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A COURSE ON SOCIAL DYNAMICS FOR URBAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

A Dissertation Presented
by
SARA JOHNSON BUMBARY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the

University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1991

School of Education

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A Dissertation Presented

by

SARA J. BUMBARY

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ABSTRACT

A COURSE ON SOCIAL DYNAMICS FOR URBAN JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

SEPTEMBER 1991

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This study of a school improvement project in a predominantly African-American junior high school examines the efficacy of a course on social dynamics, "Dynamics of Relationships." The study explores the historical and cultural factors (notably fictive kinship) which structure African-American life in the dominant White society. Given the traumatic physical and emotional changes that occur during adolescence, African-American adolescents are besieged with special challenges and problems identified with ethnic kinship. How these factors affect African-American adolescent school success is investigated.

Data were gathered through ethnographic research procedure over a three-year period. Triangulation or multimethods of participant observations, questionnaires and student interviews were utilized. The data from each method

were analyzed and the student interviews afforded the participants opportunities to make recommendations for improvement and modifications needed for the social dynamics course, "Dynamics of Relationships."

Immediate results from pre- and post-tests after the course was completed indicated no significant change in behavior or knowledge. The students were promoted to various high schools--African-American neighborhood schools, culturally diverse schools with special programs, and schools in neighboring jurisdictions. However, after a three-year period, the students' reports supported the hypothesis that the course on social dynamics positively influenced their social development and increased their self-esteem and self-concept. The students in the culturally diverse schools reported no greater concerns about their fictive kinship than their peers in African-American neighborhood schools and both groups expressed feelings of high esteem. The students in substantially different high schools (social and academic) provided an understanding that they had not been adversely affected in their self evaluation.

The study discusses the implications of the scores which reveal gender variance: the females gained more knowledge during the course than did the male participants. Recommendations for further research are presented in which

other researchers can initiate a case study that will address some of the analysis of this study.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Urban school educators and other personnel are faced with difficult responsibilities for school improvement. African-American secondary students, like all students, share the problems of adolescence and want opportunities to learn and to prepare for adulthood. However, many African-American students become socially alienated from school and are at risk of leaving school prior to graduation. Urban school personnel should emphasize and help students understand the life changing and long-term benefits of education.

Backus Junior High School in Washington, D.C.--like other urban schools across the nation--has a problem: a significant number of students are not meeting teacher expectations, or measuring up to their own abilities and aptitudes. Standardized test results indicate that these students are on or above grade level in the needed cognitive skills, yet they consistently receive low grades. There seems a mismatch between school expectations and those of students.

Urban youth bring to schools multiple overlapping problems: poverty, dysfunctional family structures, and inadequate housing and neighborhood amenities. In response to the these concerns, a school improvement project on social dynamics, which addressed the issue of school climate

(a crucial factor in effective schools), was developed and implemented at Backus Junior High. The project involved a course "Dynamics of Relationship" which focused on school climate and required no unusual resources. However, there was the realization that no single course or activity could overcome the array of possible barriers to education for all students.

The project was built on two assumptions: First, students needed to acquire social skills that might help them to gain from their academic experience and secondly, teachers needed to acquire skills to reach more students. The school improvement project was to create within the school an atmosphere where students and teachers could build healthy interpersonal attitudes—with the teachers feeling better about themselves as professionals, the students feeling better about themselves as productive members of school society, and both parties feeling better about each other.

Towards this end, funds were appropriated by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the school's general fund to institute an innovative course titled "Dynamics of Relationships" for students, with related staff development for the teachers. The course, implemented during 1987, was designed to address many of the social ills affecting adolescents and to help with students' attitudes, decision-making skills, self-concepts and self-esteem. In addition, the staff

earned one in-service credit for participating in thirteen staff development workshop sessions.

The project and course were assessed through a variety of sources: participant observation, students' self evaluation surveys before and after the course, and openended interviews with a formal follow-up of participating students. The author sought to determine the effectiveness of the course as a first step in bringing about a better school climate and thus, better student performance.

Background of the Problem

School Failure

Adolescence brings special challenges and problems to minority youth in schools (Garbarino, 1985). Students are empowered or disabled as a result of their interactions with educators and personnel in schools. Examining school failures to meet the needs of minority students from a long-term perspective, one sees that power and status have definite effects on the relationships between dominant and minority culture groups. The dominant group--generally European-centered, middle class, and patriarchal--have defined desirable school performance.

Ogbu (1978) discussed the "caste" status of minorities who failed academically. He attributed that failure to social and economic discrimination combined with internalized inferior status ascribed by the dominant

culture. Social conditions predisposed children to failure before they entered school: poor housing, inadequate nutrition, teenage parenting and sibling supervision. Children become conscious of race dissimilarity as young as three and four years of age. Within a couple of years, they recognize that society places significance on the differences. Some homes have few educational resources, and hesitancy toward cultural transmission of dominant group values and standard language usage (Heath, 1983).

Adolescents become cognizant of the reality that to be a minority has historically meant that the country where they were not involved in the founding has developed cultural norms of the "founding fathers," rather than those of the minority group. Roosevelt Thomas, sociologist, concluded: "Diversity is seen as a Deficiency" (Washington Post, May 23, 1990, p. B11). As a result, low self-concept in schools and a pattern of school failure characterizes groups such as Franco-Ontarian students in Canada, Finnish students in Sweden, and African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students in the United States (Ogbu, 1978).

Public policy directed attention towards correcting the inequalities of public schools throughout the nation based on race and poverty. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, (Duffy, 1978, p. 101) states:

To provide financial assistance...to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low income families, to expand and improve their educational programs by various means...which

contribute particularly to meeting special educational needs of educationally deprived children.

However, desegregating schools did little to equalize education for minorities or to assist the poor to escape poverty (Silberman, 1970; Jencks, 1979). Many schools for minority adolescents remain structurally poor and are institutionally laden with frustration and defeat (Ianni, 1989).

Adolescence and Minority Students

Adolescence for minority students can be difficult and problematic: they must combine efforts to develop personal identity with attempts to establish ethnic or racial identity. While African-American students have the same personal identity problems with which every adolescent must deal, they also carry the additional burdens of White racism. Kenneth Clark (Goodstein, 1989, p. 24) remarked:

I think the education decision-makers are either skirting the issue of training American children to respect diversity or are accessories in the perpetuation of racism and segregation in the schools...they seem to permit our children to remain illiterate socially.

The African-American middle class is now rearing second-generation suburbanites who are unfamiliar with urban conditions in most large metropolitan areas. Harold L. Hodgkins of the Center for Demographic Policy reports (Goodstein, 1989, p. 46), "Black kids raised in the suburbs with intact families and parents who are college graduates

do as well academically as Whites." However, African-Americans--regardless of circumstances, whether needy or prosperous--cannot overlook the results of the racism that they encounter.

No matter how well parents or schools educate AfricanAmerican youth, given the nature of our society, they are
most likely to encounter racism. Racism in American society
has labeled African-American adolescents with specific
identities: poor, the product of broken homes and troubled
communities, abilities in athletics, singing, dancing,
mugging, hating Whites, unintelligent and having little or
no interest in academic endeavors.

Many aspects of African-American life reflect the caste-like position, and many African-American adolescents cannot reject the negative images of themselves perpetuated by the dominant culture. In 1947, Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1947) conducted a study that found African-American youngsters favored White dolls to African-American dolls. They concluded that the choices were a reflection of image group self-hatred. A similar study, conducted in 1987, found that African-American youngsters still favored the White dolls, although less commonly (Powell and Hobson, 1988).

Many African-American adolescents continue to face problems and challenges that are major threats to their fulfillment of significant societal roles in the 1990s. For

example, social forces such as unemployment (at 48 percent among African-American youth) and poor education may contribute to the low self-esteem and self-concept found in African-American adolescents in the school setting (Washington Post, October 29, 1989, p. B8). High levels of hostility, tension, and stress are evident in the attitudes of many African-American adolescents who are frustrated by present processes in the educational system. Compared to their White counterparts, they lag behind in academic achievement and in the development of positive selfconcepts. Often youth do not achieve or perform at their full potential because of a lack of self-esteem and selfconfidence (Lee and Linsey, 1985). Almost half of African-Americans in urban school systems drop out and more than half of them are unemployed. In addition, 42 percent of all homicide victims are African-Americans and the majority of the perpetrators are African-Americans (Williams, 1989).

Homicide, drug abuse, suicide, and accidents are the primary causes of death among African-American youth (Washington Post, October 29, 1989, p. B8). Indeed, according to the Sentencing Project (Washington Post, 1989, p. B11), one-quarter of African-American males between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine years are either incarcerated on parole, or on probation. Raymond Patterson, head of the forensic services at Saint Elizabeth Hospital, Washington, D.C., helps young men who are struggling to find their

identity and stop engaging in pathological behaviors to show power and courage. He insisted: "What is missing is love, and what has emerged is a tremendous amount of self hate" (Miloy, 1991, p. B3). Educators should acknowledge the social milieu confronting African-American male teenagers is serious. It influences their dealings with peers (male and female) and with adult authority figures (parents, teachers, and law officers).

Some Americans believe that racism is best confronted with education. Appeals for assistance come from students in assorted ways: some attempt to become invisible, others become angry and belligerent; and some African-American adolescents seek a sense of adequacy, belonging and self-affirmation in groups that devalue academic achievement. However, a decision to pursue academic achievement and to accept the dominant culture's social skills means joining the mainstream—which may not accept African-Americans because of the color of their skin. Socially they may reject their parents' and social peer group's culture without finding acceptance elsewhere.

The School as a Socializing Agent

As the data indicate, African-American children suffer from the effects of racism and negative characterizations. However, negative identities can be overcome through positive experiences. One way to provide these experiences

is through the schools. The main purpose of education in the United States is to prepare students for future careers and productive citizenship. Also, the effects of education include students' attitudes and aspirations. Educators should assess school curricula to help provide sound education in a pluralistic society and to assist with the socialization process.

The fundamental vehicles of socialization in current societies are families, peer groups, schools, and work. The school institution affords students the opportunity to see the practice of social functions which are consistent with public rules and the consequences of non-conformity with these rules. These functions are exhibited through curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Schools seek to prepare adolescents today for the roles they will assume in society tomorrow. Noblit and Polk (1975, p. 73) have recorded:

In as much as the school is the primary institution in the adolescent experience—one that promises not only the future status available to the adolescent, but also that gives or denies status in adolescence itself—it can be expected that its definitions are of particular significance for the actions of the youth.

Adolescents should discover the roles that meet both societal and individual adolescent goals. In order to identify these roles, adolescents must discover their uniqueness—what they believe in, their attitudes, and their ideas (Lerner, 1986). The period called adolescence allows time for identity formation in integrating aspects of self

into coherent and distinctive wholes--self-concepts and self-esteem (Josselson, 1980).

Self-concept comprises the set of knowledge one maintains about oneself. Self-esteem is the level of positive or negative evaluation associated with the self-concept (Csiksyenlmithalyi and Larson, 1984). Student perceptions of themselves may affect their attitudes toward school and influence their ability to achieve in a variety of school related areas. Self-esteem is adaptive; it can be changed.

Adolescents can affect changes in self-esteem either positively or negatively. A positive change in self-concept is generally inferred from behaviors. How a person feels is inferred by how he or she behaves. Self-concept and self-esteem of the adolescent are directly involved in the interactive processes of identity development, which are the overall basic concepts of the ideal self.

The learning that takes place in schools is not restricted to the ideas, values and attitudes expressed by teachers, it includes those ideas, values and attitudes expressed by peers. Schools have a captive audience of nearly all young people in a neighborhood. Adolescent socialization is primarily a process of assuming stable adult roles, which are learned systematically throughout the socialization process. Therefore, it may be assumed that a

major objective of the school is to help adolescents learn to function in contemporary society.

Ensuring students' cognitive development, that is the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills, makes up the primary function of schools. Studies have indicated underachievement is less related to skill deficiencies than to negative attitudes toward self and school work. However, the schools are also influential in the interactions of formal and informal peer systems. This "inter-systems dependence" denotes a carryover from one social experience to the next and from one social world to another involving the family, peers and school social systems (Hartup, 1975).

Expectations at home and school may be radically at odds. For example, in some families a child who does not fight back will be punished; yet, in school, the same rationale and behavior are not tolerated. Social development which is not congruent with dominant culture values occurs in disproportionate numbers among minority youth.

Many students who are successful and gratified by their school experiences develop self-confidence and are motivated to succeed academically. Other students, "disabled" by their school experience, do not develop social and emotional foundations or cognitive and academic skills.

One method that can used to promote the campaign against racism is through the educational system: to

establish a curriculum requirement that diverse cultures be explored. This is particularly important for urban children. In large cities, children are not only confronted with race differences, but with language and cultural differences as well. By the year 2000 children of color, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, will be the majority in fifty-three of the country's largest cities (Miller, 1968).

District of Columbia Public Schools

In 1987, when the study was initiated, the city was inhabited by 67 percent African-Americans, 28 percent White and 5 percent other races. Ninety-two percent of the Washington, D.C. public school population is African-American (Indices, 1988). In many of the public schools, this homogeneous student population (racially and socio-economically--median household income of \$20,303) scores lower in academic performance and skills than national norms and other large city norms (Indices, 1988).

In the past ten years, the middle-middle and upper-middle class students have largely left the District of Columbia Public Schools. The few middle-middle and upper-middle class African-American and White students who attend public schools in the District of Columbia primarily attend a few schools in the upper northwest section of the city.

The remainder of students experience little economic or racial diversity.

Lack of diversity limits the development of a comprehensive and effective world view. Students learn by identifying with the roles and attitudes of others with whom they interact. African-American youth structure their self-image and self-concepts from attitudes, values and definitions from significant others in the community. Some African-American students assume that they are inferior because of the color caste system prevailing in the nation's capital.

The limited expectations of many teachers for low socio-economic African-American youth contribute to their lack of motivation. Leacock's study (1969) presented significant findings that teachers held different expectations for different students, and these differences were determined as much by social class as by race.

Teachers' behavior and treatment of students--which reflect their expectations--affect students' self-concept, achievement, motivation and level of aspiration. Students who perceive that teachers have high expectations for them will be led to accomplish at a high degree; those who do not, may not do as well and may exhibit negative attitudes toward teachers and school.

Teachers discover it takes hard work (using school and community resources) to bring a significant number of the

District of Columbia's students through the mastery of standard basic skills. Even though these students are improving in their academic performance, they still lag behind White students (Washington Post, 1987).

The School Improvement Project

Backus Junior High School, where the school improvement project was implemented, located in the northeast section of Washington, D.C., is situated in a middle-class African-American neighborhood. The school has been categorized as an "Open School," because there are a limited number of students who live in the area and the school's enrollment has declined.

For the most part, the student body at Backus consists of students living out of the school's geographical boundaries and whose parents have requested Backus for their children. Many of the students live in subsidized housing complexes and travel great distances by public transportation to attend school. Some of the male students view formal education as a waste and reject "study" as a feminine pursuit or something that "Whitey" does. There are large numbers of students being reared by single parents (largely mothers) who lack the support of an extended family. Some students need reinforcement in communication skills as well as exposure to the cultural aspects of Washington, D.C.

Statement of the Problem

Many students are indifferent about school because of the mismatch between their social skills and schools' expectations of their skills. How do schools bridge the gap created by this mismatch? Given today's social pressures, for example issues of violence, is it unrealistic to expect to resolve all differences between school culture and street culture. The course, "Dynamics of Relationships," should assist in bridging the gap between ideal cultural traits promoted by the schools and "real" culture as manifested in the behavior of students.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation of the school improvement project described in this document is to assess the influences of a course on social dynamics on students' attitudes and behaviors. It is hypothesized that the course should positively influence the social development of self-concept and self-esteem of the participating African-American adolescents in ways that show up in positive school behavior.

Significance of the Study

Most educational research focuses on aspects of education and schooling that adults hope to improve from their assessment of the problems. This study should reveal

--from the students own frame of reference--problems, the success of the project, and improvements and modifications needed.

The research was based on an ethnographic study of African-American adolescent interactions with teachers, parents and peers in an urban school. The school improvement project focused on better student communication skills with peers, parents and teachers with an emphasis on behaviors which increase self-esteem and self-concept. Usable strategies to achieve this were assessed and prioritized by the student participants. In addition, they evaluated the school improvement project, "Dynamics of Relationships," and indicated modifications needed.

Goals of the Study

The goals of the study are:

- To appraise how students perceive themselves in conjunction with the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," and the school experience.
- To assess the personal and social growth of the students as indicated by a pre-test and post-test.
- To survey the improvement of the students'
 attitudes contributing to self-esteem and self concept through the interviews.

- To have the student participants evaluate the school improvement project, "Dynamics of Relationships" by:
 - -- Completing an evaluation form for the course.
 - -- Participating in individual interviews to assess the impact of the course on their personal and social development.
 - -- Completing a student questionnaire form to appraise their changed or modified behavior after completing one year of high school.

Questions to be Answered

The following questions will be answered as a result of the study:

- 1. How did the students perceive their growth and development after completing the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," and the transition into high school?
- 2. Did student post-test surveys indicate any positive school improvement?
- 3. Was there increased self-understanding/selfconcept about the interrelationship of one's thoughts, feelings, behaviors and goals?
- 4. Were there observable relationships and unanticipated consequences as a result of the course?

Overview of the Methodology

There is much discussion among researchers about the attributes of qualitative research. The qualitative research data approach consists of a (Patton, 1980, p. 22)

"detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behavior, and direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts."

In an effort to strengthen the methodology of this research study, the "triangulation" method in selecting and gathering material was used. The use of triangulation permitted the connection of three different strategies: participant observation, questionnaire analysis and interviewing.

The "case study" design was utilized to examine the school improvement project. Borg and Gall (1989, p. 403) state:

These studies usually focus on an organization, such a school, or on some part of an organization, such as the classroom. A group of individuals who interact over a period of time is usually the focus of the study. Such studies are concerned with the ongoing groups and generally use participant observation as the major data-collecting tool.

One of the most commonly given reasons for using the case study design is that the entity to be described is so complex that the data collection process has to go beyond the confines of a sample survey. Yin (1984, p. 56) says the "demands of a case study on a person's intellect, ego, and emotions are far greater than those of any other research strategy."

Interviewing and observing are the more common collection techniques used in qualitative research. These

techniques were utilized in acquiring qualitative information for this research project.

Triangulation afforded the author the opportunity to analyze the data from a multi-assessment approach and to intensify the methodology of this research project. Also, triangulation of data (1) provided an extensive description of the project and the research implementation process and (2) assisted in identifying and correcting biases that may have occurred as a result of the author being the sole observer during the study.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted with the following restrictions:

- The study involved a limited population.
- The student evaluation questionnaire did not examine the motivation of the participants.
- The response to the interview instrument and process was not 100 percent compared to the student evaluation questionnaire administered at one-year intervals (students were promoted to high school and the responses were restricted).
- The formal reliability of the interview was limited; it was an adaptation of the previously designed student evaluation questionnaire.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature will specifically include:

- · Characteristics of Adolescence
- Identity and Self-Concepts of African-American Adolescents in the School Setting
- The Role of the School in the Socialization of African-American Youth
- School Improvement

Public schools in urban settings have been recognized as socialization agents by many large urban systems heavily populated by minorities and African-American students.

These systems have processes which perpetuate and accelerate poor attendance, suspension, and drop-out or push-out rates for African-American adolescents.

Poor academic achievement and inadequate preparation
limit their ability to compete for jobs in the labor market.
Upwardly mobile African-American adolescents realize that
success in the work place is often linked to their academic
mastery of the dominant White culture and the school
curriculum. Equally critical to upward mobility is the
extent to which African-American students develop the skills
and abilities to assimilate their values, behaviors,
appearance, and kinships into lifestyles the White culture
uses as a measure of acceptance and legitimization. Those

students who do not demonstrate these skills and abilities are placed in classes with less challenging curricula which do not adequately prepare them for gainful employment or effective participation in the dominant culture. These and many other factors negatively affect the achievements, attitudes and self-concepts of African-American youth.

Characteristics of Adolescence

Definitions

The adolescent period characterizes the transition from being dependent (child-like) to independent (self governing) (Garbarino, 1985). Adolescents somewhat distance themselves from the family and rely on peers and other socialization agents for direction. Garbarino, (1985, p. 10) stated that:

Adolescence is the period of life that begins around the time when the process of physical and sexual maturation (puberty) move into gear and ends when young people have assumed responsibility for the major roles of adulthood (economic, sexual and political).

Kaplan (1984, p. 7) defined adolescence as:

Adolescence is conceived by some as an awkward age, a time characterized by some as rebellious, destructive or passive and painful transition between childhood and adulthood. The adolescent struggles to reconcile genital sexuality with the moral authority of the social, moral and cultural order of society.

The definitions identified the physical changes which determined the onset of adolescence, but also recognized that adolescence begins with the biological and ends in the social and cultural development of individuals.

Loundsbury (1982, p. 128) related major characteristics of adolescents with some indication of their effect:

- Physical Characteristics. Physical development reflecting increasing height, body breadth, and depth, heart size, lung capacity, muscular strength and sexual development.
- 2. Social Characteristics. Socialization needs realized as adolescents broaden their base of affiliation from family to peer group. Opportunities for students to interact with peers and with adults (significant others) in non-instructional areas assumes increasing importance at this age.
- 3. Emotional and Social-emotional Characteristics.
 Adolescent adjustment to personal growth patterns and relationships with adults. When such patterns are atypical, the emotional adjustment difficulty is intensified.
- 4. <u>Intellectual Characteristics.</u> Changes in the intellectual nature of the adolescent. Initially grounded in Piagetian theory, this area has now been expanded to include consideration of the brain growth.

During this growth period, adolescents critically examine themselves and others (especially parents, other members of the family and peers). They assert their individuality but strongly desire the approval of adults, parents and teachers. However, this is an age when peer approval "overrides" that of parents, teachers and other adults. This is a time when adolescents begin to influence the path of their own development (Lerner and Bush-Rossenagell, 1981). They are testing their abilities to be competent, function successfully and feel good about themselves.

For many adolescents, the school provides the single most important group socialization experience for informal interactions and interrelationships in their lives.

Successful socialization produces congruity to expectations about accepted values and behavior. Schools offer adolescents the opportunity for social interaction between and among other adolescents.

The arrival of puberty sometimes brings declining interest in academics (Kohlberg, 1973). Sudden physical growth, rapid sexual development, readjustment of relationships with adults and peers, and rush toward independence sometimes result in reduced academic performance. In response, middle schools have focused on teaching adolescents to "get along" with others and "to fit in." In the 1940s "social efficiency" was stressed and "life adjustment" in the 1950s (Tyack, 1978, p. 316).

The 1980s have seen a multitude of adolescent images; some portray the adolescent as sophisticated but lacking a clear role in society. David Elkind (1984) portrayed this image in the book All Grown Up With Nowhere to Go. A current impression of adolescents was stated by Kaplan (1984, p. 87): "sitting in a chair, their feet up on a desk, while talking on the phone surrounded by unopened text books, gym clothes, half eaten pizza, and a hot dog."

Murdock and Phelps (1972, p. 72) described the adolescent culture:

[They] are caught between two fundamentally opposed cultures; the culture of the school based on: deferred gratification, cognitive skill, individual achievement and deference to authority; and the out-of-school "youth culture" based on: immediate gratification, physical skill, group solidarity, and the equality of group members. Hence they are forced to choose one or the other.

In the name of socialization and life preparation, adolescents are pushed and pulled in many directions. They may not conform to society's rules; yet, they observe a strict conformity to the rules of their own subcultures or groups (Rawson, 1984). They learn about themselves by observing the reaction of others to their behavior. Friends or peers provide feedback more positively and openly than do adults. (Chalip, Kleiber and Larson, 1984).

Many dreams, fantasies, anxieties, and aspirations fill the world of adolescents. They view the world and their immediate environment as safe and friendly or insecure and hostile, sometimes describing incidents in the way they would have liked them to happen, rather than the way they actually occurred. Adolescents continuously challenge and discard traditional values. Cooley (1964, p. 184) used an image of "the looking glass self," to indicate three related dimensions of one's self-concept: "the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his/her judgement of that appearance; and some sort of feeling such as pride or mortification."

During adolescence, young people attempt to weave phenomenon together, since the adolescent's world does not operate in single disciplines. Due to the rapid physical and emotional changes occurring, adolescents are unusually vulnerable to peer pressure, highly susceptible to fads, inquisitive about alcohol and other drugs, and subject to clashes with adolescents from different groups and cliques. This volatile stage involves physical development, sexuality, family relations, peer relations, self-concept, and academic and vocational development.

Schools which offer adolescent students courses on social dynamics spend time exposing them to opportunities which encourage self-confidence and independence. They learn to cope with the problems that affect life at home and at school, such as loneliness, poor work habits, and low self-esteem. Adolescents are provided the opportunity to grow culturally and socially. Sometimes the social dynamics courses have a subtle effect and other times a more obvious effect on adolescents.

Identity and Self-esteem of African-American Adolescents in School Settings

African-Americans are descended from African ancestry with a history of slavery, colonization, conditional freedom and segregation. Although the Supreme Court school desegregation decision of Brown versus Board of Education in

1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 have changed American society, African-Americans have not fully realized civil liberties or cultural acceptance by White Americans.

Unlike other immigrants, African-Americans have experienced the effects of slavery and Jim Crowism as a direct result of visual identification of color and physical features that are in contrast to the dominant society. Things have changed for many middle-class African-Americans over the last twenty-five years. Some African-Americans have gained affluence when assessed by the dominant society's socio-economic standards, but they have not escaped the perils of racism (Lacayo, 1989).

Parents try to insulate their offspring from the full brunt of racism, but cannot counteract the flood of messages--subtle, and blatant--filtering into their psyches. Fred Phillips (Miloy, 1991, p. B3) from the Progressive Life Center relates:

No matter how well we seem to be doing by external standards, there is a tremendous amount of underlying pain, stress, depression, and rage.

African-Americans have an ethnicity of African heritage which embraces fictive kinship (brotherhood and sisterhood). Fictive kinship is a strong bond among and within a group that is not connected by blood or marriage and sustains reciprocal socio-economic relationships (Fordham, 1988). African-American kinship is not automatically assumed

because of the color of skin, African features or being of African descent, but is bestowed by the group when African-American individuals embrace a particular "mind set" which emphasizes group loyalty and "ethnic solidarity." The language and feelings are denoted through a sense of "peoplehood" (Green, 1981, p. 58); the significance of peoplehood is in contrast to the dominant society's stress on individualism.

Early in their development, African-American children learn the guidelines of kinship from their parents, relatives, and peers. Some time between the onset of adolescence and adulthood, African-American adolescents change, their optimism fades and the realism of fate--a disadvantaged life--becomes an actuality. Thorough and comprehensive consideration and planning must be given for appropriate, effective education during the turbulent years of adolescence.

African-Americans have been denied assimilation into the American culture and those African-American individuals who have attained success or upward mobility in the dominant society have had to minimize their African-American ethnicity and assume attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of the dominant society. The "Un-African-American" behavior is looked upon as being at variance with the African-American kinship system.

Some successful African-American media persons, politicians, and students have disassociated themselves from or minimized their allegiance to the African-American community; they assume a role of racelessness (Fordham, 1988, p. 57). In many instances, those African-Americans striving for upward mobility assume a dual role, minimizing their racial identity and acting as a racial symbol. For example, an African-American appointed as a "first" in a corporate position, but assuming all the social and cultural skills of the dominant society, depicts the minimizing of ethnicity. MacPherson (1986 p. Gl) described Douglas Wilder, Governor of Virginia:

In the state with the lowest percentage of African-Americans (17 percent) of any southern state, he announced his candidacy in front of a picture of Harry Byrd and down played race until "people never perceived an African-American candidate running." A statewide trek, backed up with television ads that included an archetypal white deputy sheriff endorsing Wilder, paid off. Wilder undid his tie and rolled up his sleeves in front of Confederate flags at country stores. Instant press, statewide and local at every stop.

Douglas Wilder assumed the role of an "American" running for political office with the support and endorsement of the Democratic Party in Virginia. While Wilder's decisions helped him to a successful political end, there are other vehicles which serve to deny individual ethnicity.

African-American children learn of their heritage from their parents and a supportive community and they gain a

positive sense of self-worth. When African-American children learn or come in contact with the White world or dominant society and when their achievements are compared to White youth, their positive sense of self-worth is threatened. The dominant White society offers little support for African-American self-esteem. Many adolescents view the dominant society as the symbol of the prevalent powerful "white man" who controls their lives and fate, and they cannot accept a future in which they are wholly subject to the "whims" of Whites.

Defiance may stem partly from youthful rebellion but mainly from rage at a society that does not welcome them. Fred Phillips, clinical psychologist with the Progressive Life Center, a youth counseling service in Washington, D.C., described Washington teenagers:

They take their anger out in very personal ways-against their neighborhoods, and themselves. They are not conscious of why, but they instinctively feel that they are an exploited generation who has been deprived of the resources necessary to integrate into society. (Miloy, 1991, p. B4)

Many teenagers do not consider the consequences of their risky behavior. The way adolescents treat each other, what they approve of and reject, has a powerful impact on their value system. It would be useful to plot the educational progress of African-American children and to examine at what age, grade and why attitudes about school begin to digress. Kunjufu (1984) suggested that the fourth

grade failure syndrome can be observed in the education of African-American males.

African-American children enter school eager to learn and love their teachers. The parents want their children to receive a good education; however, often the teachers' middle class culture and professional preparation have not conveyed to them ways to identify the willingness and not always readiness of their students to learn. Numerous investigations, research, and studies have been conducted on the influence of teacher expectations on students.

Noteworthy inquiries were recorded by Leacock, 1969; Brophy and Good, 1974; and Good, 1981. The findings are summarized by Brown (1986, pp. 35-36):

- 1. Teachers hold greater expectations for, pay more attention to, and assign higher grades to the performances of students who have been labeled high achievers, students who come from higher socio-economic backgrounds, and students who are White.
- 2. Teacher expectations along with the behaviors that accompany them can produce achievement variations among children with similar intellectual endowments. This is true regardless of whether the expectations are based on prior performance or teacher assumptions about what students can achieve.
- 3. Teacher expectations serve to sustain pre-existing achievement differences among children as they progress through school.
- 4. Teacher expectations which are inconsistent with children's prior performances can bring about changes in subsequent levels of achievement.

The "nice" conforming middle-class youngsters are more likely to be favored by the teacher. African-American as well as White teachers speak out against racism but they have continued to accept the theory that only middle-class White norms of behavior and learning are the acceptable ones (Leacock, 1969; Collins, 1989). Teachers affect more than their students academic achievement. Some studies suggest that students tend to adjust to what they perceive the teacher's expectations to be and aspire to perform accordingly.

In subtle and overt ways, teachers affect the racial feelings and self-concept of their students. Dick Gregory recalled a painful school experience in his book, Nigger.

The teacher had asked each child in the class except Gregory how much their fathers would give to the Community Chest.

Fatherless, but wanting a father, Gregory decided to "buy" himself one and to pledge money that he had made shining shoes and selling papers (Gregory, 1965, pp. 31-32):

"What is it now?"
"You forgot me."
She turned toward the blackboard.
"I don't have time to be playing with you, Richard."
"My daddy said he'd"
"Sit down Richard, you're disturbing the class."
"My daddy said he'd give . . . fifteen dollars."
She turned around and looked mad. "We are collecting this money for you and your kind, Richard Gregory. If your Daddy can give you fifteen dollars you have no business being on relief.
"I got it right now, I got it right now, my Daddy gave it to me to turn in today, my Daddy said"
"And furthermore" she said, looking right at me, her

nostrils getting big and her lips getting thin and her eyes opening wide, "We know you don't have a Daddy." Helene Tucker turned around, her eyes full of tears. She felt sorry for me. Then I couldn't see her too well because I was crying too. "Sit down Richard."

And I always thought the teacher kind of liked me. I walked out of school that day, and for a long time I didn't go back very often. There was shame there.

It is important for teachers in urban schools to be highly skilled in positive attitudes about all students and the level of performance they expect from the students. The development of a solid academic curricula along with concern and nurturing of students to insure school success is needed. Erroneous beliefs about low-income citizens and their lifestyles build a basis for low expectations and the self-fulfilling prophesy of school failure.

In our present system, African-American children are urged to abandon their identity if they are to be rewarded by the system and move toward vertical mobility. The dominant society must understand that pro-African-American does not mean anti-White. The initiation of staff development programs which stress multi-cultural education is one means of alleviating some of the mis-conceptions. A study conducted by Fine and Bowers (1984) yielded findings similar to Kenneth and Mamie Clark's research reported in Chapter 1. In the Fine and Bowers study African-American children were individually tested by being given two identical infant dolls (except for skin color). Questions asked were: Which doll would he/she like to play with?

Which doll looked nice? Which doll looked like a Black child? And which looked like the student? However, the students less frequently related to and selected the White doll compared to the earlier study. Probably, prevailing political views which position African-Americans at notable social and economical disadvantage also diminish children's eagerness to relate with an African-American symbol.

A child's behavior and general emotions are intensified by the need for achievement, the need for self-assertion or aggression and the need for approval. Students in urban school settings with a majority of "at-risk" students are more often exposed to other students who feel they cannot affect their own destiny. Student attitudes follow similar pattern distributions—those raised in urban settings are more likely to feel they cannot be successful in life compared to those raised in suburban communities (Jaynes and Williams, 1989).

Some members of the African-American community perceive school as a key agent for socializing youth. Then, schools should give strong consideration to adolescents' self-perception and their evaluation of school. Often adolescent performance is geared to the expectation of significant others.

Aspirations are influenced by the expectations of the family, school and community. Expectations are imposed on African-American youth by the dominant society, the

neighborhood communities and peer environment; these expectations and inequalities are carried in their psyche prompting them to drop-out of school and confront adult life ill-prepared (O.E. Survey, 1988). Many expect to enter the work force before finishing high school—they do not aspire to continue their education: they express low levels of self-esteem. An increasing number of the African-American population is falling out of the legitimate labor market entirely, because they are denied employment.

African-Americans differ from Whites in earnings, wealth, quality of housing, schooling, in the amount learned in school, the rates of committing crime and of being victimized, life expectancy, susceptibility to disease and infant mortality. The American creed supports the idea that with hard work and effort an individual can achieve success; consequently, many believe that an individual's assessment of self-worth is the ability to achieve success (MacLeod, 1987). That assumption, when applied to the masses of African-Americans, becomes a fantasy.

In 1981, the administration abolished the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (ETA) and its 150,000 federally funded jobs, reduced \$1.7 billion from the child nutrition program budget and pushed 400,000 families off the welfare list (Hatchett, 1989). The system penalizes the poor by denying the basic needs of children and many of these children belong to the African-American poor.

The Survey Laboratory at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, conducted a poll in 1988 which found that 55 percent of Americans believed that too much federal money was being appropriated to improving the conditions of African-Americans or that no more funds should be attached to what was already being disbursed (Hatchett, 1989). The "Reagan Years" saw sizable cutbacks in federal social programs. Ten percent of Whites live in poverty compared to 33 percent of African-Americans, whose income today is comparable to what it was in the early 1970s. A 588 page report (Hatchett, 1989, p. 16) was presented by the National Research Council on Race Relations which concluded that "racism and institutional bias" were the essential reasons why African-Americans and other minorities have failed to migrate into the main stream of American society.

A survey conducted by the National Opinion Research center at the University of Chicago in 1990 (Washington Post, 1991, p. A4) showed that despite progress in race relations since 1950, Whites' negative images of African-Americans continue to be widespread. They believe that African-Americans are likely to prefer welfare to hard work and tend to be lazier than Whites, more prone to violence, less intelligent, and less patriotic. The sources of these feelings are historically complex and rooted deeply in the culture. These beliefs in part explain White resistance to government help in affirmative action and quotas for

minority groups. Lawrence Bobo, professor of sociology and head of the committee that designed the survey questions for the University of Chicago survey, comments on the rescinding of affirmative action on scholarships (Washington Post, Nov. 1990, p. A7):

It is whether we are going to accept a new form of slavery in America—albeit where the chains of bondage are invisible. Common sense ought to tell all of us that when the majority gets a minority down, and makes laws and rulings that ensure the minority can never get up, than the members of that minority become a permanent underclass, the slaves without physical shackles.

White Americans do not realize how many difficulties African-American youth encounter in their efforts to achieve equity. Middle-class Whites possess a naive faith in individualism and self-reliance. They hold in low regard victims of circumstance. They refuse to acknowledge that some minorities must overcome obstacles that are not of their making and which Whites do not encounter. Many White Americans lack empathy for those disadvantaged by race, poverty, and gender (P. Sniderman et al., 1986). Some sociologists believe that Whites have a group interest in maintaining the racial status quo and that improvements for African-Americans are "challenges" to the White group status or position. Lawrence Bobo (Washington Post, 1990, p. B4) states: "The group conflict is focused on the pace of change and matters of resource distribution (like access to quality schools)." He ascertained that Whites believe African-Americans endanger their social position. Some Whites

contest affirmative action because of real conflict--if an African-American student applicant is given favored entry to a notable university, a non African-American applicant must be denied a place. The same is true of minority "set-asides" and other affirmative-action programs (Bobo, 1983).

Although African-American leaders tell African-American youth that Black is beautiful, the dominant society, White America, tells them that Black is bad and ugly, for example, squalor in neighborhoods, dilapidated housing and inferior schools. The self-fulfilling prophecy that African-Americans are inferior and will fail has greatly affected the feelings of self-worth and self-concept of African-American youth (Washington Post, 1987). Barbara Love, professor of education at the University of Massachusetts, speaks of internalized oppression of today's African-Americans (Miloy, 1991, p. B3):

It is the guilt, shame, fear and feelings of inferiority that have been programmed into the Black psyche over generations. The devastating consequences to these messages is that it is no longer necessary for the system to keep Blacks in their place. We start doing it to ourselves. Whites don't have to keep us out of college if we feel that we are not smart enough to go. They don't have to keep us out of jobs if we feel there is no point in trying to get ahead. The Ku Klux Klan need not carry ropes if we hate ourselves so much we kill each other off.

When childhood ends and youth or adolescence begins, adolescents are primarily consolidating their social roles and are more concerned about how they appear to others than how and what they feel they are (Sewell and Trevor, 1983).

African-American adolescents perceive their choices in life as being severely limited. It is communicated early in their lives that their options will be limited and the concept of education as a passport to a better life is vague. The students cannot see the relationship between school and daily living and it becomes easy for students to leave school prior to graduation. (Mboya, 1986). Most of these adolescents leave school before finishing the tenth grade and the majority have family members (parents or siblings) who also did not graduate. The students express feelings of school alienation due to teacher dissatisfaction, classroom instruction, and school failure (most drop-outs have been retained in grade at least once) (Mann, 1986).

The school is expected to socialize African-American students into the existing racist societal value system.

Many concerned educators seek methods to make education relevant to African-American students. Many administrators and teachers discuss adjusting the curriculum to be congruent with the needs of African-American students, while assisting them to learn to negotiate and live in both worlds: African-American kinship and the dominant society (Hammond, 1990; Millard, 1990; Pendleton, 1990).

It is conceded that African-American males are rejecting education in record numbers, that is, they are failing, labeled as "behavior problems" and are slow

learners and truants. A recent study of a school district in Milwaukee revealed that African-American males had drastically higher suspension (94 percent), expulsion, retention, and drop-out rates, and lover grade point averages than other students. A Milwaukee school board member advocated a possible solution of a sequester educational environment designed exclusively for African-American males. The program would provide curriculum for building self-esteem and self-confidence and would encourage a respect for learning all components that appear to be omitted in the educational training of many African-American males. Ken Holt, principal of a Middle School in Milwaukee and head of the task force that surveyed the records of the students, says (Whitaker, 1991, p. 17):

What we're basically saying is that we need to explore a different, more supportive system for African-American males to learn in, because in the present system they're being destroyed.

African-American adolescents who identified what the school's philosophy and values of the dominant culture, in many instances, risked losing membership in the African-American kinship system.

Symbolism and Vernacular

African-American culture is generally a high stimulus culture which has preserved Black humanity; and the White middle class typically views it as a deviation from their

culture (Folb, 1973). Ethnic and racial pride based on success within the group has benefits and costs for developing adolescents.

One can observe the young African-Americans' fashions to feel the attitudes of ethnic kinship. A hair cut with "tribal designs," hair styles with "corn rows" and braids, and medallions in the shape of Africa worn around the neck denote pride and esteem for the motherland.

Alvin Poussaint explained the behavior of some African-American males: being "cool," aloof or indifferent as a kinship trait that is rooted in pre-integration sustaining skills. Educators frequently view cultural explanations as negative. Pouissant (quoted in Harriston, 1990, p. B8) said "A lot of these legacies are passed down. We are twenty-five years out of segregation. Many of the adaptive behaviors are still with us."

Working class, urban African-American culture embraces children who participate in boasting and verbal dueling (Phinney and Rotheran, 1986, p. 234). Verbal dueling, "the talk," is a verbal confrontation which, as a form of play, aids in developing attitudes and skills necessary for social interaction. Verbal dueling or "signifying" develops selfesteem among peers during the period of adolescence.

"Verbal one-upmanship" is considered socially "in" among many African-American adolescents.

Some labels that African Americans reject from the White society are designated in African-American vernacular as terms of endearment. Labels Whites give to African-Americans are nigger, burr head, liver lips, shine, spade, and monkey (Allen, 1983, p. 45). African-Americans label Whites as cracker, ofay, devil, Whitey and half and half. African-Americans identify other African-Americans as nigger (meaning soulful) and brother (blood member, brother, sister--terms of endearment) (Royce, 1982).

Some African-American male adolescents relate to their peers through their "walk"; however, when the African-American male goes job hunting, the "walk" becomes menacing and often appears to be aggressive to the world outside of his community (Pouissant, 1986).

Academic Achievement

Embracing the inherited African-American culture or kinship concept in the school context almost guarantees adolescent failure (MacLeod, 1987). Many African-American adolescents respond to the peer-generated social liability of being academically successful by entering the "anti-achievement ethic" (Granat et al., 1986, p. 153). School represents the dominant society and many African-American adolescents equate success in school to a betrayal of their African-American culture.

Because White racism persists in American society, African-American students who aspire to be part of the mainstream minimize their African-American kinship and culture. They seek to adopt a school culture and have a greater chance for success in school and in life.

Signithia Fordham, an anthropologist at Rutgers
University, conducted a two-year research study at a high
school in a poor area of Washington, D.C., with a
predominately African-American population. The study
analyzed ethnographic data of high-achieving AfricanAmerican students' academic success and tensions felt versus
the kinship with their African-American culture and
identity. Her findings indicate that the "fear of acting
White and the fear of becoming the 'other' was a motivating
factor in underachievement in the school context" (Mydans,
1990, p. B9).

The students' cultural direction equates "acting White" with educational achievement which the White dominant society sanctions and prioritizes. The research contends that African-American students were fulfilling the low expectations that the dominant society imposed on them. The study indicated that the average students enjoyed declaring their African-American identity and avoided the academics for fear their peers would view them as "acting White" which included: speaking standard English, studying in the library, involvement in volunteer work, being on time,

enjoying or listening to White music, and visiting and participating in cultural endeavors. The high achieving students disguised their attainments with different strategies such as comic persona, sports, not attending Honor Society meetings, and the like. Fordham concluded: "Kids are worried about being cut off by their own community and uncertain about being accepted by the other community" (Fordham, 1987).

African-American adolescents who achieve academic success in school risk losing their membership in the African-American kinship system (Fordham, 1988). These achieving students are keenly aware that being an African-American is an impediment and "White society" cannot get past their appearance to see or hear an individual (Alphin-Brownlee, 1984). The message becomes they cannot be culturally African-American and successful in mainstream White society. Many African-American high achieving adolescents distance themselves from their peer groups Fordham, 1987), sacrificing their loyalty to the African-American community and respect for their kinship.

African-American achieving adolescents, male or female, believe school and education are the agents for achieving upward or vertical mobility in the dominant society's system. For the high achieving male adolescent, there is much conflict and sense of uncertainty about his relationship with the dominant society and his

African-American kinship, internalizing taunts that bright, intelligent African-American males are "nerds," gays or "perverts" (Fordham, 1988, p. 78). There are 25 percent fewer African-American males in college today than ten or fifteen years ago. There are more African-American men in jail than there are in college (Washington Times, January 12, 1990). African-American men are referred to as an "endangered species." Between 1976 and 1988 the incidence of African-American males graduating from American Colleges fell from 46 percent to 35 percent of those attending college (Washington Post, Nov. 1989, p. A7). Curtailed education reduces the employability and earning power of African-American men.

On the other hand, high achieving African-American females are less scrutinized and, in many instances, disassociate themselves from racial stereotypes, that is, African-American vernacular, verbal dueling and boasting, which are realities in the African-American culture.

These are some of the factors which cause African-American adolescents to choose between academic success in school or strongly embracing their cultural and ethnic kinship.

The Role of the School in the Socialization of African-American Youth

Definition

Socialization begins with childhood, continues through adulthood and is influenced by the values of the established dominant economic system, dynamics of the individual and group life, and interactive perception of the environment and role obtainment within the environment (Bandura, 1977). Individuals adjust and adapt to a variety of positions in the social order of the established culture and attain specific orientation for competent functioning.

Socialization within a specific social system is concerned with the process by which role orientation is acquired.

School and Home Experiences

Socialization in schools is incongruent with some African-American family and community mores. Student experiences in many urban ghetto settings have not been conducive for them to explore and understand the dominant culture. They see themselves as victims of racism caught in a succession of ignorance, poverty, and violence which they did not create and do not understand how to break from for a better lifestyle. They observe through the media an affluent society which does little or nothing to relieve their dilemma.

Many African-American students face unique problems (some of which appear insurmountable), and the adolescents are ill-prepared to accept the dominant society's mores. The level of self-confidence students bring to school is rooted in the process of socialization from their ethnic background. Therefore, attitudes of ethnic kinship which make sense to their social systems often conflict with the dominant society (Clark, 1980).

The students provide each other both academic and social standards with varying degrees of vocal interchange. Where the majority of students in a school have low achievement, others will likely follow suit. Peer pressure has an immense effect in the motivation and behavior of the students. However, failure is not a necessary outcome of poverty and racism. there are some exceptional schools which service urban African-American students and low income neighborhood students which succeed in standard measures of academic success (Edmonds and Frederiksen, 1979).

The contrast between student experiences at home and those in school deeply affects their psycho-social development. The school is involved in the "overhaul and improvement" of America's educational system--improvement in language, mathematics, and thinking skills through revised curriculum, access to federal funds, and deregulated resources. Current educational reform de-emphasizes

interpersonal factors and focuses on instruction and curriculum (Chubb, 1988).

Psychologists suggest (Miloy, 1991, p. B4)) that to improve America's educational system, cultural and ethnic differences should be addressed in order to instill a sense of pride in students—with the goal to build self-esteem by making each child feel special and unique. Classroom environments should affirm students' values and culture.

Many home experiences do not address formal education, but deal with racism and the low prestige or low social status of African-Americans. Many in the dominant society view young people's publicly asserted behavior as benign or hostile; in most societies, parents and friends give the social skills and confidences that enable youth to take advantage of educational opportunities and that development, in turn, shapes academic achievement (Riessman, 1976). the absence of positive adult models many Black boys, as young as seven or eight years old, turn to their peers to explore the essence of being male. These peer groups often perpetuate behaviors that impede the chances of black males for success in education and employment (Pouissant, 1986). From 1978 to 1987, 20,315 young African-American men were slain in the United States; fewer African-American men died in the Vietnam War.

The failure to bridge the social and cultural gap between home and school may cause low academic performance

by African-American students. Ogbu (1981) believed that educators often incorrectly view all minority groups as the same. How groups came to this country affects how they view American institutions. "It makes a difference whether they joined American society voluntarily or involuntarily like American Indians and Blacks. You have to understand the history before you can adequately address the problem" (Harriston, 1990, p. B8).

The attitudes, values and behaviors of the family and social network strongly affect development. The meshing of home and school fosters further development when student social skills are considered appropriate by the teacher and invoke positive responses (Comer, 1975). Social development that is at odds with the school occurs in disproportionate numbers among African-American adolescents who have had traumatic experiences in our society. In the urban environment, they are not provided with broad experiences and opportunities to learn about how they should function in a different environment. Many times adolescents aspire to goals within their frame of experience. Youth in urban ghettos have little access to middle class role models except in schools.

The authoritarian structured schools do not give these students the skills and experiences that will enable them to fulfill expectations of the school (DeFrancis, 1989). The racial composition of schools can affect the performance and

attitudes of students. The disparities of skills between White adolescents and African-American adolescents are acute. The relationship between racially isolated education and the outcomes of the isolated schooling has a great impact on the attitudes of self-esteem, self-concept and achievement (Pottebaum et al., 1986).

In many urban schools there are not enough textbooks to go around, teachers who are indifferent, large classes, lack of professional resources—full—time reading teachers, coaching teachers or tutors and the like. Educators lament it is unfair that the quality of a student's schooling is an accident of geography and the needlest students most often attend the poorest schools. Some students with low self—esteem and self—concept emulate the negative behaviors and actions of a celebrity or gang member who receives acclaim in the school.

Students with low-esteem rarely assume responsibility for the behaviors that diminish their social approval, but use defense mechanisms to mask anxiety, guilt, embarrassment and other painful feelings. As an example, a student confronted by a teacher for continually missing class and assignments justifies this behavior with an excuse that may have little relationship to actual events, but the mechanisms serve to reduce the student's embarrassment. The adolescent confronts the teacher and complains that the inadequacies of the teacher (lack of skill and sensitivity)

prevents "anyone" from learning. These students are labeled "bad," unmotivated, or stupid. Staff personnel punish the students and hold low expectations for them. They often blame the students, their parents and their communities for the failure. The individual role definitions of educators and the institutional role definitions of schools have remained largely unchanged despite "new and improved" programs and policies (Ogbu, 1978).

William Julius Wilson's <u>The Declining Significance of Race</u> (1980) referred to the comparable position race imposes in deciding African-American life opportunities in the current technological age. Wilson found a decreasing emphasis on race and increasing importance of class for upward and lateral mobility opportunities. While only 6 percent of Americans are a part of a so-called underclass, African-Americans compose almost 70 percent of the grouping. Isabell Sawhill, senior fellow at the Urban Institute, concluded (Williams, 1989, p. 4):

Black-White income distribution is a story of income disparity and the strongest disparity in the data are for Blacks. The trend toward greater equality is more pronounced in the Black population than in the White population. The top one-fifth is doing well and the bottom one-fifth is heading for the sub basement."

Educationally there are two critical problems: The first is the under-education of most of the students classified as belonging to the underclass. They are tracked or ability-grouped into homogenous bottom-tract classes and the students are confined in the lower tracts for their school

years. The second problem is the labeling of underclass students as having educational deficits and consequently, placing them in special education or educable mentally retarded classes.

Many African-American students in urban schools have educational deficiencies, and Carter G. Woodson, in his book The Mis-Education of the Negro, (1933), described the problem as "mis-education" and "de-education." African--American students receive a consistent image of who they are (self-concept) by the dominant society; a society that uses skin color and ethnic kinship to label them inferior. Most African-American parents consider success in school as their children's hope for the future, but a considerable number expect the school to fail them and their children, as other mainstream institutions have; often schools do fail them (Morgan, 1980). The difference between impoverishment and affluence extends beyond traditional learning. In more affluent neighborhoods, education frequently is a key concern of parents who are regularly committed to school operations. Parents in poor neighborhoods are not any less concerned about education; in actuality they appraise it as the leading means out of poverty. Yet, it is more complex for them to find time to become engrossed in school affairs when the dilemma of material existence is urgent. Also, many parents do not participate in school operations because they conclude they can have little or no influence in school affairs.

African-American students are undereducated in disproportionate numbers across the nation. In large cities as many as 40 percent of African-American students leave school prior to graduation (Washington Post, September 3, 1987). Of that 40 percent, there are two groups: 1) some blame the inadequacies of the school system and 2) others were retained in grade multiple times and blame themselves rather than the school system for their failures (District of Columbia Public Schools, 1988).

It is essential that schools discover techniques to educate African-American youth so the problems associated with unemployment and alienation will not escalate (Barden, 1988). Job opportunities increasingly reside in service and technology industries, but African-American youth are the least likely to have the social and academic skills that these jobs demand. Implementation of change is dependent upon the extent to which education can redefine its role with respect to minority students and communities. As society becomes more complex, schools must develop the necessary institutional responses to changing conditions and new socialization strategies (Widaman, 1987).

School Improvement

The "Excellence" reform movement in education gave rise to the restructuring of schools and school improvement. As a result, some states have made significant progress in raising standardized test scores, but students leaving school prior to graduation in urban areas remains excessive. Students lack writing skills and educators continue to be distressed over their inability to use higher order thinking skills. Some schools and classrooms appear to create a better climate for learning than others. The most effective schooling develops with a secure staff, a safe school, strong leadership from the administration, endorsement from the families, an important significance on course content and a willingness to criticize unsatisfactory academic performance, as well as commend the good (Borman & Spring, 1984).

School climate relays symbolic messages conveyed to the students. These messages make a clear statement about the worth of students that seems to stay with them throughout life. Students who have low social status and low self-esteem within the peer group and are subject to verbal battering in the school setting or school climate and perceive the school as a depressed environment (Gilmartin, 1987).

Programs for school improvement and reform in urban areas are operating across many states. Some of the noteworthy programs are described below.

The schools in East Harlem, New York, were identified as having drug dealers, high drop-out rates and the lowest reading and math scores in New York City. They now have fifty thematic schools which include the Jose Feliciano School for the Performing Arts, the Academy of Environmental Sciences, the Isaac Newton School for Science and Mathematics, and the School of Science and Humanities. The school directors and teachers are involved in the hiring process of new faculty members and assist in scheduling courses and developing and designing new programs. Some indicators that the school improvement projects are successful are high teacher morale, the decrease in vandalism and truancy, and impressive gain in test scores.

In East Harlem, where almost 60 percent of the students fall below the poverty line, less than 15 percent of students read at grade level in 1972. Today, 64 percent of the students read at or above grade level. And on a state-administered test in 1988, 84 percent of East Harlem's eighth graders were judged competent authors (OERI, Dept. of Ed., 1988).

School administrators in Richmond, California, had significant problems with attendance, student achievement, suspensions and expulsions. To alleviate these problems,

they designed and instituted diverse programs which would suit the eclectic student population. The school system requires that all students study a basic core curriculum; however, they can choose their curriculum from classical studies, international studies, future studies (high technology), and others. Since the programs have been in existence, the students' state test scores in language arts, reading and mathematics have improved, and the number of absences and expulsions have decreased (OERI, U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1988).

Miami, Florida, has innovative programs which are identified as educational experiments in Dade County. The innovations are the product of a new division of power given to local schools and teachers since 1987. The new power has given nearly half of the schools (267) in the county an unusual amount of liberty to experiment with new approaches to learning. The theory is to give teachers more power to free them from constraining rules and to allow them to find ways of better preparing students. The outcomes are that the teachers feel better about themselves and the students are the recipients of energized teaching (OERI, U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1988).

In New Haven, Connecticut, the School Development

Program by James Comer was initiated. Cooperatively working
together are the parents, teachers, administrators and

students in the classroom and in other school activities. (Comer, 1987) says:

We can no longer assume that parents and teachers share values. We must . . . construct new patterns of interactions so that the powerful networks that nurture and develop the child in the home and community are less alienated from the culture of the school.

This program has been cited for resolving some of the school system's educational crisis through human relationships.

A five year school improvement project was initiated in the Worcester, Massachusetts, public schools which aspired to better the learning environment for culturally different students from low-income areas. Some of the goals which were formulated and are applicable to many urban schools are as follows (Jones & Maloy, 1988, p. 31):

- 1. Improve communication, cooperation and mutual support between parent/community and school staff to enhance responsiveness to diverse student needs.
- Improve instructional competencies in specific areas such as basic skills, bilingual/bicultural, multicultural, individualization and team teaching through flexible, appropriate inservice and academic credit offerings to meet identified needs of students and teachers.
- Develop a coherent educational plan for each project school based on needs of students, parent/community and educational personnel and the policies and goals of the district and state, and utilizing the resources of university faculty and Teacher Corps staff.

School improvement was observed by the participants (staff and students); however, due to lack of funding the project

was terminated before the five year commitment was completed.

Project 2000 began in 1988 at an elementary school in Washington, D.C., to give inner city boys positive classroom role models. The program made use of male volunteers who worked as teaching assistants from the corporate world and local colleges and universities. The program commits the volunteers to encourage and foster the students from the first grade until they finish high school. The volunteers chaperon the boys on field trips and render resolute images. Spencer Holland, an educational psychologist and director for the Center for Educating African-American Males, states (Whitaker, March 1991, p. 20):

We have a stake in educating and socializing our children. But if we really expect to see change in the current situation, men have to get involved in this process, because it takes a Black man to prepare a Black boy for whatever he's going to face out there. Because they have few, if any, men in their non-school environment, we have to show many African-American males that education is something that men not only do, but excel.

The group of forty-seven boys from Project 2000 have been with the program for three years and reports from the school indicate the volunteers are making an impact and most of the constructive effects have resulted in greatly improved behavior and social skills.

Proposals for programs that service exclusively

African-American males have been strongly considered in

cities such as Detroit, St. Louis, Miami, New York, and

Philadelphia (Whitaker, 1991). Two schools in nearby
Maryland have adopted the Project 2000 model. The school
districts of Milwaukee, New Orleans, and Dade County,
Florida, have results from recent studies which indicate
that African-American male students in the mainstream are
failing in school or have asymmetrically been classified as
"behavior problems," slow learners, and truants. These
jurisdictions are seeking techniques and methods to "turn
around" the discouraging results.

Sanchez (1990) reports that some D.C. school system researchers believe that there may be serious problems because the current teaching methods neglect social development and lead many children to think they have not met typical expectations by the second grade. These factors may lead to adverse grades, poor attendance, and the increased probability that students will drop-out of school. Many teachers and school systems across the country in their enthusiasm to improve schools are requiring preschoolers to read, write and memorize, and sometimes overlook their social and emotional needs. More emphasis should be placed on teaching skills such as self-respect and sharing (Sanchez, 1990).

Schools have many different approaches which affect students differently. African-Americans, other minorities, the working class poor, and urban poor in schools receive different sanctions and rewards than affluent suburban

students. Schools have changed very little since industrialization in the United States and rewards are given for docility, passivity and obedience (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

As school improvement projects increase in urban settings, many projects emphasize academic achievement independent of pupils' personal, social or cultural background. Schools frequently produce an artificial separation between the classroom and everyday living problems outside the classroom. Underclass African-American students are marked by social pathologies, that is, school failure, teenage pregnancy, crime, unemployment and the like. Some improvement and change will occur when there is more of an active commitment on the part of teachers, other education personnel, students, community and parents.

Psychologists Carl Rogers and Clark Moustakas have indicated that positive self-concept is a crucial factor for success in the learning process. School research indicates self-concept predicts and influences achievement in school from the primary grades through undergraduate education (Wylie, 1979). Other factors and components which influence self-concept are teacher perceptions of students' abilities or worth, family harmony, the amount of encouragement to perform well academically and peer acceptance. Research on school improvement programs reveal that some programs

achieve gains in self-concept and some do not (Baskins and Hess, 1980).

How do school systems, made up of administrators and teachers trained in middle class institutions, relate to and effectively develop urban African-American students? Many school improvement projects have been initiated in urban areas—for example, projects focusing on behavior management, positive instructional climate, better student achievement—and yet the schools have changed very little in principle (Sarson, 1982).

Jones and Miloy (1988, pp. 157-160) discussed educational purposes and future societies: "school improvement is not one solution to a single problem," but:

Educators continually wrestle with the connections between knowledge and an individual's capacity to act purposefully. But schooling also should prepare adults for uncertainty, ambiguity, group processes and the forming of one's personal and social values.

School improvement should be concerned with multiple goals, compromise, an open-ended power structure and a wide range of teaching methods and classroom procedures (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1988).

Nevertheless, field experiments evaluating the productivity of a variety of school improvement projects continue to be the educators greatest potential for identifying strategies that can facilitate frustrated and discouraged African-American youth to become more successful students.

Relevancy of the Review of the Literature The comprehensive review of literature relates to the research study by giving the reader the framework and understanding of how the adolescents in the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," pursued methods and techniques that increased self-concept and self-esteem in African-American adolescents. Racism is a barrier to education and social mobility and the words "minority students" and "underachievers" in many localities have become synonymous; the stigmatization of African-American students has established a perceptual caste system in the minds of The project encouraged analysis of stereotypes, Whites. assisted students in setting goals, and provided them tools for overcoming societal restraints. In the educational setting many African-American students fall behind before they begin kindergarten because many were not read to or exposed to cultural activities. They enter their adolescent years less confident and institutionalized racism threatens their self-esteem and self-concept. The study was comprised of adolescent students who were greatly influenced by their peers. Also, the educational system's socialization process

in some schools in Washington, D.C. encouraged social

concern with the African-American community. With a history

of repression of African-Americans, the students were able

to identify and develop a number of racial coping skills.

The study examined a school improvement project that involved administrators, teachers, and support staff in staff development which included networking, collaborative planning, problem solving, and continuous evaluation. the staff development, the teachers honestly conversed about race and its problematic issues. The teachers were able to assimilate the concept of teacher and facilitator, and how in many instances students were unreceptive to learning that required them to open a text book, read a chapter, and answer questions. They recognized the influence of teacher beliefs and behavior which may last long after the association between the teacher and student has ended. The teachers developed a greater perception of self-esteem which directly and proportionally impacts on student's success in whatever task they undertake; also, how teachers can encourage students to generate positive self-esteem and self-concept. The author did observe increased enthusiasm and sensitivity of administrators, teachers, and support staff.

The project emphasized that African-American adolescents should be involved with their culture, heritage and identity, but also should discover how to understand and get along with members of other groups if they are to productively succeed in society. The African-American students were exposed to methods of appraising their self-confidence and clarifying how they perceived humanity, and

techniques of coping with and resolving adolescent and ethnic problems.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to assess the efficacy of a school improvement project undertaken at Backus Junior High School to increase the self-esteem and self-concept of African-American adolescents.

Backus Junior High was selected for the study because

(1) the author was familiar with the setting and staff; (2)

the school's population (ninth-grade classes) was small

enough for individual research; (3) the students represented

a cross section of urban adolescents in Washington, D.C.;

and (4) there were strong indications of cohesiveness—a

faculty and staff who identified with the school and its

goals and objectives, and operated for the common good of

the students.

The author met several times, informally, with the principal, counselor and staff members designated by the principal. During these meetings, procedures to conduct ethnographic field work to better understand the social interactions of the ninth graders were described. The author wanted to learn about their social responsiveness and to discover how their behavior was influenced by the class, "Dynamics of Relationships."

Procedure

The principal at Backus initiated the course, "Dynamics of Relationships" to assist the students' socialization process and school progress.

The Staff Development Department of the District of Columbia Public Schools approved the project at Backus Junior High School and requested the Department of Research and Evaluation to evaluate the junior high school component. The director of Research and Evaluation reviewed the course objectives and referred the author to the University of Maryland's, Department of Research in Family Life Education. After contacting the university, the director of the department assigned a graduate student to assist with the evaluation phase of the project. An appointment was set with the researcher to discuss the goals and objectives, analyze the existing data and establish time lines. The researcher reviewed the text and curriculum guide, and met with the author and designer of "Dynamics of Relationships."

A new concept, class and training, "Dynamics of Relationships," was introduced to the teachers of the District of Columbia Public Schools. The project proposed to train the teachers in improving the decision making skills, self-esteem and academic skills of teenagers. At the conclusion of the training project, the classes were piloted in two senior high schools; the teachers felt they were ready to "respect students and have open classrooms."

One of the teachers at Backus Junior High School was in the initial training project and introduced the concept to the principal. The principal relished the concept and researched the possibility and feasibility of the course being offered in the junior high school.

The researcher, principal, designer of the project and author developed the following tentative schedule:

- 1. Review text and curriculum guide.
- 2. Review existing questionnaire items that would be applicable to the course.
- 3. Collaborate on questionnaire instruments.
 - a. Selection of vocabulary
 - b. Relevancy of items to the project
 - c. Identify highly sensitive items
- 4. Redesign the questionnaire instruments using a different format and item analysis for students, parents and teachers.
- 5. Rewrite the questionnaires for dissemination.

Staff development and training for the teachers was an integral part of the school improvement project. The staff development instruction consisted of forty-five hours of teacher training to support staff who would teach the course to their students. The author participated in the first cycle of teacher training during the fall semester of 1987. The training program stressed the development of teachers as facilitators. The techniques, methods and strategies were not limited to the course "Dynamics of Relationships" but applied to other disciplines and subject areas.

The instruments established the concepts and attitudes of the participants at the beginning of the study and helped to assess the participants' development at the conclusion of the study.

In September 1987, the school principal introduced the study, "Self-Concepts/Self-Esteem and School Progress of Black Students in Washington, D.C.," at the first PTA meeting. During the meeting, he discussed the focus of the study and its importance. He also informed the parents that a new course, "Dynamics of Relationships," was being initiated as part of a study and some ninth-grade students would participate in the classes. Any students selected to participate in the course and study would need a consent form signed by their legal guardian granting permission to participate.

The principal apprised parents that the study would span sixteen weeks beginning the second semester, February 1988, with classes meeting twice a week. It was decided by the faculty that only ninth grade students would participate in the class, "Dynamics of Relationships." One week before the initiation of the study, parent surveys were hand carried by students to the parents in sealed envelopes and returned to school in self-addressed sealed envelopes provided by the school. Student surveys were administered in the classroom setting by the classroom teacher. The

teacher surveys were issued to classroom teachers, completed and returned to the principal.

During the span of "Dynamics of Relationships," the author recorded field notes that described the participants' responses to the classroom presentations. On five occasions during the study, the author presented lessons and became involved in class projects.

At the completion of the class in June, 1988, forty-two students completed the Pre/Post tests out of 42 who took the Pre tests in February. In June, 1989, twenty-seven students responded to the "First Year Reunion" and the Student Evaluation Questionnaires. There was complete anonymity to encourage students to honestly respond to the questions.

During the spring of 1990, an effort was made to contact each student and invite them to participate in a follow-up study. The follow-up study assessed the growth and development students had experienced during their high school career through personal interviews. Eighteen (18) students participated in the personal interview study. The interview addressed how "Dynamics Of Relationships" assisted in their adjustment to high school and the development of attitudes about self-concept and self-esteem. The interview instrument included a section for recommendations modifying the curriculum and presentations.

Information letters and consent forms were sent to the participants' legal guardians describing the follow-up study

(See Appendix). The consent forms were signed and returned to the author before the student could participate in the follow-up study.

The University of Maryland questionnaire data (compiled by Maryland University) was examined along with the evaluation of the student interviews. All information was compiled and assembled to formulate findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Participants

The group consisted of forty-five students from the ninth grade who were selected in cluster sampling units. The cluster sampling units, or homerooms, were homogeneously grouped. The criteria used for classroom assignments were test results, grades and selection of curriculum. The participants ranged in age from thirteen to seventeen years, were from predominantly middle-middle and low-middle class socio-economic backgrounds and came from single-parent, two-parent and foster homes.

Classroom Procedure

The sampling consisted of two classroom units (twenty-four students each). Students in "Dynamics of Relationships" met twice a week for sixteen consecutive weeks. Each class period lasted approximately fifty minutes and trained teachers conducted each class. The major goals

of the classes were to assist the students to: (1) learn how to solve problems and make sound decisions, (2) develop new and effective communication skills and (3) learn more about their physical selves and better understand their feelings as adolescents.

Assumptions

The following assumptions guided the study:

- Adolescents want to be accepted by their peers.
- Adolescents want to exert some independence.
- Adolescents perform well in class when they perceive teacher motivation.
- African-American adolescents honestly expressed their own perceptions with their answers on the evaluations and interviews.
- The perceptions expressed by African-American adolescents are related to experiences in the home and school.
- African-American adolescents want to embrace their ethnicity and be successful in school.

Indicators

Indicators to the determine the effectiveness of the school improvement project included:

- Improved communication with teachers, parents and peers
- Regular school attendance
- Satisfactory classroom performance
- Increased self-concept/self-esteem

- Positive school adjustment
- Involvement in extra-curricular activities

Instruments Used

Instruments used to collect data included the following:

- Student Questionnaire -- Measuring Attitudes and Values
- Historical Data and Cumulative Records
- Student Evaluation
- Class Consent Forms
- Interview Consent Forms
- Telephone Call Record

Instruments developed for the study are included in the appendix.

Data Collection

Research in education using methods called "field work," "participant observation," "case study," or "ethnography" has become increasingly common. Ethnography's basic purpose is to understand the occurrences of the social world, rather than attempting to measure or predict.

Because it is open-ended, the researcher goes to the field to observe without preplanned measures and criteria but is directed by the exposure and unfolding of events in the field. Borg and Gall (1989, p. 389) state:

Ethnographers do not start with specific hypothesis. In fact, they try to put aside specific expectations or preconceptions in order to avoid the risk that these will bias what they see in the observational situation. They are likely to start with a broad theoretical framework or with tentative working hypotheses that may provide some general guidelines to the observer about what behavior may be important.

Through ethnography, the researcher attempts to accurately report and interpret the character of social dialogue among a group of people. All planned fieldwork takes place in social situations and these social situations can be described by three components: (1) site, (2) performers and (3) project. The researcher involved with fieldwork chooses a place where the performers can be studied and observed and becomes involved with them. Classrooms and schools are well-suited to ethnographic inquiry.

As previously stated, case study, participant observation and ethnography are considered synonymous by many researchers. Several kinds of case studies in the behavioral sciences' literature are:

- 1. Historical case studies of organization
- 2. Observational case studies
- 3. Oral histories
- 4. Situational analysis
- 5. Clinical case study

Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 362-363) list five basic elements of the substantive parts of a case study.

- A discussion of the problem which gave rise to the study.
- A thorough description of the context or setting within which the inquiry took place and with which the inquiry was concerned.
- A thorough description of the transactions or processes observed in the context.
- · A discussion of the key elements that are studied.
- A discussion of outcomes of the inquiry which may be most useful.

The observational case study model was used in this study. The author used the criteria set forth by Yin (1984, pp. 140-145), which provided five important criteria for producing case studies. They are:

- 1. The case study must be significant.
- 2. The case study must be complete.
- 3. The case study must consider alternative perspectives.
- 4. The case study must display sufficient evidence.

Analyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined. Yin (1984, p. 99) stated, "The analysis of case study evidence is one of least developed and most difficult aspect of doing case studies."

The author decided to collect data at different points in time in order to study changes or explore time order association. The longitudinal studies most commonly used in research are: trend studies, cohort studies and panel studies.

This research project employed the panel concept in which a specific population was followed over a period of time. Loss of participants is a significant issue. As the number of participants dwindled, the continuing participants may be a different segment. Students who move or are unreachable may have different reactions to social relationships and schools than those who have stayed in the area and in school.

The author used triangulation or multimethods for the research design to add to the breath and depth of the interpretation of the data obtained. Triangulation and multimethods are summarized by Shipman (1981, p. 147):

These procedures refer to the strategy of using several different kinds of data-collection instruments, such as tests, direct observations, interview and content analysis to explore a single problem or issue. Triangulation can also be achieved by collecting the same data from different samples, at different times and in different places, and in this sense triangulation is simply a form of replication that contributes greatly to our confidence in research findings regardless of whether qualitative or quantitative methodology has been employed.

Methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observation and physical evidence to study the same unit. Dobbert (1982, p. 265) states: "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strength of another and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies."

The triangulation method contributed to the validity of the project process report and assisted the author in recognizing and altering preferences that may have developed as a result of the author being the lone observer of an occurrence under study.

The author triangulated the data methods of (1) participant observer-nonparticipant observer, (2) interview and (3) other data sources (pre/post test and evaluation questionnaires).

Research procedures were directed to the case study, pre/post-test Instruments (Semantic Differential, Attitudes and Values Instrument) and Knowledge Instrument and Personal Interviews research. The author's fieldwork was divided into two periods. During the first period, observation and data gathering were conducted during visits to the school twice a week.

Pre-tests were administered at the onset of the first period of field research and post-tests were administered at the end of the first phase of the research.

Questionnaires and evaluations were issued to the participants after a one-year interval (the conclusion of the class). The evaluation questionnaires utilized both the open and closed format that requested the participants to circle an answer, but also asked for some written answers for completion of the questionnaire. Anonymity was assured for the participants; it was felt that the students might be

reluctant to give some responses to questions if they could be identified.

The second period of field research involved the "First Year Reunion" and the interview process. The students at the end of the sophomore year in high school had a social activity, and during their junior year of high school, were interviewed with open-ended questions on specific topics about the class, "Dynamics of Relationships," school adjustment, social interactions and communication.

The interview process normally allows greater intensity and perception than other techniques of collecting data.

"Ethnographic interviews are a series of friendly conversations in which the investigator gradually introduces ethnographic elements in order to gain the information sought" (Spradley, 1979, p 221). He discussed three important components of the ethnographic interview: (1) Explicit purpose—the interviewer should have a definite goal for the interview and the interviewee should be appraised of the goal, (2) Ethnographic explanations—the interviewer should give reasons to the interviewee about why things are being written down or being taped recorded and the reasons for asking several varieties of questions and (3) Ethnographic questions—what is requested, how it is requested and how topics are ensued.

There are three most common types of interviews: (1) the structured interview that is an oral form of the written

survey and is usually used when a large sample is to be surveyed; (2) the unstructured interview in which there is no predetermined set of questions and the interview is essentially exploratory; (3) the semi-structured interview which is directed by a list of questions or concerns to be investigated, but neither the precise wording nor the sequence of the questions is decided in advance. In qualitative interviewing, the dynamics of naturalistic inquiry is developed through observing, asking and listening to the participants' experiences. A familiar theme in qualitative interviews is that the participants express their own comprehension and viewpoints in their own vernacular.

This author utilized the semi-structured technique consisting of predominantly open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted and taped during the second semester of the participants' junior year in high school.

Patton (1980) listed six types of questions that can be used to obtain distinct types of information from respondents:

- 1. Experience/behavior questions are "aimed at eliciting descriptions of experiences, behaviors, actions and activities that would have been observable had the observer been present" (p. 207).
- Opinion/value questions attempt to discover "what people think about the world or about a specific program. They tell us people's goals, intentions, desires and values" (p. 207).

- 3. Feeling questions are "aimed at understanding the emotional responses of people to their experiences and thoughts" (p. 207).
- 4. Knowledge questions retrieve information on what a respondent assesses to be accurate findings regarding the research study.
- 5. Sensory questions establish what sensory stimuli, (sight, sound, touch, taste or smell), the respondents are responsive and sensitive to.
- Background/demographic questions "locate the respondents in relation to other people. Age, education, race, residence/mobility questions, and the like are standard background questions" (p. 209).

The author utilized the experience/behavior, opinion/value feeling and knowledge questions which related to the participants in a positive manner. The purpose of the interview is "not to put things in someone else's mind but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (Patton, 1980. p. 196). Conversation enables the participant to address the concerns that the interviewer brings to the endeavor; they can speak freely in their own words about relevant items that may surface.

The data collected from student pre/post-test questionnaires, evaluations and interviews (see appendix for instruments) were analyzed to determine the efficacy of the course and any modifications recommended by students. The information presented in the chapters: The "Case Study" comprises the setting, a journal of observed events and a description of particulars in the field research; "Findings"

contains descriptions and discussion of the data; and the "Summary" contains conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY

Historical Background

Washington, D.C. and the Public Schools

This case study is about a public junior high school located in Washington, D.C., the nations capital and the seat of the federal government. Washington, D.C. is a community of neighborhoods of approximately 630,600 residents and the neighborhoods have names such as Anacostia, Benning Heights, Georgetown, Brookland, Lamond-Riggs, Chevy Chase, Shepherd Park, Takoma, Petworth, and the like; these neighborhoods are rich in historic significance.

Prior to 1954, the schools in Washington, D.C. were segregated and termed "separate but equal." During World War II, many African-Americans educated in the neighborhood schools and employed in government war agencies in "white collar jobs" discovered they lacked basic educational skills (Green, 1967).

Tally's Corner, by Elliot Liebow, describes the frustrations of a high school graduate from the District of Columbia's public schools who was pursuing a government job (Liebow, 1967, p. 42):

But here it is the end of January, and his last job was with the Post Office during the Christmas mail rush. He would like postal work as a steady job, he says. It pays well, but he has twice failed the Post Office examination (he graduated from a Washington D.C. high school) and has given up the idea as an impractical one.

IQ and achievement test results of African-American students in D.C. were below the national norm and the House District Committee of the United States Congress cited race as one of the main contributing factors for the low test scores. The committee inferred that African-Americans's lack of basic intelligence (noted from IQ test score given in the schools) was the cause of low test scores rather than poor socio-economic factors. Highlights in the District of Columbia Indices states (1989, p. 8):

District residents won the right to vote for the President of the United States in 1961, to elect a Board of Education in 1968, and to elect a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives in 1970. In 1970, Congress approved a bill that provided District residents with an elected government of limited home rule authority, as a result, in 1974, District residents voted for a mayor and a council for the first time in more than 100 years. Congress has retained the authority to review legislation passed by the council and may use the process of appropriating the federal payment to enforce changes in policy and programs.

The District of Columbia residents pay federal taxes, but do not have a voting representation in Congress. The District of Columbia's government holds a unique status in the United States political system. It functions as a state, a county, a school district, and special districts combined. The mayor heads the executive branch of the government which is responsible for all government service delivery with some exceptions. The public schools fall within the jurisdiction of the elected Board of Education; the D.C. courts have the judicial responsibility and public transportation is governed by the Washington Metropolitan

Area Transit Authority. The superintendent of public schools, as agency head, hired by the Board of Education, runs the local school district, certifies teachers, and licenses private schools.

Each fiscal year, the school board prepares a budget which pursues the following process: (1) The budget is presented to the mayor (2) the mayor sends it to the council (3) the council holds hearings on the Budget (4) the councils sends it to the Office of Management Budget, OMB (Executive Office of the U.S. President,) and (5) OMB formally transmits it to Congress. Only the School Board and Congress have line item authority over the public school The District of Columbia's school budget for the budget. 1989-1990 school year was \$500,579,000 or an average expenditure of \$5,981 per student. The 1989 youth unemployment rate (19 percent) exceeded the national average rate of 15.5 percent. The school dropout rate is approaching 50 percent. It has been estimated that more than half of the public school students who leave school before graduation drop out at the junior high school level.

Neighborhood: Lamond-Riggs and the New School

Backus Junior High located in the Lamond-Riggs Park

area of the District of Columbia is situated in the upper

northeast corner of the city's boundaries. Prior to 1960,

the neighborhood was populated by predominantly Jewish

residents. The Jewish citizens in the area petitioned and lobbied for a new junior high school and were granted the request by the school board. The community residents collaborated with the school board on the design and site for the new school in 1958. During the intervening years, 1958 to 1962, Whites were given anti-African-American propaganda by real estate speculators who purchased whole blocks of homes inexpensively and sold and rented them to African-Americans at inflated prices (Green, 1967). A strong African-American middle class (physicians, attorneys, teachers, professional government personnel) purchased the homes and became very involved with the school.

Backus Junior High School was built and opened in 1962.

The school opened in a middle class (limited racially mixed)

neighborhood with primarily semi-detached and detached homes

and a few apartment dwellings.

The faculty was integrated and the student body consisted of 84 percent African-American students and 16 percent White and other ethnic groups. The staff, parents and students were committed to quality education. There was strong parental involvement, parent volunteers in classes, cafeteria, and the library; the teachers and parent volunteers planned field trips and provided supplemental services and resources. The students' test scores, grades and grade point averages were exceptionally high for an African-American school in an urban district. The school

and community became involved with projects, such as Upward Bound, Black Student Fund, A Better Chance and The John Hopkins Program, which placed students in integrated independent high schools in the Greater Metropolitan Area and independent preparatory schools on the east coast. A substantial number of Backus' students were recipients of scholarships to attend these schools.

During the later part of the 1960s and the early part of the 1970s, the few remaining White families moved from the area. Mothers who were formerly housewives and homemakers joined the work force by the late 1970s; the strong core of Backus' volunteer parents dissipated and the volunteer corp was reduced to one or two faithful parents and a few retired grandparents.

Public Schools: 1980 - 1990

In the past ten years, the middle-middle to upper middle class students have largely left the District of Columbia Public Schools; many of them attend private and parochial schools. The few middle class African-American and White students who attend public schools in the District of Columbia are mainly in a few schools in the upper northwest area (Shepherd Park, Chevy Chase and Georgetown) of the city. The remainder of the students experience little economic or racial diversity. For many students, the

school acts as a shelter, restaurant, clothing supplier and surrogate parent.

In the Lamond-Riggs Park neighborhood, as the African-American middle class families with school age children moved upward economically, they left the urban neighborhoods for suburbia. Changes took place in the Backus school setting, and fewer families were involved in the school process which stressed academic excellence. There was a change of focus from the academic and gifted curriculum to a more general curriculum and Latin, French, and biology were no longer offered as course selections. The present principal of the school joined the faculty in 1964 as vice-principal and was later promoted to principal in 1967. He and a few teachers have remained and have viewed and experienced the changes in educational focus, student population and parental involvement.

During the 1980s, most of the student body at Backus

Junior High School consisted of students living outside of
the school's geographical boundaries. A strong academic
curriculum stressing college preparatory courses, high grade
point averages, and good test scores were not perceived as
the primary goal by many students and some of the parents.

The students, like many teenagers in the United States
today, showed a strong interest in acquiring materialistic
things—such as designer clothing, money, personal
telephones, and TVs with VCRs for video games. Many lacked

standard communication skills as well as exposure to the cultural offerings in Washington, D.C. The students were receptive and open to cultural enrichment and the majority participated in school trips to cultural sites in the area.

The administrators and staff perceived that many of the students were floundering in the present educational process and changes were needed in the curriculum, organization and teaching techniques. The faculty recruited, with the assistance of the Boy Scouts of America Association, African-Americans who were competent and assertive in their profession and sent messages of ego strength, and strong self-concepts and self-esteem. The role models met with the students on a monthly schedule. Knowing that many African-American students assume they are inferior because of the color caste system in the nation, the faculty sensed that youth structure their self-image and self-concepts from attitudes, values and definitions from significant others in the community.

Backus Junior High School Improvement Project

Backus Junior High School has been categorized as an

"Open School" because there are a limited number of students
who live in the area and the school's enrollment has

declined. A considerable number of neighborhood residents
and homeowners have raised their children and remained in
the neighborhood. For the most part, the student body at

Backus consists of students living out of the school's

geographical boundaries and whose parents have requested Backus for their children. Many of the students live in subsidized housing complexes and travel great distances by public transportation to attend school. The parents request that their children attend the Backus School because of its reputation of being well-organized, efficiently managed, and well disciplined. Ninety-eight percent of the graduating students promoted from Backus attend high school. Ninety-six percent of the student body is promoted yearly with four percent being retained in grade.

The parents are supportive of the school's educational philosophy, programs and its extracurricular and special activities. Most parents are employed and have little or no time to volunteer or become actively involved with the school on a regular basis; although many parents express a sense of detachment when their offspring enter the secondary school. The parent-teacher meetings are well attended by parents; report cards are issued and parent-teacher conferences are conducted following the business portion of the meetings. Most parents have positive interactions with the teachers and the administrators.

The Backus staff consists of a principal, an assistant principal, two guidance counselors, a librarian, twenty-four regular classroom teachers, four special education teachers, and one transition teacher. The faculty is composed of traditional experienced teachers who stress academic

success. Success is the principal part of the teachers' expectation and provides the opportunity for competition between classes and students. There is one White teacher on the faculty. Most of the teachers relate positively to junior high school students and verbalize their dedication for teaching on this difficult level.

They expressed concerns about the students' lack of motivation and lackadaisical attitudes toward learning the prescribed curriculum. Some teachers emphasize academic excellence while others (including the principal) stress good citizenship, responsibility, decision making, and exposure to fine arts, the community and world culture. However, the principal and staff are very concerned with student performance. Test results from the national norm achievement tests reflect that Backus students are on or above grade level in the areas of reading, mathematics, language arts, study skills, and science; however, the majority of the students grades and performances are below expected achievement levels. The recent spring test results (1990) on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) indicated a decline in the test scores on the reading and language arts segments. The teachers do not want to be characterized as being apathetic in preparing the student to perform in a competitive society.

Backus' student body, consisting of 400 students, is actively involved in the school process but not overly

concerned about academic excellence; however, they are very enthusiastic about nonacademic activities. Some weeks are filled with field trips, special assemblies and extra curricular undertakings. Nevertheless, poor classroom performance is reflected in low student grades.

Backus Junior High school offers a variety of extracurricular activities however, a significant number of students are not involved in extracurricular activities. Some of the activities are:

- · Student Council
- · Honor Society
- · Red Cross
- · Postal Stamp Collection Club
- 4 H Club
- · Homemakers of America
- Junior Varsity Softball Team (Coed)
- Track and Field (Coed)
- Outdoor Club (Coed)

Backus' students are virtually isolated from the
District of Columbia's White society and attend segregated
schools because Washington's public school student
population is ninety-two percent African-American. There is
little or no opportunity for the students to have positive
interactions with White students or White society. Many of
the youth are hostile toward White people because of the
many negative encounters with White merchants in the

African-American community. They resent and reject the long standing negative racial identities and undesirable social roles designated by the White community.

The students are idealistic, action oriented and want to do something about racial injustice. Their values are not in conflict with values of White students, that is, family loyalty, compassion, hard work, desire for social mobility, and security. However, many African-American youth have to choose between the philosophy of the school, which represents the dominant society, and the philosophy of their African-American community. Ethnic values reinforce life conditions in the community in which they live. Being unyielding and tough in one neighborhood is the norm while being intelligent, bright, and obtaining a good scholastic average is the norm in another (Ogbu, 1981). Powerful inner conflicts develop when African-American adolescents have to select between strong racial and ethnic identities and performing well in school (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).

The principal at Backus, committed to "school improvement," initiated "Dynamics of Relationships," the first innovative course on the junior high level to assist the students' socialization process and school progress. Staff development for the teachers was an integral part of the school improvement project. The course, unique and innovative, was specifically designed to approach many of the social ills affecting adolescents, such as low self

esteem, poor school performance and faulty decision making skills.

Early in the school year (September, 1987), the principal held a one-hour introductory session to describe the project to staff members. The faculty was encouraged to ask questions to ensure that they understood the goals of the project. Staff development training introduced the teachers to the project through forty-five hours of instruction. An incentive for participation was provided by release time for the training period. The faculty was informed that staff development activities were scheduled weekly for the first semester. Teachers chose how and when they wanted to be involved in the staff development activities which would increase their use of innovative strategies. Ten teachers volunteered for the first semester staff training project. Other participants included the administrators, a psychologist, counselors, a librarian and a pupil personnel worker. The age and experience of the participants varied greatly. The younger new teachers were shy and expressed anxieties; the older, experienced teachers were philosophical and sometimes rigid. The seasoned teachers sometimes presented pictures of senior persons who knew it all and were critical of the young naive teachers who were totally unaware of the school's social patterns.

The first sessions were presented to develop the understanding and skills to deal with adult development and

life cycle changes. Before a new topic was introduced, each participant received information about the topic and a reminder (invitation) to attend.

The principal assumed the role of the coordinator; he had visions of the teachers' training component developing improved self-awareness and self-image among the faculty. The class reviewed limited literature on effective schools and positive school climate and selected for their development the following quotation from Edgeman et al., (1985, p. 298):

- Treat each student as an individual who can learn and be successful in school.
- Respect student and teacher self-esteem as important factors in the learning process.
- Make opportunities for student self-exploration and self-definition to help the students find meaning and relevance in their school experience and future lives.
- Teach students and help them use decision-making and problem-solving strategies.
- Develop open and effective communication skills.
- Provide opportunities for students and teachers participation in the learning process as well as in the entire education enterprise, to promote ownership and investment in their own growth.
- See problem solving and focusing on solutions rather than victims.
- Consider discipline as focusing on helping students learn more appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

At the next session a needs assessment and questionnaire were administered to the class by the

principal and the facilitator. After analyzing the results followed by a lengthy group discussion, the class agreed on the following goals:

- To help students have greater understanding of self and to demonstrate how a course in social dynamics is related to their lives and future careers.
- To assist the students in developing skills in decision making, problem solving, communication skills, and interpersonal relationships.
- 3. To participate in a teacher-pupil evaluation team at the conclusion of the course.

During the beginning sessions a shared vision of goals and beliefs regarding the welfare of the school and students emerged between the principal and the faculty. They agreed to develop a school climate which would encourage students to develop higher aspirations. Staff agreed to introduce a comprehensive social dynamics course. The group further established the relationship between the staff and the principal and how they could work together to foster an environment conducive to a better school climate and raising students' aspirations. They also established the role of all the school personnel and how they influence student aspirations and school climate.

One teacher expressed the need for focus and help. He told the class about an incident in which he told a student

"If you don't like what I teach, get out." The student quietly got up and walked out and he had not seen the student since the incident. He told the class the student had a negative attitude and he did not miss him. teacher informed the group that he was in the classroom to teach the students to appreciate the power of language and to think important ideas and he did not intend to put up with adolescent insolence. The class members assured him that they had experienced painful classroom experiences but suggested that "taking command in the classroom" means they cannot control others but they can only control themselves. They talked about the troubled, confused and depressed students that must deal with many of the social ills (drugs, sex, violence and unhappiness). He and the class concluded that they want the students to learn academic content but they must help them cope with life.

The first dimension of the staff training was labeled the "Helper Role." The tasks involved were assessing students' concerns, problem identification and resolutions. Then the class went about acquiring skills necessary to provide professional and technical expertise in areas such as role playing techniques, developing classroom assessment models and lesson and curriculum planning.

There was a special type of camaraderie that evolved among the group who met regularly to improve their professional skills. The participants designed a

socialization component that included a pot luck breakfast, a Christmas party, birthday parties, and other events to promote positive interaction between faculty on an informal basis. The writer was a participant in the first cycle of teacher training. The teacher training program stressed putting aside traditional teaching methods and developing techniques of a facilitator. The major differences between teachers and facilitators are that teachers give information and students receive it; facilitators establish communication with the students, through open discussion, role playing and experimental activities and information evolves from students and facilitators. The training stressed "We live in a world that was; they live in a world that is."

Some of the guidelines were:

- Greet students at the door of your classroom, office or any space that you use to interact with them.
- Use each students' name as often as possible.
 Whenever calling or addressing a student, always us his name.
- Display warmth, sensitivity, respect, friendliness, interest, and humor when appropriate. Your behavior and attitude are critical in establishing the kind of atmosphere conducive to learning and participation.
- Try to focus on students' positive qualities, not their negative ones.
- Never let a class end on a negative note. If a student is upset toward the end of the class period or the tone has turned very serious, find a way to inject some positive communication before the students leave the class.

Observing one of the last training sessions, growth and attitudinal changes were evident. The teachers entered the library about 3:30 P.M. with soft drinks in their hands for a refreshing "pick up" and joked with the author about the hassles of a long Monday. Most teachers arrived at the same time and were ready for the session to start. The presenter introduced a lesson on Activities and Exercises which enhanced interaction in the classroom. As the class progressed a veteran teacher expressed concern about the students not attending morning and afternoon tutorial sessions provided by the staff. One of the experienced and rigid teachers was open and shared her methods and strategies in motivating the students. The presenter entertained other suggestions from the participants. could observe the participants felt comfortable with each other and they could discuss, disagree and criticize a point without becoming personal. The eighth grade mathematics teacher reported she served punch and cookies for the afternoon sessions. The social studies teacher suggested giving students McDonalds' coupons after they had attended eight sessions. One male science teacher suggested instituting a group buddy system. This system would include leaders who would organize and develop the mornings for (1) good attendance and (2) participation in the tutorial The group would gain points or credits toward a Backus "B" (a letter award) after attending ten sessions.

One teacher remarked that "Education has really changed --done a "turn around"--when you have to bribe students to come for help to learn and acquire basic skills." The class members expressed different opinions and the furrowed faces did not understand the concept of the McDonalds' generation. The remark led to the discussion of the "new teacher" versus the "old teacher" and how educators must change their concept of the traditional teacher working with "Today's Students."

Everyone agreed they had a vested interest in our youth. The presenter led the class into an activity of developing a list of characteristics needed for "Today's Teachers" instructing "Today's Students." Some of the characteristics suggested were:

- 1. Show respect for each student's uniqueness.
- 2. Allow for individual differences between students.
- 3. Treat both male and female students equally.
- 4. Display a sense of humor as often as possible.
- 5. Give individual attention as often as possible.
- 6. Help students develop realistic expectations.
- 7. Have realistic expectations of students' abilities and capabilities.
- 8. Be an "Askable Teacher."
- 9. Express appreciation.
- 10. Be a good role model.

The session ended with the participants verbalizing their desire to adopt and try some to the new strategies to meet "Today's Student."

The second semester of the teacher training course (Cycle II) started in February 1988 and fifteen teachers enrolled in the class. Although it was impossible for all the teachers to be in the staff development planning effort, some of the participants from Cycle I served as presenters and resource persons.

The principal structured a schedule during the second semester which provided "release time" for the staff (faculty and support staff) to obtain training. The staff was divided into two teams, "A" and "B." Each team was scheduled for two hours of training per week. Either Tuesday or Thursday from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M.

During the special schedule, the school provided a series of activities for the students which were educational, social, or entertainment. While team "A" was in training, the members of team "B" supervised the activities period. As team "B" was in training, the members of team "A" supervised the students. The principal thought he had designed an ideal situation in which the faculty and support staff could receive training. However, there was discord and five teachers filed a formal grievance with the Teachers' Union stating that they were being forced to participate in a training program in which they had no

interest. The protesters contacted the parent community and protested that too much time was being taken from the instructional program and the students were not receiving the necessary instruction as prescribed by the curriculum and School Board. The grievances were reviewed by the Washington Teachers' Union, and the Parent Teachers Association in an open meeting. The Teachers' Union proposed that the training should be conducted after school from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. one day a week and the teachers should have the option of taking the training. The administration conceded to the recommendation. After a heated discussion two teachers opted not to participate; later, a third teacher dropped out of the training course.

The classroom teachers were issued advisory Teacher Questionnaires--pre/mid/post evaluations--of for each student during the second semester. Some of the teachers involved complained about the extra clerical work and recommended they not be included in the evaluation. (See Appendix)

Discussions were most productive when the presenter kept the group focused on finding solutions and sharing ideas. Evaluation comments revealed that teachers best liked sharing ideas about strategies and possible solutions of areas of concerns. They had not had the opportunity to systemically share and report the success or inadequacy of their efforts. The class and instructor attempted to design

an evaluation tool which was to determine the effectiveness of the course, "Dynamics of Relationships." However, a formal evaluation was not developed but there was a discussion and verbal report presented by the class on the strategies learned and the continuation, modification or withdrawal of "Dynamics of Relationships."

Certificates of Merit and one in-service credit was awarded to faculty members who participated in the staff development. The culminating activity was a boat ride down the Potomac River with dinner and dancing.

The school principal presented the instructors

perception of the project to the parents at the September

Parent Teacher Association meeting. The goals of the

project were to enhance the "self-concepts/self-esteem and

School Progress of African-American students in Washington,

D.C." The instructional course was titled, "Dynamics of

Relationships," and was to have a span of sixteen weeks for

some ninth grade students.

The major goals of the course were:

- To assist students to learn how to solve problems and make sound decisions.
- To assist students to develop new and effective communication skills.
- To assist students to learn more about their physical selves and better understand their feelings as adolescents.
- To assist students to develop strong and secure self-concepts/self-esteem.

The author and designer of the course curriculum, Pat Kramer, had to redesign and review some of the more highly sensitive areas of the curriculum and program design that were not adaptable to the junior high school. The questionnaires and evaluation instruments were rewritten. The course, "Dynamics of Relationships," became a part of the curriculum in February 1988, and the first class instructions were introduced to two classes of ninth grade students.

Before the classes commenced, students who were programmed to take the course were interviewed. The students were enthusiastic about the onset of the course and verbalized their concerns about the growing-up process and areas in which they needed help. They verbalized such thoughts as:

- "I need to better cope with my parents and to be honest with my parents."
- "I want to change things, get along better with my friends, and discuss girl-boy relationships."
- "I want attention from my mother and teachers and learn how not to be upset when my friends make negative remarks about me."
- "I want to change my behavior. Everyone thinks I am a show off, but I want to be friends and be popular."
- "I know I have a bad attitude at home and school, I don't like doing homework and household work. I need better to understand myself."
- "I am still puzzled and confused about growing up. I need some answers before going to high school next year."

Each class period lasted approximately fifty minutes and a trained teacher conducted the sessions. The author served as a participant observer in most sessions.

Initially there were forty-eight (two classes of twenty four each) ninth grade students scheduled to take "Dynamics of Relationships." Two weeks before the class began, parents were mailed information letters, questionnaires and consent forms with self-addressed envelopes to the school. Forty-five parents allowed their offspring to participated in the course.

The University of Maryland's Family Life Department consented to assist the school in developing three instruments to evaluate and measure the course outcomes in June 1988, and a questionnaire (evaluation) to be administered at the completion of the students first year in high school, June 1989. (See Appendix) The instruments were the: (1) Semantic Differential instrument which used different word-pairs to measure student self-esteem. It followed Osgood's classic semantic differential technique (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1967). (2) Attitude and Values Instrument which measured student attitudes and values about self, relationships and values. The sixteen item instrument was designed by the author of The Dynamics of Relationships (Kramer, 1966). A clinical psychologist and a sociologist judged this instrument to have face validity. (3) Knowledge Instrument which measured student knowledge about the course content of "Dynamics of Relationships." This multiple choice/true false instrument was designed by the author, Pat Kramer. A clinical psychologist and a sociologist judged this instrument to have face validity.

Two days before the course began, the students were introduced to the researcher/proctor and informed about the purpose of the instruments. The instruments (pre-tests) were administered to the students at the same time in a large classroom. Once the students completed the pre-tests, the researcher/proctor checked to see that students did not leave any questions unanswered.

Three students were not given parental permission to participate in the class and three students transferred as a result of geographic relocation.

Starting the Class

Forty-two students completed the sixteen week course which met two days a week. The course curriculum covered the following topics used in conjunction with the text The Dynamics of Relationships (Kramer, 1986):

Chapter One Self Esteem

Chapter Two Communications

Chapter Three Conflict

Chapter Five Friendship

Chapter Seven Love

Chapter Eight Jealousy

Chapter Nine

Expectations

Chapter Ten

Dating

The teacher's used a variety of strategies and techniques which included:

- Unannounced Role Play: Designated students were 1. given vignettes associated with the discussion topic and the students were to act out the scene in the classroom without telling the other students. At the completion of the role playing, the class addressed what happened in the scene, the alternatives for resolving the problems and the consequences of the various suggested alternatives. Example: A preselected student (only the teacher and the student knew of the choice) started an altercation with the teacher. The vignette was dramatized before the class without the other students being cognizant of the role playing. Once the altercation ended, the teacher inquired from the students how the circumstances could have been managed differently or resolved.
 - 2. Announced Role Play: Students volunteered or were requested by the teacher to participate in written scenes performed in the classroom. After finishing the role playing in the scene, the class

reviewed what happened in the scene, the dilemma, problem resolutions, alternatives available and the effects of the chosen alternatives, using the topic or unit identified in "Dynamics of Relationships" as the primary guide to problem solving methods and issues.

- 3. Student Teaching: Individual students and student groups were assigned designated topics identified in "Dynamics of Relationships"; the students would read the chapter, research the topic, introduce the topic to the class and provide a teaching situation in which one or two examples pertinent to the topic were presented. This technique was devised to encourage student involvement, student participation, and the introduction of candid dialogue among the students.
- 4. Sharing/Caring Circle: Weekly, students assembled in a circle and were requested to introduce some prevailing issue they, a friend, their family or other persons were grappling with or were conscious of, and to request recommendation.

 Students were steered to use course materials from "Dynamics of Relationships" as the main resource quide.

5. Lecture: Most days the teachers used the lecture style method during the last ten minutes of the class period to summarize the lesson and to confirm that all issues and messages in the chapter were included.

The class started with great expectation by students and teachers. The students were eager to learn about sex, love, and marriage; the teachers were eager for the students to learn about self esteem, communications and conflict. The author, principal and teachers had studied long and carefully before agreeing on the curriculum for junior high school students. Included in the curriculum development were guest presenters who could act as resource persons.

The period of observation in this study ranged from February 1988 to June 1988. During this sixteen week period, the author maintained a journal of class meetings, observations and notations of formal and informal discussions with the teachers and students in the study.

The author embarked upon the research project deciding to use the qualitative method. The author decided to act as a participant observer but after a week into the project the author realized that an adult cannot enter into the lives of teenagers. The adult-student relationship is well established early in a child's life and adults must work within certain limits. Lynda Measor comments (1984, p. 54).

I think one of the strongest things in kids' culture is knowing who you don't tell certain things to; it's

one of the things that kids have very clear in their minds and I think kids don't make mistakes about that.

Also, the author had to reconcile the separation of the adolescent outside of the school setting and for some students school was a formal institution, but was not the most important thing in their lives.

On the first day of the class, the author observed students entering the room giggling and joking about the new class. The room consisted of large tables each seating eight students. Students sat in gender cliques with friends. The teacher greeted the class, introduced the author and informed the students of my role and notetaking. The textbook, Dynamics of Relationships, was issued. The students hungrily devoured the table of contents and were ready for instructions. Most of the students were enthusiastic and had many questions about the course content. The boys were more vocal than the girls.

The teacher introduced the course to the class by telling them they were the first junior high school students to have this course. Prior to this year the courses have been taught to senior high students. One male student raised his hand explained to the teacher and the class how he just read an article about homosexuality and he saw the topic listed in the table of contents; he wanted to know how you stopped it and how you identified it.

The teacher was under the scrutiny of twenty four watchful eyes and listening ears. The room became still.

The stage was set and she had to respond with an explanation that was logical, but nonjudgmental. After an academic analysis of homosexuality, students were encouraged to give their points of view without becoming personal. It was requested that the students remain objective and not "put down" any individual in the discussion. The class was given an academic explanation of homo vs. hetero; the comparison was made of alternative life styles of people in all cultures and standard life styles. The textbook was used as a frame of reference. The class ended with the teacher assigning the chapter on communication for homework.

The majority of the observations were done in the classroom; however, the author did interact with the students in the hall and in the cafeteria talking with them about their families, their grades and friendships. The author had been their seventh-grade counselor, but had been assigned to a new position in the regional office at the end of their seventh grade and the students felt comfortable conversing. They had a willingness to talk and to be open and frank about their concerns. They gossiped about each other and talked about their teachers. The author obtained information about the students which could not be included in the case study. However, by doing so, their school lives and more narrowly their classroom lives were focused on in "Dynamics of Relationships."

After three weeks of class, the author observed a strong degree of bonding among the students and they were less self conscious with their discussions. The author entered the room and observed large charts, collages and slogans that had been completed by the students. The chairs were placed in a U shape and the teacher was conducting the lesson from behind the desk. The teacher issued students a study sheet titled: "Test Your Stress Level" and instructed the class to read the directions, the paragraphs on stress and complete the responses. The students dutifully followed the teacher's direction but showed little enthusiasm for the The teacher opened the discussion with a dialogue about her own personal life's stress and posed the question "How can a lesson on stress assist you in understanding your parents?" The students did not volunteer to answer the question, so she called on two separate individuals to answer the question, but they did not respond. The teacher then asked the class, "How many times have you requested something from your parents and they snapped at you?" The students became alive and raised their hands excitedly. However, the teacher continued the presentation on how parents become stressed when they return home from work and find a dirty room, dirty dishes in the sink and their children looking at TV.

The students did a role playing scene that was previously discussed depicting the scenario of parents

returning from work and finding their teenager watching TV.

The students began to see the parents' concerns and professed to start a new approach in talking with parents and accepting the responsibility and duties assigned by their parents. The class ended on a positive note, with the students committing themselves to openness and better communication with the parent. The teacher concluded the lesson with an assignment.

As the semester progressed, many of the students became very involved in the process of perceiving themselves as they are and how they would like to become. They struggled with their identity with questions such as Who am I? Where do I fit in? Am I normal? Do others like me? Do I like myself? The teachers modified their traditional teaching methods and handled the diverse values represented by the students.

At the end of the sixteen week period and the completion of the course, the post-test instruments were administered to forty-two students; three of the original group had relocated and transferred from the school. The same proctor from the University of Maryland administered the post-test and verified that the students did not leave questions unanswered. The data were analyzed and assessed to determine the differences between the pre-test and post-test scores on the semantic differential scale, values and

attitudes questionnaire and knowledge questionnaire. (See Major Findings.)

Promotion

The students were promoted to high school leaving many of their junior high school friends to seek special academic preparation for careers and college. One-third of the sample group moved on to the neighborhood high schools, one third of the group applied for special permission to attend high schools with special programs and the other third attended high schools in their prospective areas as they lived out of Backus boundaries.

Most of the group that attended the neighborhood school, in the African-American Brightwood community area, selected the college preparatory curriculum and moved into settings with minimum adjustment. The group which applied for special permission to attend schools with special programs, in the integrated Chevy Chase and Georgetown community areas, selected International Studies (at Wilson High School's accelerated program), Duke Ellington School of The Fine Arts, and the School Without Walls program (a highly individualized open program which uses the Smithsonian Institute as their base resource agency). The remaining third of the group had enrolled in predominantly African-American public and parochial high schools in the

District of Columbia, integrated schools in Maryland, and schools outside of the immediate area.

First Year Reunion

The students were contacted by telephone and word of mouth, through siblings and friends that the "Dynamics of Relationships" classes were having a reunion social at Backus Junior High School. Twenty-eight of the forty-two students attended the social. The principal and the author greeted the students and informed them about the project's tracking procedures, the questionnaire at the end of the first year and individual interviews at the end of the second year. The students completed the questionnaires and quickly became involved in the refreshments and camaraderie with classmates they had not seen or interacted with since their promotion exercises a year ago. The author chatted with the students finding out about their first year in high school and plans for the summer. Some of the responses were as follows:

K.B., who attends the neighborhood high school, entered the reunion very relaxed and told me about his high school year. He had been unable to find a steady part-time job and was doing odd jobs in the neighborhood (cutting grass, walking dogs, and the like). He shared some concerns about his eleventh grade curriculum. He had selected courses without seeing the guidance counselor and felt that the

first year had not been productive. He had been assigned ROTC for two years and enjoyed the regimentation and discipline it offered. However, he was not sure that his eleventh grade program was meeting college preparatory requirements.

C.B., who attends the Fine Arts School, arrived at the reunion very jubilant. She had received an internship at Howard University's Communications Department and was working behind the scenes in their cable TV productions lab. She spoke with self-confidence and was elated about the exposure to the legitimate stage and jazz and classical concerts that the school had introduced to her life.

P.H., who attends an inner city high school, arrived quietly for the social. She expressed concern about her program of study; she wanted to attend college. Her grades and test scores indicated she would be successful, however she had been programmed for the general course of study or curriculum. She had been an outstanding student when attending Backus, but was not aggressive or assertive in pursuing the college preparatory course of study. That afternoon, following the social, the author called the high school and talked with the principal who reviewed P.H.'s records and made an appointment with the student for the next day to adjust the program.

O.G., who attends a Maryland school, confidently entered the reunion. He had recently received an

outstanding award in art at his high school and had been selected to play varsity for the school's soccer team. He planned to visit his home in Jamaica at the beginning of the summer. He obtained a part time job in a restaurant after the soccer season ended, but planned to work it full-time during the summer months and return early to school for soccer practice. He was interested in obtaining a soccer scholarship to college and informed me that the restaurant manager had suggested full-time employment. The restaurant wanted to train him as an assistant wine steward. He rejected the offer for training because his goal was to enter college immediately after finishing high school.

The Interview Process

During the spring of 1990, an attempt was made to contact each of the forty-two students who completed "Dynamics of Relationships" to participate in the follow-up study. The author had a list which included each student with their addresses and home telephone numbers. A form letter and consent form were sent to the students describing the follow-up study. The author then followed the letters with telephone calls.

Locating the students became a monumental task. In the intervening years since their enrollment at Backus Junior High, many had moved to new areas in the city, neighboring areas in Maryland (no forwarding addresses), a few left

school or a few moved to other areas in the United States. Students who seemed enthusiastic about the project were located and meeting times at Backus Junior High School were However, there were problems of appointments not arranged. being kept and phone messages not being relayed. The author had difficulty getting some students to come to Backus Junior High School for the interview process. The author then realized that the students were involved with school studies, extra curricular and social activities and some with after school employment. Traveling to an interview at Backus became difficult and was not a priority. Appointments were set by calling a week in advance to clear the date and time. The students would forget the appointments, but were telephoned the night before as a reminder. Some students appreciated the reminder; others were not at home.

This procedure was not productive and the author decided to go through school counselors to set-up the interviews. Most of the counselors were very cooperative, and allocated space in the Guidance Suite for meetings with the students; they also assisted in securing the students' daily schedules and locating them. The students were then contacted by telephone and informed of the place, day and time of the interview. This approach worked very well and the students communicated with each other as to day and time they were scheduled for the interviews.

The students who had completed their interviews at Backus assisted in setting up the assigned space with the tape recorder (locating electrical outlets, panel boxes and the like). At one school the interviewees (males) reported to the counselor's office before their designated time; they were anxious to be a part of the process and to shield the author from some of the negative factors in the school. At that particular neighborhood high school an altercation occurred down the hall from the interview site. The interview session was interrupted because of the loud noise as the disruptive altercation spilled out into the hall.

At another neighborhood high school, the school counselor did not have accurate schedules and programs for the students and it was difficult locating them. The author resorted to going to the homeroom teacher to locate the students.

The interviews were enlightening and perhaps the only way to find out "what is in and on someone else's mind"

(Patton, 1980, p. 196). The students appreciated the fact that an adult was setting up appointments, rearranging schedules and telephoning to confirm appointments; all of this attention made them feel important and flattered. One of the most successful features of the interviewing process was the willingness of the participants to cooperate. The participants were open and willing to talk about their school life. The interviewing process led the author to a

greater awareness of the importance the participants placed on the meaning of what they were doing. By expressing an interest in their lives, the author could have been signaling that there was a source of help for students to resolve their problems.

All the interviews were tape recorded. The purpose of taping the interviews was to have a record of what each participant had to say and to guarantee the accuracy of the data collected. In the study, the author had the tapes transcribed verbatim which posed problems. Some of the students spoke in broken sentences and in a halting manner which often made the transcribing difficult. However, experience using the tape recorder confirms Patton's conclusion that a "Tape recorder is part of the indispensable equipment of evaluators using qualitative methods" (Patton, 1980, p. 247).

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

This chapter describes the findings of the research study. As previously stated, the study sought to assess the influence of a school improvement project in social dynamics on the attitudes and behaviors of the participating students. The purpose of the school improvement project was to assess the social development of the self-concept and self-esteem of participating African-American adolescents in the school environment. The study examined the possible changes in the students in two phases: (1) The pre and posttest results (self-esteem and self-concept, attitudes/values and knowledge units) at the conclusion of the course, "Dynamics of Relationships,"; and (2) personal interviews with students, during their junior year of high school, which would revel the efficacy (school adjustment, social interactions, communication and recommendations) of the course.

The study's findings have been organized and presented under the broad headings of (1) Pre/Post-Test Findings, (2) Student Evaluations and (3) Interviews. It was proposed that:

 Students participating in "Dynamics of Relationships" would demonstrate an increase in self-esteem/self-concept as measured by the posttest on a "real" versus "ideal" Semantic Differential Scale.

- 2. Students participating in "Dynamics of Relationships" would demonstrate greater positive attitudes about self, relationships and values as measured by the post-test on an attitude and value instrument.
- 3. Students participating in "Dynamics of Relationships" would demonstrate an increase in knowledge of the concepts covered in the unit as measured by the post-test scores on a multiple-choice and true false instrument measuring knowledge.

Table 1 indicates the demographics of the ninth grade student population that completed the course, "Dynamics of Relationships." The population consisted of 91% African-Americans, 58% Protestant, and 57% female and 43% male students.

Table 1

Student Population Demographics

<u>Demographic</u>	Topic	Total
Sex	Male	18
	Female	24
Race	African-American	38
	Other	4
Religion	Protestant	24
	Catholic	9
	Other	9
Age	13 years old	1
	14 years old	19
	15 years old	16
	16 years old	5
	17 years old	1

Pre/Post Test

Major Findings

The table below presents a comparison of the scores on the pre-test and post-test.

Results from the Semantic Differential demonstrated no significant difference in the scores. Therefore, the results do not support Proposal 1 that students who participated in "Dynamics of Relationships" would exhibit greater levels of self-esteem and self-concept.

Table 2

Semantic Differential

Pre-test and Post-test Scores

9th. Grade Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Group 1	34.00	35.77
Group 2	32.00	26.88

Low scores indicate more positive attitudes and high scores indicate less positive attitudes. There was no significant difference on the attitudes and values instrument. The results do not support Proposal 2 that students who participated in "Dynamic of Relationships" would exhibit more positive attitudes about self-esteem, relationships and values.

Table 3

Attitudes and Values Instrument Pre-test and Post-test Scores

9th. Grade Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Group 1	43.25	43.08
Group 2	43.95	46.84

Table 4 presents the pre-test and post-test scores on the knowledge instrument. The results indicated no significant difference in the scores on the knowledge instrument. Therefore, the results do not support proposal that students participating in "Dynamics Relationship" would exhibit a greater increase in knowledge of the concepts covered in the unit.

Table 4

Knowledge Instrument

Pre-test and Post-test Scores

9th. Grade Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Group 1	37.06	40.80
Group 2	42.30	43.56

Further Analysis

The data were further examined to discern if gender differences existed on the major variables, that is, changes in self-esteem, attitudes and values, and knowledge.

Table 5 indicates that Group 1 males demonstrated virtually no change between the pre-test and post-test scores. Group 1 females demonstrated an increase in the discrepancy scores in the post-test which indicated a decrease in self-esteem, whereas, Group 2 male and female students demonstrated a decrease in discrepancy scores which indicated an increase in self-esteem.

Table 5

Semantic Differential Discrepancy

Pre/Post-test Scores (Male vs. Female)

9th. Grade Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test	
Difference			
Group 1 Male	36.12	35.12	45
Female	32.45	38.72	+6.27
Group 2 Male	30.00	22.37	-7.63
Female	33.23	29.07	-4.16

Table 6 indicates there was essentially no change in the groups in regard to attitudes and values. Group 2's females had post-test scores that indicated less positive with regard to self, parental and peer relationships.

Table 6

Attitudes and Values Instrument

Pre/Post-test Scores (Male vs Female)

9th Grade	Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Group 1	Male	42.00	41.55	45
	Female	44.50	44.08	42
Group 2	Male	41.37	41.37	.00
	Female	46.53	52.84	+6.31

Table 7 demonstrates there appeared to be little change among any of the groups with regard to knowledge gain. However, the females scores indicate that they gained more knowledge over the sixteen week period than did the male participants. The post-test knowledge scores revealed a statistically significant difference for the variable of gender F(1,37) 6.90, p = .012, P = .012 (Significant difference between sexes).

Table 7

Knowledge Test Pre/Post-Test Scores (Male vs Female)

9th Grad	e Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Group 1	Male	34.55	35.00	+0.45
-	Female	39.58	44.08	+4.50
Group 2	Male	40.00	42.12	+2.12
02 Jup -	Female	44.61	47.53	+2.86

Table 8 consolidated questions on the knowledge instrument into related topic areas to include self-esteem, relationships, roles, communications and emotions.

This table indicates the percentage of students that:

- Learned the information as demonstrated by selecting wrong answers on the pre-test and right answers on the post-test (wrong-right).
- 2. Knew the information both pre-test and post-test as demonstrated by selecting right answers on the pre-test and right answers on the post-test (right-right).
- 3. Did not know the knowledge and did not learn the knowledge as demonstrated by selecting wrong answers on the pre-test and wrong answers on the post-test (wrong-wrong).
- 4. Knew the information pre-test and had a loss of knowledge post-test as demonstrated by selecting right answers on the pre-test and wrong answers on the post-test (right-wrong).

Table 8

Response to Knowledge Test Questions

Self Esteem Related Questions

Pre-test	Wrong	Right	Wrong	Right
Post-test	Right	Right	Wrong	Wrong
Group 1	15%	52%	15%	15%
Group 2	16%	52%	11%	21%

Relationship Related Questions

Pre-test	Wrong	Right	Wrong	Right
Post-test	Right	Right	Wrong	Wrong
Group 1	8%	65%	20%	7%
Group 2	14%	59%	20%	8%

Roles Related Questions

Pre-test	Wrong	Right	Wrong	Right
Post-test	Right	Right	Wrong	Wrong
Group 1	11%	52%	25%	12%
Group 2	15%	50%	20%	14%

Communications Related Questions

Pre-test	Wrong	Right	Wrong	Right
Post-test	Right	Right	Wrong	Wrong
Group 1	13%	52%	28%	6%
Group 2	13%	55%	20%	11%

Emotions	Related	Questions
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Pre-test	Wrong	Right	Wrong	Right
Post-test	Right	Right	Wrong	Wrong
Group 1	10%	54%	21%	16%
Group 2	10%	59%	16%	16%

Analysis of the pre-test and post-test knowledge scores by topic area demonstrates that for each related topic area similar percentages of Group 1 and Group 2 students had similar levels of knowledge on these topics. Similar percentages of students:

- 1. learned knowledge during the unit of instruction
 (wrong/right);
- 3. did not know the information either before or after the unit of instruction (wrong/wrong);
- 4. knew the information before the unit and demonstrated a loss of information after the unit (right/wrong).

It should be noted that for all topic areas, 50 percent or more of the students selected the right answer in both the pre-test and post-test suggesting pre-existing knowledge of the concepts of self-esteem, relationships, roles, communications and emotions (as defined by the questions on the knowledge instrument). More than 75 percent of the

students knew, both pre-test and post-test, the definition of self-esteem, what to do if a friend is talking about suicide, that good friends argue and disagree, that angry feelings are not necessarily good or bad, and that arguments are not necessarily bad for relationships. The research evaluation of the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," did not reveal improvement or effectiveness at the completion of the course. The intervention included only forty-two students, sixteen hours of instruction, and pre/post tests which did prove to be ineffective using the research design.

A major limitation of the evaluation was the limited period of instruction (sixteen weeks). The course should not have been expected to have a significant impact on the students' self-esteem which is significantly influenced by biological, emotional, and social influences. Another important factor affecting the interpretation of the results was the instrumentation. Pat Kramer, the author, designed the attitudes and values questionnaire by combining questions from several nationally recognized attitude and values questionnaires rather than using instruments with proven validity and reliability. The knowledge instrument had no correlation or association between the amount of class time spent on a subject and the number of questions on the knowledge instrument that addressed that material. of the questions had no definite right answers and were subject to broad interpretation.

Further research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the full-length version of "Dynamics of Relationships."

In summary, it appears (according to the scores on the semantic differential technique, the attitudes and values instrument, and the knowledge instruments) that the only students that demonstrated any significant level of change were the females and that difference was only noted on the knowledge questionnaire. Females in Group 1 and Group 2 demonstrated a significantly greater increase of knowledge in the "Dynamics of Relationships" course.

Student Evaluation Data

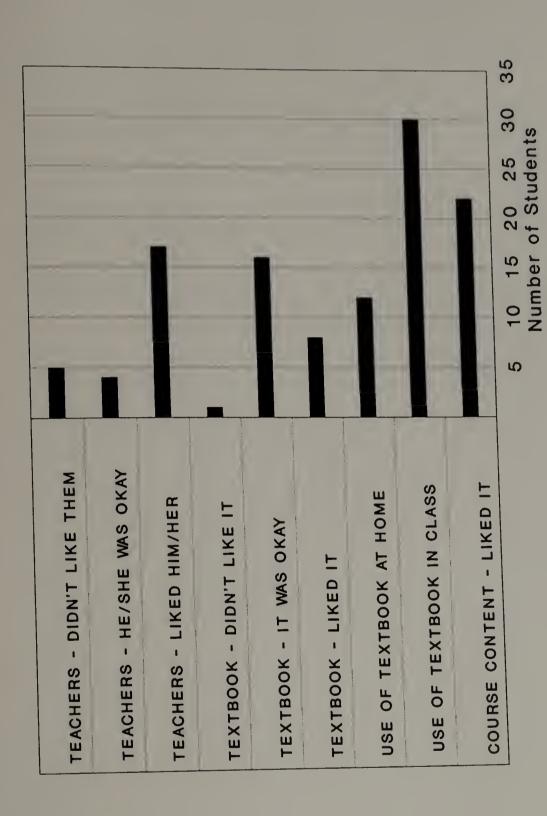
The evaluation questionnaire utilized both the open and closed format. Questionnaires are usually designed in closed form in which the questions permit only certain responses (multiple choice) or open form in which the respondents can make any response they wish in their own words. The design requested some input (essay answers) for the completion of the questionnaire. The students responded to the open form questions about the teachers, instruction, and course content. The students were assured anonymity in the completion of the questionnaire. It was felt that the respondents might be reluctant to give some answers to questions if they were identified.

The author observed and recorded the social adjustment, self-concept and self-esteem of the African-American adolescents who participated in the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," after one year of maturation.

Interviews

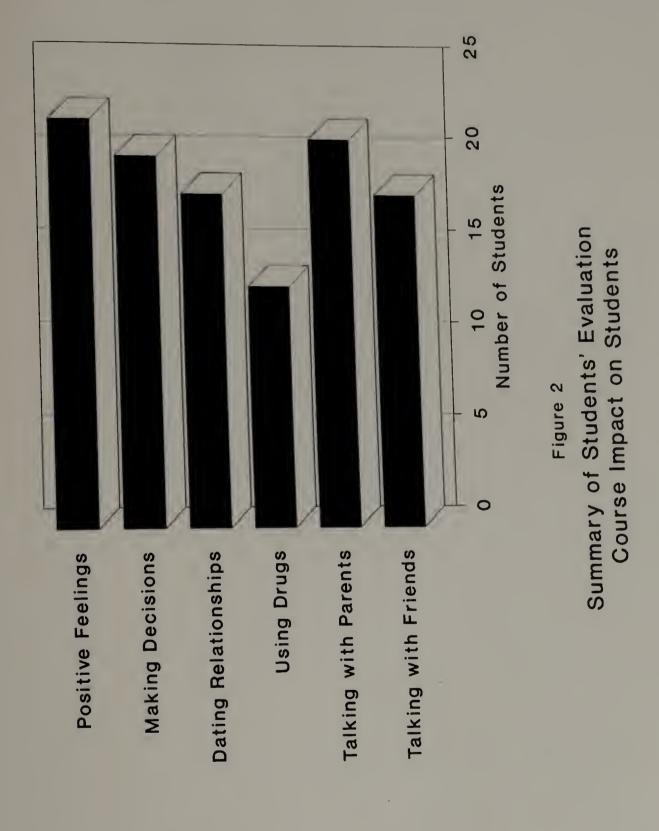
The interview questions grew out of the expectations of the course content. However, as the students were promoted from an ethnic junior high school and to culturally diverse senior high schools, the author was concerned about their adjustment. Would the students encounter hostilities? Were the students academically prepared and motivated to successfully perform in the culturally diverse schools? The interview questions were designed to find out if there were differences in race and ethnicity in dress, hair styles and language patterns; and did the differences have effects (negative or positive) on the students adjustment in high school?

The literature indicated that students re-evaluate themselves as they are exposed to a greater segment of society. The interview questions were designed to discover how the students re-evaluated themselves (self-concept), their schooling, aspirations and resources. How did the



Thoughts About Teachers, Instruction, & Course Content Summary of Students' Evaluation

Figure 1



participants face day-to-day issues that affect urban students? Did the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," assist the students in acquiring a more positive approach to social and educational practices? Also, the interview questions inquired about the "then" (junior high school) and the "now" (senior high school). Could the urban students living in a subculture (ethnic kinship) disassociate themselves from the immediate community and embrace the culture evident in the diverse multi-cultural schools? Were the students attending neighborhood schools versus students attending culturally diverse schools more deeply rooted in their ethnicity and positive feelings of self-esteem?

Most of the respondents perceived the interview process and questions positively and willingly participated; they felt the need to become involved. The interview process and questions provided the students opportunities for discussion and recommendations for class curriculum content. The students were involved in innovation and change.

Through conducting personal interviews with the participants, the author hoped to gain a more insightful perspective on long-range influences stemming from the social dynamics course. There was no foolproof process to insure the reliability of the participants responses, but the author had the advantage of the participants knowing her as their counselor and as a participant observer. However, every effort was made to separate the role of researcher

from that of counselor and to be candid with the participants.

The interview questions are presented with quoted responses (excerpts) from the participants with symbols as follows:

- 1. NS Students in African-American neighborhood schools
- 2. SS Students in (special programs) and integrated schools
- 3. & Represents the author's questions and statements

Eighteen students were interviewed. Two students attended integrated schools in Maryland; nine students attended integrated schools in the District of Columbia and seven students attended neighborhood schools which are predominantly African-American.

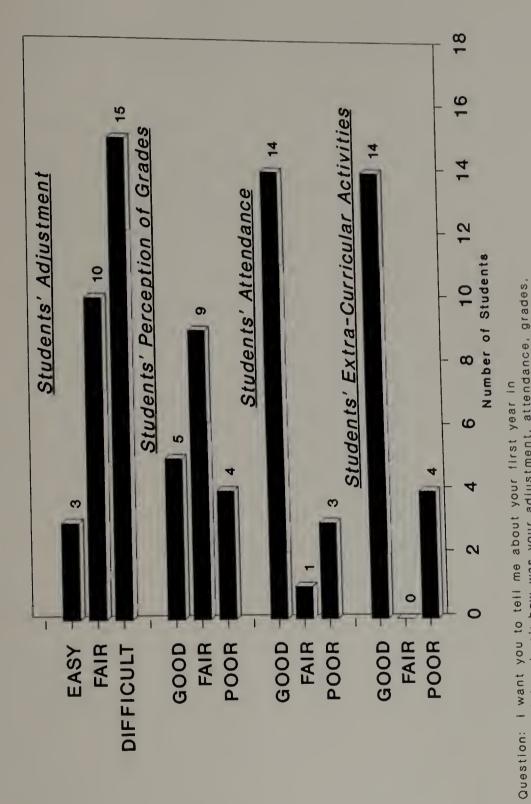
Ouestions

1. I want you to tell me about your first year in high school, how was your adjustment, your attendance, your grades and did you participate in any extra curricular activities? See Figure 3.

Most of the respondents did adjust to high school with positive outcomes. The class, "Dynamics of Relationships," did positively influence their social development and school success.

- When I first got to W---, I thought the work was a little hard and I realized I had to work harder to keep up with everybody else, to be on the same level as everybody else. And, it's a lot; there are different cultures here so you have to be able to get along with people from different nationalities. I've learned about people's lifestyles and how things are different from their culture than mine and the similar things as well as the differences.
- NS My first year of high school, I had to adjust because I had to buckle down and study. I was getting a lot of homework and I had to study a lot more than I did at Backus. Yeah, I felt like I was just there because I didn't know too many people at the time. I didn't want to make too many friend because I was gonna start hanging out with them, and I couldn't do what I wanted to do well in school. I wanted to make a good first year at R---."
- Well, my first year was really tough, real tough. It was hard to adjust to the school as far as learning, study hours, making time for yourself. You don't get much of that because you have to stay on top of your grades. Even on the weekends, school can have you on

the weekends too. I realized that life isn't all fun and games; its getting to that time when you got to take life very seriously. If you don't grab it now then you might be a bum or whatever. So, to try and prevent that, you got to stay in school. You know, these days that you need a... good education.



high school; how was your adjustment, attendance, grades, and did you participate in extra-curricular activities?

Interview Question One

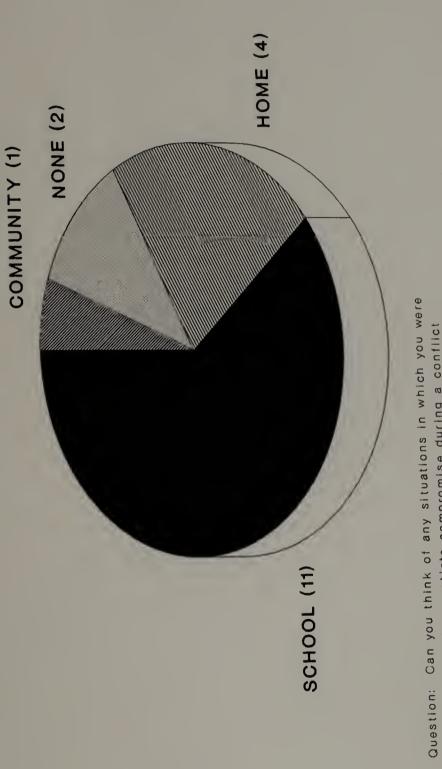
2. Can you think of any situation that you were able to negotiate compromise during a conflict (school, home or community)? See Figure 4.

The participants responded favorably and were able to negotiate compromise in racially active situations and in the social environment. It was noted that racial identity and acceptance were important components of the participants self-identity.

- Actually, I did near the end of the sophomore year. SS said to my mother I didn't want to stay at W---, I wanted to go to another school. I was finding it harder to stay in school with the different races because some of my teachers as well as some of my classmates were prejudiced in a way. Some of the students would ignore you, like act like you weren't even there or think you could not do the work. I think it was that stereotype that they had about Blacks. I talked it over with my mother and she told me to give it some time and to just go on with what I had to do because it's always going to be that way...especially, in the United States. I was telling her how I wanted to go to Boston University and she said that the farther north you go the harder it is to recognize that and so I really thought about that and I decided to stick it out.
- NS Yes. It was an incident that a couple of girls were saying that, "most girls say that you think you are cute and all of that." I just politely asked her what was it about me that she didn't really like and she told me. I told her there wasn't going to be a fight or anything about it and she, you know, politely told me and we settled it then. There wasn't a fight; we just talked and then after, from then on we were friends.
- Yeah, at school. This...I just went to school and this boy was messing with me in class because sometimes when I was reading, the Jamaican accent came out. So, he was making fun of me and touching my neck. I told him

to stop or else. He kept on playing and I told the teacher that I wanted to leave. Came up with and? That's the way I do. Yeah, that's the way I do. I don't really...if they go ahead an mess with me I tell them to stop and when I get mad, I look for a @#\$@# I was trying to keep away from the person.

Well, in a basketball situation, in gym class, mainly, when we have basketball in gym, we tend to always pick out the people that we think are good and really that is the blacks, quote unquote. Nobody wants to pick out any whites or anything like that. They try to go out and win and I think that way there's a lot of separatism cause we don't try to do things for each other or with each other.



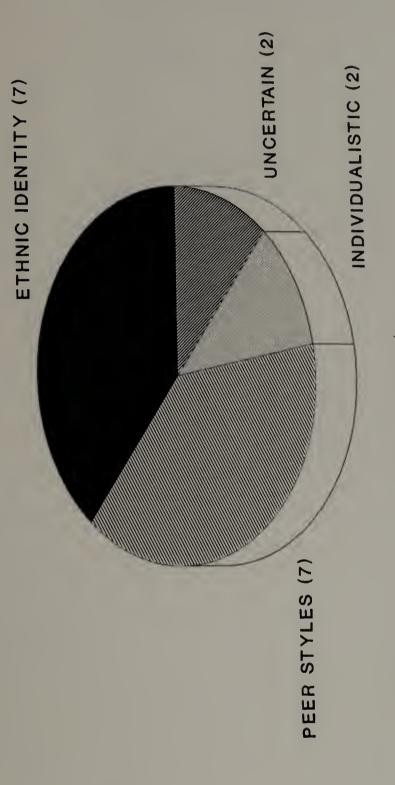
able to negotiate compromise during a conflict (in school, home, or community) where you were able to stay calm?

Figure 4 Interview Question Two

3. Tell me about the changes in your personal appearance (i.e., new hair style, clothing and grooming)? See Figure 5.

The students' personal appearance was highly acceptable. The styles, cost of the apparel (designer clothes) and accessories differed according to the individual and the school site and peer pressure. The males were more assertive in their African-American hair styles and symbols to denote manhood.

- SS The taper. Yeah, tapers, tempa-tapers, phillies, all types of styles...S-curls with tapers, stuff like that. A goatee. It says that I'm growing up, that I'm becoming a man, but this peach fuzz doesn't necessarily make a man a man. It takes a lot of experiences learning how to deal with people. I think that that's what makes a man.
- When I first got up there, I was looking at some people like they were kind of strange because with us living in a predominant black area and coming from Backus a predominantly black school, it wasn't just familiar to me, their dressing wasn't familiar to me, but once I got there I found some of it to be nice. Some of the things that these people wore, I found very nice. Others, I really didn't care for, but I was like, I don't have to wear it and they might feel the same way about me... about my clothes, so I didn't really say anything or really bother to say anything. I just kept that to myself.
- NS Fade. And I have to keep it low because of ROTC regulations. It's suppose to be no more than 6 inches.
- Yours is rather conservative? And I see you with your medallions indicating the map of Africa.
- NS My roots. Symbolizing where we come from. Where did I get 'em from? I got them overseas in London.



Question: Teli me about the changes in your personal appearance (i.e., new hair style, clothing, and grooming).

 The students determine if they have made a positive change or not.

Figure 5 Interview Question Three

- 4. As you look back at your junior high experience and the class "Dynamics of Relationships" do you recall any part of the class that was particularly helpful to you? See Figure 5.
- More than half of the participants indicated the unit on communications was most helpful to their adjustment and success in high school and attainments at home and the community.
- NS I felt that what I got out of the class was that it helped me improve talking relations with people. Such as like, when I'm angry, I learned how to talk with them in a nice calm manner. Usually, I would talk to people when I'm angry and you say things that you don't really mean. I learned to use "I" statements and show the things that I felt that I needed such as, communications, self-esteem, and how to cope with people because nobody is the same. You have different types of people out here and you've just got to have an open frame of mind.
- Yeah, the part about family...when we talked about our SS family, it kind of ... a lot of people in my class were talking about how they really didn't get along with someone in their family. It could be mother, father, sister or brother. Miss J---, I believe it was, talked to us and she was telling us how we need to--even though we feel like no one cares about us and we don't care about them -- we need to talk to our parents more often...communicate with them. She felt that there was a big communication gap. We should talk to our parents, tell them that we love them, hug them sometimes and go sit next to them when they are sitting down reading the paper or whatever. Our parents don't feel like we want them to be a part of our lives and that can kind of break the communication barrier between us.
- NS Uh, it has helped me cause I'm hyper just like my mother and when something upsets the both of us, I mean, we just go at it, but I try to calm myself down.

Like my father says, he said, "K--- just calm down. You're just like your mother. Both you two when you guess, just go at it." So, he just told me to calm myself down. I just remember what was taught in that class and I just try to bring that into the situation.

- NS No, Me and my mother talk more. I really don't talk to my grandmother really. Me and my mother, we talk all the time. If I'm in trouble or something, anything, I talk to my mother.
- The part about relationships and the part between men and women because now, I'm more sensitive because I used to just treat girls like dogs. But now, I understand that they have feelings and are not just a toy. So now, I can treat them better and I can have better conversations with them. I used to, you know, have little quick conversations. Now I can talk with them and relate, you know. I can understand, you know, better how to treat them and everything, you know. I feel a lot better about that.

|--|

Question: As you look back at your junior high experience and the class 'Dynamics of Relationships," do you recall any part of the class that was particularly helpful to you?

Figure 6

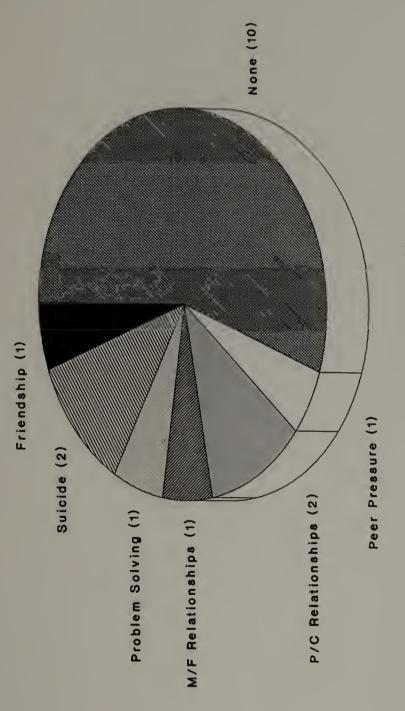
Interview Question Four

As you think about the class, was there anything you wanted to learn more about subjects, facts and theories? See Figure 6.

More than half of the participants denoted the course content was adequate; however, there were some areas that the participants felt should be given more emphasis.

- We didn't really go in depth about friendship...being a SS friend, having friends. I think most people have more associates than they have friends when you look at it because they don't know the meaning of the word friend. I don't think we went into depth about that which is something I think I would have liked because it would have described a lot of people because you can call yourself my friend, but if I do something that you don't agree with then you'll go get mad at me. You'll talk about me and then you'll never speak to me again and that's not a friend. So, I think we should have gone in depth about how to be a friend to someone, especially, when they need you. And what to do when you have people that treat you like that, who are your friend one minute and talk about you the next. I think that should have been talked about more.
- NS I think it was maybe peer pressure. How to handle it more. About how to deal with more situations when someone's always on you or something about one particular thing. They just keep coming at you with it and you just sometimes don't say nothing or sometimes give in when you really don't want to give in.
- NS Umm, a little bit because at first, I was mad because I couldn't take art because I like to draw and concentrate on creative things, but "Dynamics of Relationships" really brought out something in me. So, that helped even better, much more than art could have done for me.
- No, not really, but sometimes, like, what was it? It might have been sex and gender roles or something like that. It wasn't that I didn't want to talk about it; it

was just like the boys (most boys in our class) would direct it to one girl, you know. That happened to me once. I think, but it was O.K. It didn't bother me, like, really bother me.



Question: As you think about the class, was there anything-subjects, facts, theories- you wanted to find out more or learn about?

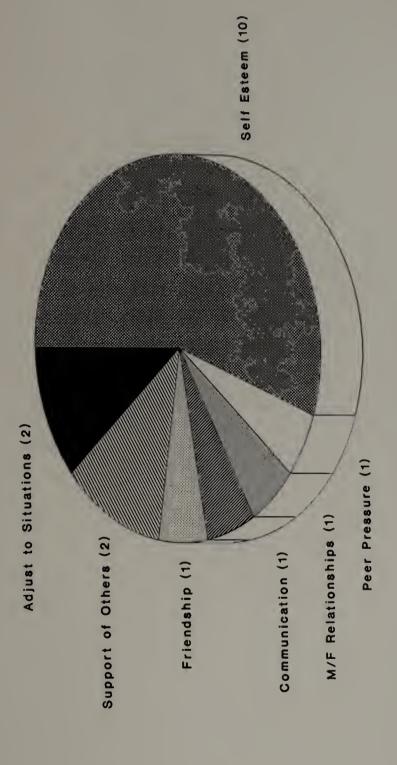
Figure 7 Interview Question Five

6. In the class, "Dynamics of Relationships", what was most helpful for you to feel good about yourself and to become socially comfortable? See Figure 7.

Majority of the participants verbalized that the course gave them increased self-esteem. As high school students, they reflected on the class instruction and the use of the techniques taught in the class for "feeling good" about one's self.

- SS Some people don't keep themselves up, I know I feel good about myself. I don't see anything to be angry about myself. I think I'm not perfect in my opinion. I know everybody's not perfect, but I think I'm O.K.
- NS Hey, my looks. And "Dynamics of Relationships" helped me conclude that I should just be happy for what I am and how I am. Just take it as it is and not let my friends get me down for what they say. Just believe in yourself. Make love to yourself.
- SS Yes, in a way, it did. Most of us that came from Backus, we kind of stuck together because we didn't really know too many people here and we had a lot of classes together. So, we kind of boosted each other up and once we kind of got the feel of W--- and everything, we basically kept high self-esteem. If one of us started feeling bad because of a grade we may have gotten on a paper or a grade for the end of the quarter or what have you, there was always someone for them from Backus.
- Yes, you have your buddies, your friends, your associates and you know how to get along with each of them so no matter what happens if you feel good about yourself you're not going to let anybody bring you

down. That was one thing that she taught and it's one thing that you come to learn, that you have to do, you have to feel good about yourself. Somebody can always come along and just swipe you off and bring you down.



Question: In the class, "Dynamics of Relationships," what was most helpful for you to feel good about yourself and to become socially comfortable?

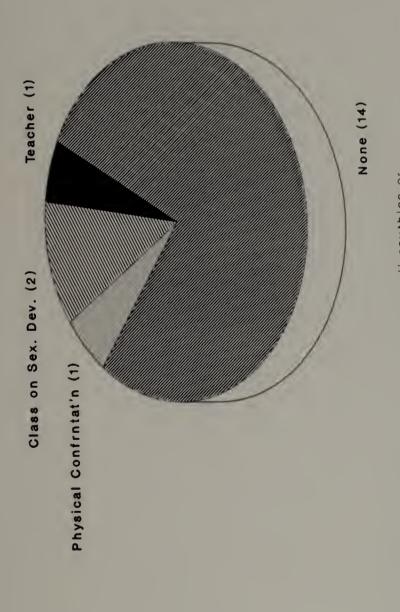
Figure 8 Interview Question Six

7. During the class, can you recall anything or experience that blocked your learning? See Figure 8.

Most of the students did not find any segment of the course content offensive. However, there were comments made about the text book and daily living in an urban society.

- I think it was mainly how we walk away from a fight cause from my neighborhood experiences, if somebody came up to you and tried to start something either you had a choice to fight. It was kind of hard to make that change into trying to talk to that person or try to reason or wiggle out of it. It's sort of hard to do that, especially if the person is fired up or whatever and mainly if the person hits you and walks away. That's..., that can be hard, very hard.
- SS We had a couple of bad seeds in class. We had certain people who were not really serious about what was trying to be taught to them. That kind of blocks you from trying to learn. Like, if you have some silly people in the classroom, that distracted me...'cause I'm trying to learn.
- NS Well, I had a situation; my father had gotten killed and it was a lot of pressure on me and it was all taken out on the school which was...when I went to school. It was like, I didn't want to speak to anyone or my work wasn't being done the same as it was when everything was O.K. in my family.
- Not one that was sort of what I didn't believe in, but one that did cause a lot of controversy. We were all about fourteen or fifteen years old at the time and relationships with boys and girls and dating had started. We all had our different concepts. What we felt dating was and everything and I would have liked to talk more about that too. It was interesting watching, listening to the different points of view that went up and the different opinions and then of course Miss Johnson had the overall opinion. She was telling us what the book said. We always said, don't go by the book. That's not right. The book hasn't

experienced anything. So, I think that's one that caused a lot of controversy, but it was the most interesting.



Question: During the class, can you recall anything or experience that biocked your learning or understanding?
What was it? How did it biock your learning?

Figure 9 Interview Question Seven

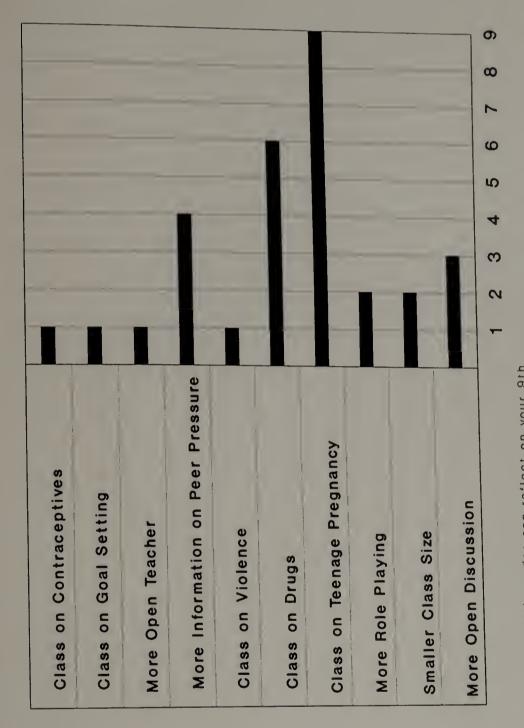
8. You as an eleventh grader can reflect on your ninth grade school experience, what suggestions would you make for improving the class, "Dynamics of Relationships"? See Figure 9.

The participants candidly responded to suggestions for improving the course. There were topics that most of the participants stated should be included in the course curriculum or content, for example, teenage pregnancy and information on the effects of drugs.

Also, the participants expressed the need for more role-playing as a teaching and learning technique.

- Well, I think that I would suggest role playing. When we were in that class, we did a lot of reading and discussions. I mean that helps, but when you get people to role play certain situations it helps, it puts them in a situation where they have to bring a positive outcome to work with the book and see what it says. I think that would help more...activities where they can move around.
- Drugs. I know a lot of...this is a topic that is SS really in the news today. We talked a little bit about drugs, children and drugs, teenage pregnancy... and major issues that are facing children. I think that would be important and if you had certain students in the class to come up and have a testimony, as when they were using drugs or how they got into drugs or if they still are using drugs and the effects that it had on It not only helps that person to get it out, but it also helps the people who are listening to what he or she is saying. On my job, that's what we are doing now. We are trying to make up a rap scene about drugs and certain people come up and tell how they got into drugs and their personal testimony and...it's real interesting listening to that because you're like, it takes a very strong person to comment and testify.

- NS Yes. Well, young girls should learn about pregnancies and the males, and just young relationships. And, they should know about babies, that they are not even taking care of themselves and they want to take care of a baby. They have to think about their responsibilities. It's not going be like they used to have it. They used to going out. Now, they have to take care of a baby and basically think about the male.
- It's a lot of them that have children and now D--- has a, I mean, I guess they have a nursery where the students who have a, you know, have children can bring their child in the morning and at lunch time they have to come in and sit with their child or nurse their baby of whatever. And at 3 o'clock when school lets out, take their child home with them and really I think the nursery was needed because it would keep the mother interested in school and taking care of her child. And basically, the father, if the father attends the same school as the mother, he will be influenced to come to school cause most of the girls, they go there if the father is in the same school, he wouldn't come to school.
- NS Drugs. They need to learn more about drugs. That is not good. That the money might feel good, but it's not. They should stop getting hung up on materialistic things. The money is not going to be there all of the time and they have to know that their life could be in danger because of them selling the drugs. Yes. Most of the high school students, don't use the drugs themselves. They just...they find it, they sell it and I guess, basically, that's all... they sell it. They get the extra money. They buy cars, gold, clothing, they buy their so called girlfriends clothes, jewelry, take them to get their hair done and the girls think it's cool. And then....



Question: You as an 11th grader can reflect on your 9th grade school experience, what suggestions would you make for improving the class, "Dynamics of Relationships?"

Figure 10 Interview Question Eight

Summary

The findings assess the school improvement project.

The study, in general, indicated that the participants,

African-American adolescents, made positive steps toward

successful high school adjustment, effective social

interactions, improved communication skills and increased

self-concept and self-esteem. The data recorded at the

conclusion of the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," seems

to suggest little or no significant increase in the proposed

hypotheses: increased self-esteem/self-concept, greater

positive attitudes and values, and increased knowledge about

the course.

The intervention, "Dynamics of Relationships," did not yield immediate effects. However, over a two-year period the author explored time order associations and the results were evident and rewarding to the participants. Finally, some variables that were not included in the original design or model became visible due to clustering. The information obtained from the interviews was grouped or categorized and assigned topologies. In the progression of the study, clustering added some new elements to the research.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion and Summary of Findings

This study sought to examine a school improvement project, a course on social dynamics for urban junior high school students. In conducting the case study, the author utilized evidence from interviews, evaluations and participant observations. This "triangulated" process was used to strengthen and focus key findings of the research.

Specific objectives of the study were: (1) to assess the personal and social growth of the students as indicated by pre and post-test results; (2) to survey the improvements of the students' attitudes contributing to self-esteem and self-concept through the interviews; and (3) to have the student participants evaluate the school improvement project, "Dynamics of Relationships."

Incidental observations disclosed that examples set by teachers had a significant impact on the students' values and behaviors. It was how the teachers related to the students more than what they said that made the difference. Peer influence and self-esteem were found to be related to incidental teacher student relations (indirect classroom interaction) as well as activities using direct strategies.

The study looked at one school's intervention project that involved forty-two students and of that number eighteen were interviewed; the study was exploratory in nature.

Parents were willing and eager to cooperate with the research project. Several parents wrote notes expressing their pleasure with the project on the permission letters and some parents contacted by telephone stated they were gratified their children were receiving a course on social dynamics.

Given the limitations, this study provided preliminary evidence that the school improvement project, "Dynamics of Relationship," had some positive effects on the school success of the students. The research was limited to the school setting. The study did not present statistics to confirm its findings but explored what the student participants revealed in the interviews. Some of the student characteristics revealed in the interviews were as follows:

- Had a stable self-concept that did not easily change.
- Were able to link short-term goals with long-range plans.
- Were less susceptible to the changing impulses of peer pressure influence.
- Tended to have reasonably high levels of selfacceptance.
- Were able to seek self-acceptance directly by being their own person.

I am this kind of person.

I am not perfect, I am still OK.

I can accept others shortcomings because I can accept my own.

- Were able to make decisions without fluctuating or being indecisive.
- Tended to be optimistic about themselves, others, and life in general.
- Tended to believe that they were responsible for what happens to them, positive or negative.
- Were able to be physically and emotionally close to another person without fearing a loss of self.
- Tended to be cognitive adaptable--their sense of self did not depend on being right.

In light of the increasing complexity of the adolescent social world, intervention seemed appropriate to assist the students in developing positive social skills that aided in the formation of relationships and the new found independence.

The pre- and post-test data indicated the general ineffectiveness of the course, "Dynamics of Relationships." The lack of positive results on the Attitude and Knowledge Instruments at the conclusion of the class suggested the modification of the course content and a possible extended intervention might be needed. Another factor contributing to the immediate ineffectiveness of the course may have been its brevity. Although disappointing to the author, the literature indicated that many of the school improvement programs are characterized by a high percentage of negative and inconsistent outcomes. However, during the interviews, most of the students indicated that they found the course and activities helpful and enjoyable.

According to Erikson (1963) adolescents experience a decline in self-worth because they are reevaluating themselves and their goals as they search for a stable identity. It is urged that although teens can hold multiple perspectives, only their own group is "right" or acceptable at that point in their lives. Therefore, the progression from childhood to adolescence demonstrates an exchange of dependency from parent to peers. The dominant force of peer pressure is conformity. The older adolescent is more inclined to academic peer influence than social peer influence.

Psychological and emotional factors are major stumbling blocks for many students because they interfere with students doing their best--moving from "I want to do well" to "I must do well." "Dynamics of Relationships" helped them learn more effective ways of successfully functioning in their world, that is, handling stress and getting along better with others. Sara Lightfoot (1983, p. 352) concluded:

Adolescence is a time of heightened affiliation and identification with peers and the conservative choice usually points toward finding friends who mirror one's attributes and behaviors. In all the high schools I visited, I was struck by the rigid definition of student groups and their internal homogeneity.

Students need to learn how to manage frustrations because adult life is full of them. It is illogical to presume that adults will be able to meet frustrations

successfully without acquiring and applying skills that should have been developed during youths' adolescent years. The program focused primarily on self-esteem, coping and employing direct and indirect strategies to reinforce acceptable social behaviors and attitudes. The participants developed strategies for coping with school related concerns and perceived school as relevant to their lives. encouraged to participate in democratic activities with issues being solved by reason rather than force. The developmental teaching of social behaviors was easily carried out in groups. There was improved communication between the students and their parents and the use of alternative means of resolving problems and problem solving strategies. Most of the participants learned from their exposure or intervention how to make a significant difference and how to bring about constructive resolutions about their concerns.

The most encouraging finding is that the students perceived the course, "Dynamics of Relationships," as providing valuable information strategies and had an impact on their perception. The research also pointed to the efficacy of the course because 55 percent increased in self-acceptance in high school as a result of the course which provided the students an opportunity to benefit from the power of a group atmosphere that allowed them to find out they were not alone in their feelings. They discovered

classmates, they discovered modifying behaviors from observing others in role playing situations and they had an opportunity for releasing individual problems and suppressed emotions. What students learn from one another intermittently has more effect than what they learn from the teacher. The hidden curriculum encompassed how they conceived themselves; how they thought about other people and how to get along with others. They were also able to demarcate between distinct components of self-esteem, self-worth, self-doubt and self-concept of ability. It involved values, codes and styles of behavior. The participants learned to accept their feelings and the feelings of classmates and to perceive their personal situations more objectively.

This study set out to examine a school improvement program, not based upon sorting, but on the concept that most students can have school success through positive self-esteem and self-concept. The program and activities focused primarily on self-esteem, coping and employing both direct and indirect strategies, that is, informational, role-playing, and peer rapport. It appeared that the lessons which incorporated a variety of strategies seemed to have the greater impact on influencing the students.

What they were doing and what was important to them was not separate from what they were learning in the program.

The programs's goals and activities were linked with some of the students' intrinsic needs. The activities offered students a chance to express their ideas about their own attitudes, behavior and uniqueness. They learned how to discuss opinions, attitudes, likes and dislikes without the expectation that the other person "should" feel the same way.

The school improvement project at Backus Junior High School did much to bridge the gap between the school's expectation of the students socialization skills, school success and the openness of the staff to support a project for change.

The administrators initiated a forum that engaged the school staff in dialogue on how to make the school more effective. The staff decided on a school improvement program that involved staff development training which would enhance the school's characteristics and contribute to the success of the students. The course, "Dynamics of Relationships," was a new concept in the public schools and had been piloted on the high school level. The staff was willing to take the risk as leaders in the innovative project on the junior high school level and felt that the administrators and teachers could make the decision to incorporate the socialization course in the curriculum.

During the staff development sessions the group learned techniques on how to effectively facilitate communication

between teachers and students. The teachers acquired increased confidence in their own ability, team development skills, appreciation and use of style differences, and new knowledge and adeptness to the change process. The teachers' role changed from controller to facilitator and the teachers' expectations changed to include more decision making and responsible participation by students. They were encouraged to employ a variety of methods—some nontraditional—and use materials that encouraged the students to consider their potential which would lead to school success.

The entire staff recognized that in their efforts to turn the school around they had neglected their most valuable resource: each other. The administrator, teachers, and support staff began to revamp the organization scheduling to ensure time for regular exchange of ideas, insights and problem resolutions. The staff's recommendations at the conclusion of the first ninth grade group's experiences in "Dynamic of Relationships" were: 1) that the course be introduced to the students in the eighth grade and 2) more emphasis should be placed on conflict resolutions. The staff became a team and Backus Junior High School became a different place.

Participation in the program gave some satisfactory feelings about the mismatch of social skills and the school's expectation of those skills. The teachers tended

to encourage peer resolutions of student conflict and deviant social behavior. The participants received proximal encouragement from the teachers which resulted in renewed enthusiasms from the students and teachers.

The participants appeared to enjoy the interviews and the extra attention they received. The data revealed that the participants were involved in the program. The receipt of extra attention was a significant factor in shaping how the participants viewed the reasons for taking part in the interview process. Most of the students expressed positive feelings about the course, "Dynamics of Relationships." interview process enabled the students to narrate their own perception and description of their process of change. revealed three unanticipated emergent type information: (1) increase in study time and habits in order to "keep up" in their perspective high school curriculum; (2) identified socio-cultural influences regarding their decision to achieve in their perspective curriculum programs; and, (3) key events had varying degrees of influence as precipitators in their school adjustment and school life.

For many adolescents, feelings of depressed selfesteem, self-worth and self-concept is the nucleus of what
needs to be addressed. Students learned to anticipate or
even expect some putdowns from others, but look for strength
in their own behaviors and develop concepts of "I am lovable
and capable, I am a worthwhile person." With a positive

self-concept and feeling better about themselves, students developed better attitudes toward school, developed some problem-solving skills, improved grades, and accepted and learned appropriate social skills.

Role playing was particularly useful in achieving the educational and affective goals. The students were able to perceived another person's point of view by asking an individual to pretend to be that person. Also, the open communication and exploration of feelings benefitted the students to develop more positive attitudes about themselves. The role-playing and simulation of social situations that were specific to their concerns and development were used as a means of providing rehearsal of new social skills. It afforded them opportunities to improve self-awareness and to gain new skills and knowledge.

The adolescents learned more about their own values, beliefs, reactions, feelings and behaviors. In addition, they acquired increased understanding about the values, beliefs, reactions, feelings and behaviors of their peers. Through role-playing students explored reactions and outcomes of particular behaviors and consolidated behavior changes. The discussions increased their awareness and exploration of possible alternative methods of behavior and interactions. They practiced different reactions and behaviors which helped them to decide which of several alternative courses best suited the situation. The process

emphasized the connection between cause and effect which helps adolescents to understand the relationship between their own behavior and the possible consequences they may follow their decisions.

Implications

Byrne (1984) and Pottebaum, Keith and Ehly, (1986)
Self-concept in a school setting relates to academic
achievement. African-Americans tend to be highly conforming
under cultural circumstances (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).
District of Columbia Public School students associated
excelling academically with "acting White." Therefore,
African-American culture and fictive kinship as the D.C.
students visualize it does not highly value academic
achievement. It is difficult to educate African-American
students who associate academic effort with "acting White."

The attitudes and behavior Fordham and Ogbu found to be identified as "acting White" were getting good grades in school, being on time, studying and participating in the school's social activities. Attention was given during the Interview Process to achievers who might be negatively affected by peer ridicule (fear of "acting White"). The interview responses offered little or no evidence that the high achievers were any more affected by peer ridicule that their average counterparts. The study found ethnic pride to be significantly treasured among the students. In most

cases, the students did not demonstrate hesitancy to academic effort and success and did not reject behaviors which fall into the dominant society's cultural framework (academic achievement).

Findings from this study indicated that females in the study demonstrated an increase or gain on the knowledge questionnaire about the course, "Dynamics of Relationships." The American Association of University Women conducted a high school study, "Short Changing Girls, Short Changing America," which concluded both males and females suffer from low self-esteem levels during adolescence; however, as girls ascend from adolescence, their self-worth is noticeably The study showed that African-American girls performed better on the self-esteem index. The analysts credited this to a significant amount of family and community reinforcement (fictive kinship) which encouraged African-American girls' high levels of self-esteem. However, the study asserted the African-American girls sensed strong coercion from the school system and plummeted meaningfully in positive feelings about their teachers and school work by the conclusion of high school.

The literature indicated that the achieving AfricanAmerican male has more grappling and sense of skepticism a
bout his relationship with the dominant society versus his
fictive kinship. The females are less scrutinized and
sometimes distance themselves from strong fictive kinship

standards. The study findings inferred that males tended to score higher on materialism and cultural rigidity.

Persons such as Carl T. Rowan and other corporate and media emissaries in Washington, D.C., are achieving the stand to repulse the notion of "acting White" by acknowledging academic excellence through significant visible accolades (student participation in banquets, panels, lectures and the like) and financial incentives for post-secondary education.

The students development assisted them in accepting their own race and the races of others. The multicultural process was new to many of the adolescents, but the course "Dynamics of Relationships," assisted them in positive interaction with members of their own race and different ethnic groups. They were able to exhibit courteous behaviors by listening to the ideas and feelings of others, asking for help within the group when needed and disagreeing with others in the appropriate manner. The course experience strengthened their self-esteem, identity and mutual respect.

Conclusion

"Dynamics of Relationships" encouraged students to recognize their particular strengths and assets and to develop particular talents and abilities. The course on

The enthusiasm exhibited by the staff for the instructional training and ownership into the program - implementation of new skills and techniques in all subject areas - was inspiring. The administrators, teachers, and support staff wanted to accomplish the goal of educating and training their students for school success and have the school be recognized as "outstanding" for students successes and accomplishments. The philosophy of the school improvement project was that minority, African-American, students from urban schools can and do succeed in schools if the administrators, teachers, support staff, and students truly believe that all children have the capacity to improve and maintain feelings of self-worth; the students will aspire to achieve and succeed in their endeavors.

As the students learned to trust each other, they acted as support systems for each other, and an atmosphere of camaraderie and strength prevailed as they moved through high school.

As high school students, they had the skills to explore their verbal and behavioral interactions in new groups and to structure their decision-making process. They were able to employ skills and ways to avoid arguments and violence and to redirect or use positive outlets for their anger. As high school students they were able to recognize their own unique worth and importance.

The school improvement project did ultimately improve the social and educational atmosphere. The students reported enhanced self-esteem, improved communication and social skill. Succeeding in school was of great importance to the participants. Ironically, the author did not find out how well the course had been received until later when the students participated in the interviews. Older adolescents with well known antics for individuality and independence revealed to the author the three-stage sequence of understanding the course: awareness, comprehension/conceptualizing, and modification.

Researchers have found that ethnic pride and sensitivity to cross-ethnic peers being similar to one's group social expectations is associated with higher self-esteem and social competence (Rotheran, 1987). To enhance students' sense of self-worth and participation in our diverse society and to increase their ability to respect and accept differences can have a dramatic effect on the quality of their lives. Perhaps our most important contributions to the twenty-first century as educators will be to demonstrate that students from different races, cultures and ethnic backgrounds can live side by side, attend the same schools, retain their uniqueness and yet equate school success with their prospective life's work.

Recommendations

The author believes the following recommendations regarding this case study deserve a focus of study:

- 1. Examination of the types of staff development necessary to create school improvement and positive school climate which will promote higher self-concept in African-American students.
- 2. Additional information in a comparable study of gender which examines the cumulative effects of socialization differences between African-American male and female adolescents.
- 3. Examination of a school improvement program that involves staff development which stresses the development process of high expectations and successful practices that communicate school success when teachers and students are mismatched.

APPENDIX FIELD WORK INSTRUMENTS

	CODE	
TEACHER	CODE	

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Backus Junior High School is conducting a course, The Dynamics of Relationships, which is designed to increase levels of self-esteem in students involved in the class. Your participation is required as part of the evaluation of this program. Your will not be provided results or information specific to individual students, but the final results of the program will be given to the principal.

Please evaluate _____ in the following areas. Circle the appropriate answer below. If you do not feel that you can accurately or confidently answer a question please circle N/A.

1. Academic Motivation: NA

Excellent good average below average poor motivation motivation motivation motivation

2. I can communicate with this student: NA

Extremely well Quite well Moderately Well Not very well Not at all

- 3. Level of Perceived Self-Esteem: NA
 - very High High Average Low Very Low
- 4. Ability to get along with other students: NA

Excellent Good Average Low Very Low

5. Ability to get along with teachers: NA

Excellent Good Average Low Very Low

6. Ability to get along with other adults: (i.e., school nurse, janitor, teacher's assistant) NA

Excellent Good Average Low Very Low

7. This student's general disposition is: NA

Always Happy and Almost Always Happy Withdrawn easy going

Moody and Irritable

Difficult to get along with

- 8. This student's sense of responsibility regarding homework/schoolwork is: NA
 - Very Strong Strong About Average Poor Very Poor
- 9. This student's sense of responsibility toward friends is: NA
 - Very Strong Strong About Average Poor Very Poor
- 10. Attendance Record: NA
 - Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor
- 11. Participation Level: NA
 - Very High High Average Low Very Low

Interview Process

Call Record

<u>Name</u>	Tele	Date/Time	Code
IR = Interv WR = Wrong DISC = Discon	me iew Granted iew Refused Number	ime)	
	used - Comments		
Other Comment	:s:		

BERTIE BACKUS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 5171 SOUTH DAKOTA AVENUE, N.E. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017 (202) 576-6111

September 21, 1987

CONSENT FORM

I agree to allow my daughter/son to participate in a Research Study of Dynamics of Relationships.

I understand that my daughter/son's participation includes completing questionnaires measuring self concept and answering questions about self concept/esteem during interviews.

I understand that my participation includes completing a Parent's Survey, and granting permission for my child to participate in the Research Study.

The principal and counselor will be available if any concerns develop regarding this study. The major benefit from this Project is that it will add to knowledge on how to increase teenagers' feelings of self esteem/concept, and help to develop coping techniques.

I understand that I can discontinue my child's participation in this study at any time.

I understand the procedures described above and have had an opportunity to ask questions about any aspects of the Research Study that I did not understand.

Parent's Signature

Date

Principal's Signature

Date

ATTITUDE AND VALUE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire asks about your attitudes and values, how you feel about yourself and bout issues that impact on or effect you attitude about yourself.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT CLOSELY MATCHES HOW YOU FEEL
1. IF YOU STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT 2. IF YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT 3. IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL (NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE) WITH THE STATEMENT 4. IF YOU DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT 5. IF YOU STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
1. I am proud of myself
2. I am easy to like
3. I have a good friend with whom I can confide 1 2 3 4 5
4. Intimate relationships provide an important and fulfilling part of life 1 2 3 4 5
5. I am comfortable talking to the opposite sex 1 2 3 4 5
6. I am generally satisfied with myself 1 2 3 4 5
7. I am very clear about my values and attitudes regarding sexuality 1 2 3 4 5
8. I feel good about the way I look 1 2 3 4 5
9. I am often depressed
10. It is easy for me to make friends 1 2 3 4 5
11. I am comfortable talking to my father about sex
12. Girls should set the limit of how far to go in a relationship
13. I feel comfortable about my body 1 2 3 4 5
14. I am comfortable talking to my mother about sex
15. I am comfortable telling people how much I care about them
16. If I'm depressed, I can talk with my parents about it

|--|

PLEASE CIRCLE THE BEST ANSWER THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS

- What it's like in my home (loving, encouraging, caring, argumentative, fighting) effects my self-esteem.
 True
 False
 Uncertain
- How my parents feel and treat me affects my selfesteem.

True False Uncertain

- 3. Body language affects the way messages are heard.

 True False Uncertain
- 4. Listening and hearing are the same thing.

 True False Uncertain
- 5. When having an argument it is important to win.

 True False Uncertain
- 6. It is unhealthy for children to see their parents argue.

True False Uncertain

- 7. Good friends do not argue or disagree.

 True False Uncertain
- 8. Being a good friend means you always understand and agree.

 True False Uncertain
- 9. Physical violence is sometimes necessary in a relationship.

 True False Uncertain
- 10. Parents should have the same expectations for daughters and sons.

 True False Uncertain
- 11. Men who display emotions or show feelings are weak.

 True False Uncertain
- 12. Men's and women's roles have not changed much in the last ten years.

 True False Uncertain

PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE BACK OF THE SHEET

13.	True	False	Uncertain	
14.	Jealousy is a True	cover-up fo	r other feelings. Uncertain	
15.	First impress person. True	ions tell us False	what we need to kn Uncertain	ow about a
16.	It is safe to lonely. True	False	people who are alo	ne are
17.	A person canr	not be happy False	without a mate. Uncertain	
18.	There is no s	such thing a False	s the ideal mate. Uncertain	
19.	People should the relations True		partner what they Uncertain	expect from
20.	Sex is the b	est way to p False	rove that you love Uncertain	someone.
21.	Everyone sho	uld have chi False	ldren. Uncertain	
22.	Self esteem	is: (CHOOS)	ONLY ONE ANSWER)	
	Being lang lang The way	others fee	ers think about myself l and think about m	e
23.	If a friend depressed an ONLY ONE ANS	nd talks abo	n confidence that h ut suicide, you sho	e/she is very uld: (CHOOSE
	Tell a	heir secret nother frier lieve them n adult who		

24.	Love is: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)	
	physical attractionsexual desired	a
	companionship friendship	
	commitment	
25.	. People marry for: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)	
	lovecompanionshi	•
	companionshisexescape lonel	p inogg
	financial securityget away fro	
26.	Before marriage people should talk about: THAT APPLY)	(CHECK ALL
	religionchildren ro	oles
	commitmentmoney	
27.	. Sometimes marriages don't work because: ((APPLY)	CHECK ALL THAT
t	too much dependenceunrealistic	c expectations
1	_lack of consideration/respectfinancial	instability
u	unable to resolve differencesunsatisfyi	ng sex
p	poor communication	
0.0	man magnancy offorts: (CUECK ALL THAT A	DDT.V\
28.	Teen pregnancy effects: (CHECK ALL THAT A the unwed motherthe unwed mother	erui)
	the unwed fatherthe unwed mother the unwed father	es family
	the unborn child	5 Iumily
	the diboth child	
29.	Teen pregnancies can and often result in: THAT APPLY)	(CHECK ALL
h	_high death rates in babieslow birth wei _retarded babies	lght babies
	O. Angry feelings are: (CIRCLE THE BEST ANSW	VER)
30.	lways Sometimes Neither Good Sometimes	Always
		Good
	1. Arguments are for relationships. (
Alw	lways Sometimes Neither Good Sometimes	Always
	ad Bad or Bad Good	Good
	70	F ONLY ONE
32a	2a. When someone puts me down I feel: (CIRCL	E ONEI ONE
	ANSWER) helpless despair rejected angry	hurt
h	b. I usually handle it by: (CHECK ONLY ONE	ANSWER)
D		
	getting revenge talk to the	ne person
	getting revengetalk to theother(specify)	- 67
	other(specify)OTHE B	ACK

33.	When someone has a different point of view from me on something, I: (CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER)
	_reer angry and upset
	_try and see their side of it
	_ignore their opinion
	_other (specify)
	When I am angry with my parents, I: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
	talk to my parents avoid my parents
	talk to my parentsavoid my parentstalk to friends
	keep the anger inside
_	other (specify)
	When I am angry with a friend, I: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
	talk to my friendavoid my friend
	talk to my friendavoid my friendtalk to other friends
	_keep the anger inside
	other (specify)
36.	Kinds of things that make me angry are: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
	know-it-allsbackstabbers
	people who lie about others being used
	getting in trouble
	other (specify)
37.	I like my: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
	personalitylooks
	ability to care for othersintelligence
	confidence
	other (specify)
	- 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
38.	I don't like my: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
	bodyattitudeinability to get along with my parents
	inability to get along with my friends
	other (specify)
39.	I am trying to change things I don't like about myself by: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
	dieting, exercising
	being friendly and considerate
	make new friends
	other (specify)

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE CONTAINS 24 WORD PAIRS THAT MIGHT BE USED TO DESCRIBE HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE.

PLACE AN X ON EACH LINE TO DESCRIBE HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE.
Example short ::: tall
If you would like to be <u>extremely</u> short you would mark the line like this:
short :X:::: tall
If you would like to be <u>neither short or tall</u> you would mark the line like this:
short ::_x_:: tall
If you would like to be <u>extremely</u> tall you would mark the line like this:
short :::::_X: tall

DON'T SPEND A LOT OF TIME THINKING ABOUT YOU ANSWER MARK EVERY LINE AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE.

CODE	

DIRECTIONS feel you a	re	Place a	n <u>X</u> on	each	line	to desci	cibe <u>how you</u>
SMART	:	:	_:	_:_	:	:	DUMB
BAD	:_	:	:	:	:_	:	GOOD
вну	: _	:	:	:	:_	:	OUTGOING
SCARED	: _	:	:		:_	:	BRAVE
POPULAR	: _	:	:	:_	:_	:	UNPOPULAR
НАРРУ	: _		:	:_	: _	:	SAD
QUIET	: _	:_	:	: _	:_		LOUD
PLAIN	: _	:	:	:		:	ATTRACTIVE
WARM	:_	:_	:	:_	: _	:	COLD
HARD	: _	: _	<u>.</u>	:	:_	:	SOFT
ANGRY	:_	:_		: _	: _		CALM
CHEERY	•_	:-	:	: _	: _		GLOOMY
FAST	•.	:_	:	:_	:	:	SLOW
WEAK	•	:_	:_	:_			STRONG
LAZY	•	:-	:_	:-		:	INDUSTRIOUS
HATED	:	:-	:-	:-	: .	:	LIKED
SHARP	:	:_	:_	:	:	:	DULL
BORED	:	:-	:_	:	:	:	INTERESTED
FUNNY	:	:_	:_	:	:	:	SERIOUS
ACTIVE	:	:-	:_	:	:		PASSIVE
NEAT	:	·:_	:_	:	:		SLOPPY
WILD	:	:;	:_	:		::	TAME
FRIENDLY		::		:		::	UNFRIENDLY
OUTGOING	;	:;	:_			::	PRIVATE

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. What did you like best about this course?
2. What did you like least about this course?
3. If you could change this course in any way, how would you change it - What would you change?
4. In what way was the teacher most helpful?
5. In what way was the teacher least helpful?
6. Did you use the <u>Dynamics of Relationships</u> book in class? Yes No
7. Did you use the <u>Dynamics of Relationships</u> book at home? Yes No
8. How did you feel about the <u>Dynamics of Relationships</u> book?
PLEASE CIRCLE THE BEST ANSWER

I liked it I liked it It was okay I didn't I didn't a lot

PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM

changed your behavior or opinion regarding the areas below - please provide some input as to how it might or might not have influenced you.	
- talking with friends - yes no -	_
- talking with parents - yes no -	_
- using drugs or alcohol - yes no -	_
- dating relationships - yes no -	_
- making decisions - yes no -	_
- your feelings about yourself - yes no -	

"Dynamics of Relationships"

Written Consent Form

TO:	, Eleventh	Grade
Student		

FROM: Sara J. Bumbary, Doctoral Student, School of

Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst,

MA 01003

Re: Participation in a Research Study on the class'
"Dynamics of Relationships" Impact on the SelfConcept/Self-Esteem of African-American Adolescents.

You may know me as a Regional Counselor and former counselor at Backus Junior High School. I am now working in a different role. I am in the process of completing the requirements for a doctoral degree in Staff Development and Urban Education at the University of Massachusetts. Ny research for the last two years has examined student participation in the class, "Dynamics of Relationships", at Backus Junior High School. I participated in your classes as a facilitator and an observer. This research has led me to do a follow-up study. This phase of my research seeks to examine the effectiveness of "Dynamics of Relationships" on the participants after completing a year of high school.

I am hoping that you will agree to take part in the study. If you do, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire measuring self-concept and to answer questions about self-concept/self-esteem during an interview. The interview will focus on your high school experiences, your reflections of the class, "Dynamics of Relationships" and your suggestions for improving and strengthening the class. Some parts of the interview may be audiotaped. I will make written transcripts of the interviews.

My goal is to analyze the material gathered in the study for presentation in my doctoral dissertation. I may also use the information in journal articles and workshops for teachers. However, I will not under any circumstances use your name or the name of any other student in the study. I will refer to your school only as a public school in Washington, D.C.

I want to encourage you to participate in the study; however, I want you to understand that you are under no obligation to do so. If you agree now to participate in the study but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time.

In order to take part in the study, you must have written consent from your parent or legal guardian. A space is provided for his or her signature on the form below. If your parent or guardian has any questions or would like further information about the study, please ask him or her to call me at my home phone, 882-4316.

In signing the form below, you and your parent or guardian are agreeing to your taking part in the study under the conditions set forth above. Your are also assuring me that you will make no financial claim on me now or in the future for your participation.

Thank you for considering being a part of my research. I look forward to working with you on this project.

Sara J. Bumbary
DO NOT DETACH. PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN ONE COPY OF THIS FORM. KEEP THE OTHER FOR YOUR RECORDS.
Participants' Consent: I, statement above and agree to participate in the study under the conditions stated herein.
Signature of Participant Date
Parent or Guardian's Consent:
Signature of Parent or Guardian Date

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