to be the best predictor of high school graduation among African American males over and above social support. This was a finding not anticipated. Essentially, friends have more of an impact on African American males and high school completion or dropout than any of the social supports. This finding was somewhat of a surprise since the majority of empirical literature pertaining to high school graduation and dropout

indicated that support from family was the strongest indicator of school dropout (Rumberger, 2001; Lange, 2001; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). But there is a limited amount of research that evaluated African American male graduates compared to African American male dropouts.

As aforementioned, there is a difference between peer influence and peer support. Peer influence is so important because students are more likely to associate with those who have similar interests and through this, they can influence one another. For example, a student who has never been in trouble with the law, makes good grades, and is involved in extracurricular activities is less likely to have peers who have been arrested and make low grades. Additionally, youth really just want to fit in and are more likely to fall into certain crowds. This result indicates that peers seemingly play a more powerful role than family, professionals, or school staff.

Kandel (1985) established that the association with deviant peers as the greatest predictor of negative behavior and outcomes (school dropout). Additionally, Vitaro, et al (2001) found that those who had peers who committed deviant acts were at risk of dropping out of high school. Thus the findings of this study on this dimension indicate that for African American males, the type of peers they have plays vital role in making certain decisions.

Many people have had others encourage them, whether it is a teacher, pastor, doctor and this study's findings reveal that the influence of these figures could be more influential than parents. These findings support the ecological model, in that interactions and the environment in which they occur are essential. Subjects in the study who believed their friends participated in more positive activities were more likely to graduate from high school. In this study, all statistical analysis between the predictor variable of high school completion status and the criterion variable of peer influence represented a statistically significant relationship between

peer influence and high school completion status among African American males. Theoretical and empirical literature can explain the reasons for this. Kandel (1985) established that the association with deviant peers as the greatest predictor of negative behavior and outcomes (school dropout). Additionally, Vitaro, et al (2001) found that those who had peers who committed deviant acts were at risk of dropping out of high school. Thus the findings of this study on this dimension indicate that for African American males, the type of peers they have plays vital role in making certain decisions.

This finding was somewhat of a surprise since the majority of empirical literature pertaining to high school graduation and dropout indicated that support from family was the strongest indicator of school dropout. But there is a limited amount of research that evaluated African American male graduates compared to African American male dropouts.

Methodological Limitations

This study had various limitations. The first, being that the study was retrospective. The participants were asked to think back to a certain time. Although the participants were 18 to 24 years old, the participants might not have been able to remember certain events accurately.

Another is that the researcher had to use many data collection sites that were scattered across Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston. The fact that the researcher was an African American woman not too much older than the participants could have been a limitation. The subjects might have been more likely to answer the questions in a way he believed the researcher expected.

Self-report questionnaires were used to collect the data via the Internet or paper and pencil. With the Internet, the researcher had no control over who completed the survey. Additionally, since there were specific questions and answers, this limited the participant's

ability to elaborate. On a few occasions, when participants who dropped out of school were answering the question that asked them the reason for dropping out, answers not available were given such as “didn’t care”, “lazy”, “more than one reason”. The length of the survey could possibly be a limitation. The first thing most participants did when asked to take the survey, was check on the length of the survey. When they discovered the survey had 94 questions, some became apprehensive. Even though they completed it, the participants might have had a negative attitude while completing the survey. Even with the addition of incentives and many data collection sites, it was difficult to locate high school dropouts that fit the age range. Many were just out side of the age range (over 24 years old)

A non-experimental design and convenience sample were employed. This is a limitation because the participants were not randomly selected, limiting control over external validity. Because of this, the data cannot be generalized to other populations and no causal relationships can be established. The fact that participants were asked to complete the study might have altered the answers. They might have answered the way they thought the researcher would prefer.

Additionally data were collected once. Since there was really no convenient time for the participant to complete the survey, they might have been in a rush, in a bad mood, felt inconvenienced or distracted which could have altered their answers.

Practice and Policy Implications

Findings greatly support the need for school social workers. From the findings of this study along with other similar findings, implications for practice and policy towards preventative measures will be addressed.

1. Reporting drug/ alcohol reasons for dropping out supports the need for school based drug and alcohol intervention programs (Hadge, 1992). Students spend approximately 40 hours in school each week, making it a prime catalyst for this type of program.

This type of program should also be implemented at churches, after school programs, summer programs, and community centers. Additionally, social workers have got to be more creative in addressing drugs and alcohol use to reach African American males; such as using music, bringing in speakers that not only will peak their interest but also can get a great point across, using at time harsh visuals, and sharing the detriments and risks of drug use.

2. School social workers could greatly help schools to be more supportive especially for African American boys. Literature says school environments are hostile for African Americans. There is a need for more policies to address this problem

3. Promoting positive peer influence is essential. Since this study found peer influence to be the strongest predictor of high school completion, more attention should be paid to peer groups and positive peer influenced should be encouraged. Direct social work practice could play a large role in this effort. This is important for social workers to take note, because often times, peer support rather than influence is evaluated. One could argue that youth in gangs have peer support, but this support is not necessarily positive support. These groups are filling a void that is not being filled at home or at school.

Social workers should create and implement programs and processes where peer groups are evaluated, mentored and assessed. Being that peer influence was the strongest predictor of high school completion among African American males, this must be essential. Through efforts that focus on peer groups, the peers could learn how to encourage one another in positive ways,

accountability etc. These types of programs should not only be implemented in schools, but churches, community centers, after school programs, and summer programs.

4. School social workers, being that support from teachers, counselors, and administrators was the second strongest indicator of school completion; schools need school social workers. Having to be the teacher and at times a counselor, and counselors having to focus more on TAKS and class schedules, school social workers would be able to fill some gaps that teachers and counselors are unable to fill.

5. African American male youth today face an abundance of negativity, such as being negatively stereotyped, knowing that he is more likely to end up in jail than in college, and just the day to day trajectories of being a Black male youth. Whether it is on television, in music, at school, or within their own families, they need assistance in dealing with issues they face on a daily basis. It is the role of the social worker, to design, enhance, and implement programs to assist this group in finding alternative ways to release stress, and assessing an issue before it gets out of control. These young men need to see the opposite of all of the negativities they potentially will face. Having positive male role models is important, at the least allowing the young men to see that there are other options. Social workers play vital roles in making this happen. Social workers should have a database of positive African American male role models on which they can call. A vast majority should be teachers, counselors and administrators since these are figures that the students should be seeing on a regular basis.

6. African American male youth should to be able to assist in some of the planning and development of programs for them. It is astounding at the number of committees and boards geared at activities for young people, but very seldom do young people serve on the committees.

Committees that are geared toward the planning of activities for African American males, in particular, should be required to have at least two young people on the committee as voting members. Social workers could play a vital role in getting young people to serve on committees because, more often than not, there will be at least one social worker serving on the committee.

Since the African American male participants identified the type of friend, support from teachers, counselors and school administrators, and their own spiritual beliefs as factors that contribute to their high school completion outcome, social workers should take this into account and build upon it. Many times young people just want a voice, but feel as if no one is listening.

7. It is of interest as a public policy issue to be able to determine decisively what factors are uniquely operating and contributing to the dropout rates. The drain on the national economy is linked with the success or failure of such a large segment of the nation's population. Social workers can greatly influence policies by collaborating with various organizations and agencies. Social workers could also advocate for certain policies that are guided to alleviating drop out among African American males.

8. Since the previous and this research suggest that a risk factor associated with school drop out is attending a run down school, where the buildings require repairs, additional funding should be allocated to the re-building and re-structuring of these schools. Additionally, some risk factors pertained to a school's infrastructure. While the student cannot do anything about this, the schools should make it a point to make sure that the facilities are kept up and that there is some sort of school pride expression, such as a mural or mascot. Also many studies have found that students do much better in alternative schools than in regular school. If this is the case, schools should adopt some of the principles alternative schools employ. Cassel (2001) stated that

students must be at the center stage in school and must be able to obtain individual attention, and this is what they receive in alternative school settings. Social workers, especially school social workers could encourage such policy initiatives.

9. Tutoring, positive sense of self, supportive peers, and role models, to name a few, are necessary to deter a student from dropping out of school. These preventative methods could be implemented in many settings including the school, after school programs, libraries, and community centers. Social workers must be aware of the risk and protective factors because they could play a pivotal role in deterring a student from dropping out. Social workers most often come into contact with students who are at-risk, and the research has made it clear that at-risk students are more likely to dropout of school. Social workers should also be aware of some of the theoretical models used to explain high school dropout. This is important because many factors are related to dropping out and there is not one theory that can address the entire phenomenon.

10. Schools should take into account that other factors aside from poor academic achievement contribute to a student dropping out. Schools should be an essential site of intervention for preventing school dropout. Low attachment to the school, low attendance rates, feelings of alienation, failing exit exam scores, which are all risk factors related to high school dropout, could all be ameliorated through campus-based dropout interventions. These campus-based interventions could include, tutoring programs, cultural diversity programs, being assigned a mentor, allowing the students to check their grades when needed, and volunteer activities to give the students a sense of worth. Social workers and practitioners can encourage and create programs to cultivate these items.

11. Church and spiritual beliefs are pivotal tenants within the African American community. Social workers can build upon the knowledge of this study and collaborate with the faith-based community. Additionally, since schools cannot advocate religion, the social worker could be a liaison between school and church. The aforementioned items could also be implemented in the church. Some students may attend church 1-3 times per week. Currently many churches do have some type of programs for youth, but are they doing all they can do?

Future Research

Further research is required in many areas in order to address the issue of school dropout among African American males and those will be presented.

1. The replication of the study needs to extensively evaluate peer influence and peer support and assess how they might interact together. In addition to this, more research is need comparing peer influence to parental support. Pertaining to replication, parental support should be evaluated separate from sibling support. The instrument utilized in this study combined parent and sibling support into one measure of support.

2. Further research requires a larger sample of African American males to be evaluated during real-time (not retrospective). An evaluation of African American males who dropped out of school within 60 days of the study is needed to get more accurate results. The present study evaluated males within 1 and 10 years of school dropout.

3. An experimental study, where the school environment is manipulated should be conducted. Literature has confirmed that the upkeep of a school plays a role on high school completion status. Also males at risk of dropping out should be assessed before during and after additional support from teachers, counselors, and administrators is implemented.

4. Further research examining peer influence among African American males students while still in high school would prove to be meaningful. A step further would be to evaluate these students in junior high, to determine when and how peer groups change. African American male youth should be compared to African American female youth regarding peer influence.

5. The relationship between spiritual beliefs and high school completion require additional study, specifically for African Americans. Researchers could examine what attributes comprise spiritual beliefs. Additionally, examining the parents and grandparents beliefs and determining whether it contributed to the beliefs of adolescents.

6. Replication of this study with African American females, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females in the same age groups could prove to be beneficial. Many studies, compare groups to one another, but this is not beneficial in attempting to create interventions because the groups and youth are so different.

7. Peer influence and social support should be assessed to determine whether they are resiliency factors related to high school dropout. Resiliency is the ability of the individual to recover from negative experiences such as the ones previously stated. The premise of resiliency is that negative outcomes (school dropout) could be prevented by protective factors (Murry, et al., 2001). The research literature indicates that students who can overcome such obstacles share common facets of resiliency such as high self-worth. Resiliency most often has been applied when working with youth who are at risk. What resiliency employs is the notion that regardless of one's background, income, or living arrangements he or she, too, can overcome the situation with reinforcements and graduate from high school as well achieve defined goals.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

SOCIAL SUPPORT SURVEY FOR BLACK MALES



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Thank you for agreeing to take this survey

It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete

There are no right or wrong answers

This is a survey about when you were in HIGH SCHOOL. We are trying to find out things that contribute to Black males graduating or not graduating from high school.

The information that you give will be used to assist in developing programs for young Black males!

*"I can accept failure. Everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying."
-Michael Jordan*

*"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed."
-Booker T. Washington*

First we will ask you to answer some questions about yourself today

Please continue to the next page

Please answer the following questions about **yourself** by indicating your answers on the given scantron

1. How old are you now?

- A. 18
- B. 19
- C. 20
- D. 21
- E. 22
- F. 23
- G. 24
- H. 25
- I. 26
- J. 27

2. What race are you?

- A. African American or Black
- B. Biracial-(Black or African American and another race)
- C. Other

3. Did you graduate from high school?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. No, I am still in high school

4. If you did not graduate from high school what is the main reason you dropped out?

- A. I did not drop out
- B. I needed to work to help my family
- C. I wanted to work instead of being in school
- D. My grades were too low
- E. I was unable to pass the TAKS/ TAAS exam
- F. I was absent too many days from school
- G. I went to jail
- H. Because of drug and alcohol related problems
- I. I became a father
- J. I was kicked out of school because of my behavior

5. What is your current employment status?

- A. Not employed
- B. Not employed, full time student
- C. Employed, part time
- D. Employed, full time

6. What is your current yearly income?

- A. less than \$10,000
- B. 10,000 to \$19,999
- C. \$20,000-29,999
- D. \$30,000-\$39,999
- E. over \$40,000

Please continue to the next page

7. At what age were you first arrested?
- A. Never been arrested
 - B. less than 12
 - C. 12-14
 - D. 15-18
 - E. over 18
8. Have you ever been incarcerated?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
9. Did your mother graduate from high school?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Don't know
10. Did you father graduate from high school?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Don't know
11. Do you have siblings that dropped out of high school?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Don't know

NOW THINK BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL



12. Did your family use food stamps or any other public assistance at anytime while when you were in high school?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Don't Know
13. Who did you live with MOST of the time while you were in high school?
- A. Mother only
 - B. Father only
 - C. Both Mother and Father
 - D. Both Mother and Stepfather
 - E. Both Father and Stepmother
 - F. Grandparent(s) or other family member
 - G. Close family friend
 - H. Foster care families
 - I. Other
14. How would you describe your high school?
- A. Well kept
 - B. Ok, but needed some repairs
 - C. Run down

15. How would you describe the town/ city in which your high school was located?

- A. City
- B. Small town
- C. Suburb

16. What type of high school did you attend?

- A. Public
- B. Private
- C. Magnet
- D. Charter
- E. Other

17. How many students were in your high school?

- A. 0-500
- B. 501-1000
- C. 1001-2000
- D. 2001-3000
- E. 3001 and more

18. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities (sports, band, drama, etc)

- A. Yes
- B. No

19. While in high school what is the most number of hours you worked during any school year

- A. 0 hours per week
- B. 1-20 hours per week
- C. 21-30 per week
- D. 31 per week or more

Please continue to the next page

When you were in HIGH SCHOOL how did you feel about



	VERY UNHAPPY	MOSTLY UNHAPPY	NOT SAD OR HAPPY	MOSTLY HAPPY	VERY HAPPY
20. your school?	A	B	C	D	E
21. your family?	A	B	C	D	E
22. your house or place where you lived?	A	B	C	D	E
23. the things you and your family had like cars, tv's, radios, and other things?	A	B	C	D	E
24. your teachers at school?	A	B	C	D	E
25. the amount of money you and your family have?	A	B	C	D	E
26. the way you got along with your parents?	A	B	C	D	E
27. your school principle?	A	B	C	D	E
28. your life in general?	A	B	C	D	E

When you were in <u>high school</u> how many of your friends--	NONE	A FEW	SOME	MOST	ALL
29. liked to play sports?	A	B	C	D	E
30. Knew your parents?	A	B	C	D	E
31. Got all good grades at school?	A	B	C	D	E
32. did your parents like?	A	B	C	D	E
33. liked school?	A	B	C	D	E
34. did their homework after school or at night?	A	B	C	D	E
35. did things that might have gotten them in trouble with the law?	A	B	C	D	E
36. had ever used a weapon (like a gun or knife) in a fight?	A	B	C	D	E
37. Wanted to go to college?	A	B	C	D	E
38. liked your parents?	A	B	C	D	E
39. had been in trouble with the police because of drugs or alcohol?	A	B	C	D	E

When you were in high school how many of your friends--	NONE	A FEW	SOME	MOST	ALL
40. quit or wanted to quit school?	A	B	C	D	E
41. were in school organizations?	A	B	C	D	E
42. went to church?	A	B	C	D	E
43. did your parents know?	A	B	C	D	E
44. liked to read books after school	A	B	C	D	E
45. were stopped or picked up by the police?	A	B	C	D	E
46. did things that might get them in trouble at school?	A	B	C	D	E

please continue to the next page



The following questions ask about support you received while you were in HIGH SCHOOL	No	Yes
47. Were one or both of your parents living when you were in high school?	A	B
48. Did you have siblings (brothers and/ or sister)?	A	B
49. Did you have other relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins?	A	B
50. Did you have friends?	A	B
51. Did you belong to a church or synagogue?	A	B
52. Did you have spiritual beliefs?	A	B
53. Did you have contact with school teachers, counselors, administrators?	A	B
54. Did you have contact with professionals or service providers such as doctors, barbers, social workers?	A	B

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
55. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my parents	A	B	C
56. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my parents	A	B	C
57. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my parents	A	B	C
58. When I needed to talk or think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my parents	A	B	C

59. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my parents	A	B	C
--	---	---	---

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
60. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my siblings	A	B	C
61. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my siblings	A	B	C
62. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my siblings	A	B	C
63. When I needed to talk or think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my siblings	A	B	C
64. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my siblings	A	B	C

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
65. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my other relatives	A	B	C
66. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my other relatives	A	B	C

please continue to the next page

	No	Yes	Yes A lot
67. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my other relatives	A	B	C
68. When I needed to talk of think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my other relatives	A	B	C
69. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my other relatives	A	B	C

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
70. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my friends	A	B	C
71. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my friends	A	B	C
72. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my friends	A	B	C
73. When I needed to talk of think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my friends	A	B	C
74. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my friends	A	B	C

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
75. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my school teachers, counselors, administrators	A	B	C
76. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my school teachers, counselors, administrators	A	B	C
77. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my school teachers, counselors, administrators	A	B	C
78. When I needed to talk of think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my school teachers, counselors, administrators	A	B	C
79. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my school teachers, counselors, administrators	A	B	C

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
80. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by the professionals or service providers	A	B	C
81. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by the professionals or service providers	A	B	C
82. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with the professionals or service providers	A	B	C
83. When I needed to talk of think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from the professionals or service providers	A	B	C
84. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help the professionals or service providers	A	B	C

please continue to the next page

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
85. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my church or synagogue	A	B	C
86. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my church or synagogue	A	B	C
87. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my church or synagogue	A	B	C
88. When I needed to talk of think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my church or synagogue	A	B	C
89. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my church or synagogue	A	B	C

When I was in HIGH SCHOOL...	No	Yes	Yes A lot
90. I had a feeling of being loved or cared about by my spiritual beliefs	A	B	C
91. I felt I was valued or respected for who I was and what I did by my spiritual beliefs	A	B	C
92. I had a sense of trust or security from the "give and take" of being involved with my spiritual beliefs	A	B	C
93. When I needed to talk or think about how I was doing with my life, I felt understood and got help from my spiritual beliefs	A	B	C
94. I felt good about when I was able to do things for and help my spiritual beliefs	A	B	C

Thank you!!

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO USE YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL SUPPORT INDEX (YA SSI)



UH School of Social Work
1800 East-West Road ::
Henke Hall Rm.224 :: Honolulu, HI 96822
Tel: 808.956.7182 :: Fax: 808.956.5964

Family Assessment: Stress, Coping and Resilience

Re: Permissions letter

Kristen Guillory, PhD Candidate-
University of Texas at Arlington

Dear Kristen Guillory:

This correspondence is to confirm permissions granted for your use of YA-SSI for your dissertation Research. If additional documentation is needed, please notify me. We are pleased to support your efforts.

Mahalo Nui Loa

Hamilton I. McCubbin

Hamilton I. McCubbin Ph.D
Director of Research and Evaluation
Center for Training, Evaluation and Research of the Pacific
Henke 314A Ph: 808-9564605
Email: him@Hawaii.edu

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION OF USE TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY/ PREVENTION
MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION SYSTEM SCALES
(TCU/PMES)

RE: permission to use scale

Standard HeaderFull Message View

"Bartholomew, Norma" <N.Bartholomew@tcu.edu>

AddMonday, November 7, 2005 12:03:48 PM

To:tiki_ksg@yahoo.com

Hi Kristen

We encourage the use of the TCU forms, especially in research applications such as yours. You may use the TCU FFS, and make adaptations as you see fit, for your dissertation project. As you indicate, it will be necessary to test the revised instrument, as the scales and alphas from previous research with the original instrument may not hold up if the time reference of the questions is changed.

Good luck with your project

Norma

Norma G. Bartholomew, M.A.,M.Ed.,LPC

Research Associate

Clinical Training Coordinator

Institute of Behavioral Research

Texas Christian University

Box 298740

Fort Worth , TX 76129

(817) 257-6476 or 257-7226

n.bartholomew@tcu.edu

Web site: <<http://www.ibr.tcu.edu>

I have included the recommended citations for the FFS form.

Recommended Citations for TCU Adolescent Programs Forms

Simpson, D. D. (1998). TCU data collection forms for adolescent programs. Fort Worth : Texas Christian University , Institute of Behavioral Research. [On-line]. Available: www.ibr.tcu.edu.

Barrett, M. E., Simpson, D. D. , and Lehman, W. E. K. (1988). Behavioral changes of adolescents in drug abuse intervention programs. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 44(3), 461-473.

Simpson, D. D. & Chatham, L. R. (Eds.). (1991). Inhalant use by Mexican American youth: Findings from a longitudinal study (special issue). *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 13(3).

Simpson, D. D. , & McBride A. A. (1992). Family, friends, and self (FFS) assessment scales for Mexican American youth. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 14(3), 327-340.

From: Kristen 'Tiki' Guillory [mailto:tiki_ksg@yahoo.com]

Sent: Friday, November 04, 2005 7:43 PM

To: IBR_MAIL

Subject: permission to use scale

Hello my name is Kristen Guillory, I am a TCU graduate and PhD student at UTA. I am interested in using the TCU/PMES Sclae on Family, Friends and Self for a pilot study and potentially my dissertation. My area of interest is African American males, high school drop out and social support.

I will be conducting a pilot study next semester to test my measurement tool and will be going to IRB on Dec. 20. I would like to know if I could be granted permission to make an alteration to the scale. I would make the questions past tense. This would be the only alteration of the assessment.

Thank you,
Kristen Guillory MSSW
cell 469 855 5993

APPENDIX D

STUDY CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kristen Guillory

This Informed Consent will explain to you about being a research subject in an experiment. It is important that you read this information carefully and then decide if you want to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to look at friends and family support of African American males. The problem that is being looked at is high school drop out. The results from this study will help the researcher during her dissertation (final paper of a PhD program)

DURATION

It will take you about 15-20 minutes to complete this study. There will be approximately 200 participants recruited from seven sites.

PROCEDURES

The things that make you a research subject include: You are a research subject by agreeing to the terms of this consent. You will fill out the survey to the best of your ability. Upon the completion of the survey, the survey information will be analyzed.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts of your involvement include: none

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The possible benefits of your participation are: you will receive a handout covering information about the General Education Development (GED) and exam. After you complete the study you may feel good about being involved in something that may lead to ways to keep African American males from dropping out of high school. Another benefit is knowing that you assisted an African American Doctoral student. Another potential benefit is that you can put your participation in this study on applications, resumes etc. The last benefit will be the fact you will receive the researcher's business card and will be able to stay in contact for study purposes or resource referrals.

There are many benefits for society. The first benefit would be that of a social support has been used on African American males. The benefits include being able to discover how important peer and family support is in graduating from high school.

These results of this study can be used to encourage agencies, schools, etc to be more involved in the lives of youth.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES / TREATMENTS n/a

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in Social Work Building A-201G for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA IRB, the FDA and personnel particular to this research Kristen Guillory and the School of Social Work have access to the study records. Your informed consent document and survey records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

FINANCIAL COSTS

The possible financial costs to you as a participant in this research study are: None

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Kristen Guillory at 469 855 5993, or Debra Woody at 817 272-3181. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 817/272-1235 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. You may contact the principle investigator of this study at 817/272-0932

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or quit at any time. If you quit or choose not to participate, there will be no negative effects. You may quit by calling (Ms. Guillory), whose phone number is (469 855 5993). You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

By signing below, you are saying that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been and will continue to be given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator.

You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

DATE

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

DATE

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM BRACKINS VILLAGE

Audrey H. Brown
Caseworker



CITY OF DALLAS
Police Department
Southwest Operations Division
Brackins Village NAC
125 Monaghan Court, Apt. #72
Dallas, Texas 75203

Telephone 214/670-6739

May 15, 2007

Ms. Kristen Guillory
The University of Texas at Arlington
Graduate School of Social Work
P.O. Box 19129
Arlington, TX 76109

Dear Ms. Guillory,

I am confirming my conversation with you in regards to the Institutional Review Board. I agree to offer you the opportunity to collect data on African American males and high school drop outs at my office location. It is understood that you are targeting males between the ages of 18 to 24 years old who have graduated from high school or dropped out. I am happy to work with you in providing access and introductions to this target population.

If I can assist you in any other way let me know. I can be reached Monday through Friday at 214-670-6739 from 8:30 AM until 3:30 PM or by email at audrey.brown@dpd.dallascityhall.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Audrey H. Brown".

Audrey H. Brown
Caseworker
Dallas Police Department
Southwest Operations
Brackins Village Police Storefront
125 Monaghan Court # 72
Dallas, TX 75203

APPENDIX F

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER DALLAS



**Urban League of
Greater Dallas and North Central Texas**
An Affiliate of the National Urban League, Incorporated

*Empowering Communities,
Changing Lives*

April 26, 2007

Ms. Kristen Guillory
The University of Texas at Arlington
Graduate School of Social Work
PO Box 19129
Arlington, TX 76109

Re: Institutional Review Board

Greetings Kristen,

We are pleased to provide you the opportunity to collect data on African American males and high school drop out. It is understood that you are targeting males between 18 and 24 years old who have graduated from high school or who have dropped out.

If we can be of assistance in any way, let us know. We can be reached at (214) 915-3646 or by email at anthony.green@dallasurbanleague.com

Sincerely,

Anthony Green
Director
Institute for Minority Success

214-915-4600 Phone * 214-915-4601 Facsimile * 4315 S. Lancaster Road * Dallas, TX 75216 * www.uiagdntcx.com



"A partner agency of United Way of Metropolitan Dallas."

No. 2468 P. 2

Classic Real Estate 9722988075

Nov. 25, 2007 1:50PM

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER



May 4, 2007

Ms. Kristen Guillory
The University of Texas at Arlington
Graduate School of Social Work
PO Box 19129
Arlington, TX 76109

Re: Institutional Review Board

Greetings Kristen,

I am pleased to provide you the opportunity to collect data on African American males and high school drop out at Southside Community Center. It is understood that you are targeting males between 18 and 24 years old who have graduated from high school or who have dropped out.

If I can be of assistance in any way, let me know. I can be reached at 817-871-6605 or 817-871-6606 or by email at Monique.Hill@fortworthgov.org.

Sincerely,

Monique L. Hill, LMSW
Southside Community Center Coordinator

Parks and Community Services
Southside Community Center
959 E. Rosedale
Business 817.871.6605 or 817.871.6606 Fax 817.871.6603



No.2468 P. 3

Classic Real Estate 9722988075

Nov.25. 2007 1:50PM

APPENDIX H

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM SOUTHWEST BEHAVIORAL SYSTEMS INC.

Southwest Behavioral Systems, Inc.

A Behavioral Health Care Organization

October 12, 2005

Ms Kristen Guillory
The University of Texas @ Arlington
Graduate School of Social Work
P.O. Box 19129
Arlington, Texas 76109

Re: Institutional Research Board

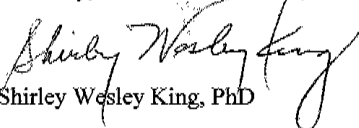
Dear Guillory:

Congratulations on the tremendous progress you are making in your graduate program. It is wonderful to know that you will add to the pool of doctoral level trained practitioners in the field of social work.

Southwest Behavioral Systems, Inc. is pleased to provide you the opportunity to conduct your research on African American males and school drop rates in the Dallas Metroplex. We understand that the male youth that you are targeting are between the ages of 18-24 and have dropped out of school. The data collection will begin in November, 2005 and continue until all data are collected.

If we can be of assistance in any way, let us know. We can be reached at 214/489-9300 or by email at swking1978@aol.com.

Sincerely,


Shirley Wesley King, PhD

"Transforming Lives"

727 S. R.L. Thornton Freeway • Dallas, Texas 75203-2904
P.O. Box 763579 • Dallas, Texas 75376-3579 • Phone: 214/941-7499 • Fax: 214/946-5484
SWBS, Inc. is a licensed facility by Texas Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse.

No. 2468 P. 4

Nov. 25, 2007 1:50PM Classic Real Estate 9722988075

APPENDIX I

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM FORTRESS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER

May 30, 2007

Ms. Kristen Guillory
The University of Texas at Arlington
Graduate School of Social Work
PO Box 19129
Arlington, TX 76109

Re: Institutional Review Board

Greetings Kristen,

We are pleased to provide you the opportunity to collect data on African American males and high school drop-out's at Fortress Youth Development Center. It is understood that you are targeting males between 18 and 24 years old who have graduated from high school or who have dropped out.

If we can be of assistance in any way, let us know. We can be reached at 817-335-1007 or by email at Michael@fwydc.org.

Sincerely,

Michael Thames – Executive Director
Fortress Youth Development Center

APPENDIX J

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM FIRST CHRISTIAN METHODIST EVANGELISTIC
CHURCH



Mary Garnett
Missionary
President

Beverly Payton
Sunday School
Superintendent

Carol Anderson
Church Treasurer

Leslie Hayes
Chairman of the
Stewards

Claudine Brown
Pres. of Stewardess
Bd. I

Margo James
Pres. of Stewardess
Bd. II

Gia Towns
Financial Secretary

Zachary Wilder
Minister of Music

Robert Payton
Chairman of the
Trustees

Patsy Whitaker
Director of
Christian
Education

Georgianne Williams
Church Conference
Secretary

Rev. Eric Tate Martin
M.Div
Senior Pastor

First Christian Methodist Evangelistic Church

"Transforming the community for Christ from the inside out."

7575 South Hampton Road, Dallas, TX 75232-4121

(972) 283-1000 • FAX (972) 283-1142

firstcme@ticnet.com - Website: www.1stcme.org

October 17, 2005

To: Kristen Guillory

From: Rev. Eric Tate Martin

Re: Institutional Review Board

Greetings Kristen. I am writing to you to inform you that it will be a pleasure for the men here at First Christian Methodist Evangelistic Church to participate in your survey on African American men and High School dropout among African American men. Let us know how we can better assist you in your study.

Thank you,

Eric Tate Martin

Rev. Eric Tate Martin, M.Div

APPENDIX K

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER FORT
WORTH

October 5, 2006

Ms. Kristen Guillory
The University of Texas at Arlington
Graduate School of Social Work
PO Box 19129
Arlington, TX 76109



Melvin C. Carter III
Project Director

3218 E. Belknap Street
Fort Worth, TX 76111-4739
Tel 817.834.4711
Fax 817.222.0911
Cell 817.925.2379
mcarter@fortworthkids.org
www.fortworthkids.org

Re: Institutional Review Board

Greetings Kristen,

We are pleased to provide you the opportunity to collect data on African American males and high school drop out. It is understood that you are targeting males between 18 and 24 years old who have graduated from high school or who have dropped out.

If we can be of assistance in any way, let us know. We can be reached at 817 925-2379 or by email at mcarter@fortworthkids.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melvin C. Carter III". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Dr. Kristen Guillory received her Bachelor's degree in psychology from Texas Christian University in 2002 and her Masters of Science in 2004 and PhD in Social Work in 2007 from the University of Texas at Arlington. While pursuing her Master's degree she created and was the director of a youth program called Rites of Passage and was the first social work graduate intern for the Fort Worth Mayor.

Dr. Guillory has always had a passion for working with and empowering others, especially youth. She has been working with youth for over 10 years. She also believes that it is extremely important to be a positive role model in African American community. Currently she is Director of Programs at Fortress Youth Development Center in Fort Worth, Texas serving low-income children and youth. In addition to this, Kristen is an evaluator, program developer, and motivational speaker. Her research interests include youth and education, community initiatives, hip-hop trends, spirituality as a support system and the plight of the African American male.