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The Influence of Violence Upon Academic Achievement Among African American First Time College Students.

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THE INFLUENCE OF VIOLENCE UPON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN FIRST TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Administrative and Foundational Services

by

Diana F. Kelly
BS, Southern University, 1967
M.Ed., Louisiana State University, 1974
August 1997
DEDICATION

To my loving family—Albert, Sr., Albert, Jr., and Ricky:

This terminal degree is the culmination of a dream that started a long
time ago. My husband—Albert, Sr.—has made many sacrifices to insure that
I achieve my goals. He sacrificed his own education, worked several jobs
simultaneously, as well as weekends and holidays, etc. He made every
effort to insure that I had the things necessary for me to be successful in
school. Many days and evenings I "ran in" from school and had to write a
paper. Al, you always said, "We'll just eat out--don't worry about
cooking." You were always there with a shoulder to cry on when I wanted
to quit. Thanks, Honey!!

My sons—Al and Rick—are my inspiration. They both have earned
engineering degrees; I am well pleased with them. Hopefully they will be
inspired to pursue additional degrees. Go for it guys! Al and Rick have
blessed me tremendously by marrying two lovely girls—Nedra from New
Orleans and Andrea from New York. Above all, they have given me five
lovely ladies who are the "little lights of my life" (Jesus is the big light)—
Ashley, Amber, Alexis, Aria and Helaine.

This dissertation is dedicated to my "precious" family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Philippians 4:13 states, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." God's guidance and grace and my reliance on His wisdom and direction have brought me to this point. I have finally reached the pinnacle that I have so long desired.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between early exposure to violence—both personal and community—and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students. The study incorporated several variables that were thought to impinge upon the academic achievement process. Specifically, those variables were divided into several groups: background factors (socioeconomic status, high school academic record, personal and community violence exposure), student characteristics (locus of control, educational aspirations and expectations), and university characteristics (campus safety, academic and social integration). Student achievement was measured by students' expected grade point average, as indicated on a student questionnaire.

University administrators, professors, and researchers who study the nation's institutions of higher learning have long been interested in improving the academic performance of African American college students. Concomitantly, learning theories that proliferate in educational literature have gained wide recognition for their potential to explain the academic development of young adults in post secondary educational settings. Yet little research addressing the academic development of African American
College students has been conducted. This study departs from similar studies that have been conducted because while its focus is academic achievement, it specifically examines the influence of early exposure to violence upon that process.

Theoretically, early exposure to personal and community violence and the manner in which that exposure impacts upon the later academic achievement of college students is a complex one. Early violence exposure impacts upon the student's locus of control; the locus of control attribution then determines the student's predisposition and motivation toward seeking assistance and pursuing academic endeavors. Traditional variables that have been studied in the past were also found to have strong correlations with academic achievement. Case studies have been included as a means of strengthening the contention of a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Learning theories that proliferate in educational literature have gained wide recognition for their potential to explain the academic development of young adults in post-secondary educational settings (Miller, Winston, & Mendenhall, 1983; Rodgers, 1980). Yet relatively little research addressing the academic achievement of African American college students has been conducted. While many of the theories that have been proffered by psychologists and educational researchers may be comprehensive enough to encompass the academic development of African American students, fundamental differences exist in the manner in which black and white students learn (King & Taylor, 1989; Nettles et al., 1986).

Existing theories fail to address vital issues; specifically, black students on historically black college campuses are disadvantaged relative to students—both black and white—on white campuses in terms of family socioeconomic status (SES) (Thomas, 1984; Morris, 1979), high school academic records (Astin & Cross, 1981), caliber of university instructional faculty and facilities (Fleming, 1984; Haynes, 1981), and enrollment in
advanced study (Pearson & Pearson, 1985; Blackwell, 1982; Miller, 1981). These students also report more academic problems (Allen, 1985; Webster, Sedlacek, & Miyares, 1979; Willie & McCord, 1972) and display greater disparities between educational aspirations and eventual attainment (Boyd, 1981; Braddock & Dawkins, 1981) than do white students. For example, statistics calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau (1995) show that in 1992, approximately 886,000 African American, 18 to 24 year old students were enrolled in institutions of higher education. During that same year, 72,326 African American students earned bachelor's degrees—approximately 6.4% of the bachelor’s degrees conferred during that year.

The typical parents of black students on black campuses earn less money, have lower status jobs, and are more often separated or divorced (Thomas, 1984; Morris, 1979; Gurin & Epps, 1975). Consistent with observed economic discrepancies, typical black students on black campuses have lower standardized test scores and weaker high school backgrounds than their African American peers on white campuses (Astin, 1982).

The profound differences between African Americans and whites in educational experiences and outcomes cited here and elsewhere, have led some scholars to conclude that a crisis exists for black college students
(Billingsley, 1981; Ballard, 1973). It appears that there is an urgent need to identify those salient factors that influence the academic achievement process in black college students.

The educational dilemma that permeates black America is further exacerbated by the proliferation of violence within the black community. Violence is prevalent in African American communities across this country. Nationwide, homicides among blacks, especially of black men, are soaring. U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that black teens, particularly males, are 11 times more likely to be killed by a gun than white teens. If crime related trends continue, more than 50% of all black teenage males in America will have spent some time in prison by the year 2000 (Pratt, 1993). Even though gun and weapon related violence are massive problems in African American communities, they by no means represent the only source of crime and violence; illicit drug sales and use, as well as other crimes, have exacerbated the violence problems.

Educators and law enforcement officials are chagrined and appalled by the alarming increase in juvenile and teenage violence. Numerous public service announcements and television programs, as well as newspaper articles have documented atrocities perpetrated by school age children. It
appears as though teenage drug abuse has reached epidemic proportions, while handguns and other weapons have become commonplace.

Many inner-city teenage boys who can't recite their multiplication tables, can describe, with stunning accuracy, the deadly power of weapons like Tech 9s and 9mm pistols. Handguns, used in at least 80% of the killings perpetrated by teens in the black communities, are as easy to get as baseball trading cards (Pratt, 1993).

Educators, feeling overwhelmed and perplexed by the situation, are beginning to feel that the magnitude of the problem prevents its rectification (Peter King, unpublished writings, March 1996).

In 1993, a young African American reporter—Edward Pratt—poignantly depicted the depravity and pervasiveness of the problem in one small Southeastern city. Even though the city is not a sprawling metropolis, his investigation revealed that within a seven month span, five neighbors and friends were killed as a result of juvenile violence; those teens were high school students who probably would have enrolled in college.

The callousness of the violence in that small community became even more pronounced when a 17 year old high school student was shot to death on a local high school campus, and his alleged assailant, a fellow student, calmly stood by and watched as emergency medical technicians tried to save the dying student. The aftershock of that student's death sent tremors
across the city, especially in the black community where it appears that killing and violence have become a growth industry.

Despite the tragic circumstances surrounding these events, friends of the murdered students persevere and are now entering college. Those deaths and other traumatic events permeate the minds of the survivors as they begin their college matriculation. These students are typical of students across the country; they bring unique backgrounds and experiences to the university environment. Their unique strengths and individual abilities provide fertile ground for initiating and encouraging problem solving strategies.

Because many black college students hail from violent, crime ravished communities, it is imperative that those professors who encounter these students realize that they bring assets, as well as liabilities to the college classroom; they are products of prior institutional and environmental factors, and personal experiences. Many of these students are products of impoverished homes and undereducated parents. Others hail from single parent homes where the families are recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Unfortunately, educators are increasingly confronted with students who are entangled within the criminal justice
system or who have been previously incarcerated. For many students who have been previously involved with courts, judges, lawyers, and jail(s), college matriculation represents a partial solution to some of their problems.

Just as family circumstances, socioeconomic factors, and legal entanglements impact upon the academic achievement process in many black students, prior acts of violence and abuse traumatize others. Many students have been maltreated and/or sexually and emotionally abused. Psychologists have conducted studies (Viadero, 1995) and found that students, like war veterans, who are exposed to violence in their homes and communities, can suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Yet, in spite of all the turmoil and disarray in the students’ backgrounds, academic success is expected. Ironically, the sense of obligation shifts and the college professor becomes responsible for instilling a quality education that prepares students for meaningful careers. It now becomes the professor’s responsibility to reach and teach students in spite of prevailing problems.

Problem to be Addressed

The problem addressed in this study is the absence of information on the relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic
success of African American first time college students. Generally, I explored the impact of early exposure to violence upon the later academic success of African American first time college students. Specifically, I examined the impact of early exposure to violence relative to the impact of other personal, familial and institutional factors upon the academic achievement of African American first time college students.

The absence of data presents a problem, and if African American students are to be successful, we must learn more about the relationship between violence and the successful acquisition of knowledge. Perhaps additional information will shed light on the critical events that occur between the time of exposure to violence, and students' later enrollment in college.

Research Questions

Specifically, in this study on violence I shed light on the following issues:

1. Is there a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)?
2. Is there a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs)?

3. If the relationship does exist, does it differ on the two campuses?

4. Does the relationship make a difference above and beyond that of traditional predictors of academic success for African American students?

These questions were addressed via a sample of approximately 800 students from two Southeastern universities. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used to gather and analyze the data. This study may be classified as a prediction study in that my aim was to identify variables that forecast success. The correlational method was used to explore relationships between variables in this study. Correlational statistics were used because the correlational method of analyzing data is very useful in studying problems in education. The correlational research design was very amenable to this study because it permitted me to analyze relationships among a large number of variables in a single study, while concomitantly allowing me to analyze how several variables, either singly or in combination, might affect a particular pattern of behavior.
The qualitative research design features three purposefully selected samples. Qualitative sampling differs from quantitative sampling in that quantitative sampling depends on selecting a truly random and statistically representative sample that will permit generalization. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990). There are several different strategies for purposefully selecting information-rich cases. For the present study I used critical case sampling. Critical cases make a point dramatically. This sampling procedure allowed me to select subjects that contributed much to the development of knowledge. Using critical cases was important because resources were limited, and it was important to choose cases that had the greatest impact upon the questions being investigated in this study.

Significance of the Study

Researchers have studied the influence of SES, high school academic record, and student and university characteristics (faculty, facilities, and culture) upon the academic achievement of college students (Allen, 1986; Nettles et al., 1983; King & Taylor, 1989). Such research has provided
insight into the dynamics of the learning experiences of students from
different socioeconomic backgrounds. Unfortunately, very little, if any,
research has examined the impact of early exposure to violence upon the
achievement process. Educators and researchers need additional data to
increase our understanding of the influence that violence often exerts upon
academic achievement. In this study, I explored the relationship between
early exposure to violence and later academic achievement of African
American first time college students. The present study has significance for
theory development, as well as for practice.

The data that is supplied by this study provides groundwork for future
research and theory development. Research conducted on students in
elementary and secondary schools will benefit from the insight into violence
and its impact upon the achievement process that is supplied by this study.
Perhaps theories can be generated that will aid in the alleviation of problems
caused by early exposure to violence. Relatedly, this research is significant
to theory development because I explored the possibility that early exposure
to violence, over and beyond other contextual factors that relate to academic
achievement, adds to the problems associated with academic achievement in
college students. The present study also contributes to the existing literature, because very little research has been done in this area.

Data that is supplied by this study also has practical significance. When educators and policymakers possess sufficient knowledge, they are able to identify students who are subject to violence related problems. They can then devise counseling programs and intervention strategies to preclude or alleviate academic problems. Violence prevention initiatives can also be devised to assist impressionable students. Administrators and central office staff members will be able to tailor staff development training sessions to address academic problems related to violence. Teachers can be trained to recognize symptoms related to PTSD and other violence related academic problems. College admission offices will have data at their disposal that will enable them to devise methods for screening potential students. When students are identified as being susceptible, specific support structures can be offered early in the students' college careers.

The inclusion of the central variables—SES, high school academic record, and university characteristics—in the present study is not novel. However, what is unique is the consideration of the impact of early violence in the student's environment. In past studies, researchers have
used descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of these variables to advance knowledge relating to factors that influence academic achievement, but higher education research has seemingly ignored the impact of violence upon academic achievement; in my study, I seek to fill that void.

This study offers a significant departure from most of the current research because while I consider those variables that have been studied in the past, the investigation of the effects of violence upon academic achievement is its central focus. Further, along with archival data, I gathered data via a life events inventory. Students' personal and vicarious experiences with violence were explored via the life events inventory that was administered during the first semester. In addition to students' experiences with violence, I gathered data that relates to the central variables discussed above; correlation statistics were used to investigate the relationship between the variables identified in this study. Specifically, the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to show the relationship between violence and the other variables explored in this study. It is hoped that with the use of such data, a more complete picture of the effects of violence upon academic achievement in African American, particularly first generation, college students may be drawn.
Conclusion

The relationship between a student's academic achievement and the student's SES, high school academic record, and other noncognitive variables is one of the more consistent (and persistent) findings in the educational literature. In this study, I used SAS to explore the significance of violence as one of those central variables which may impinge upon this relationship.

In chapter two I present a review of the relevant literature and describe in detail the nature of the model that is used. In chapter three I outline the sample, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis strategies that I employed in the investigation.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

University administrators, professors, and researchers who study the nation's institutions of higher learning have long been interested in increasing the academic performance of African American college students. As a result, much past research has been directed toward trying to identify particular variables which have some bearing on bolstering low achievement and maintaining high achievement, usually defined as scores on a standardized instrument. Early exposure to violence, as a factor in academic achievement has been largely overlooked. In this study I seek to address that omission by exploring the effect of early exposure to violence upon the academic achievement of African American first time college students, particularly first generation college students.

I begin the literature review with research findings that relate to pertinent background variables—namely, SES, high school academic record, personal and community violence. That information is presented first because of the emphasis early studies placed on the role SES plays in students' later academic development. High school academic record follows SES because
Numerous studies have placed great emphasis on the role high school achievement plays in influencing later college achievement and persistence. Personal and community violence are included among those cogent background variables that impact upon students' cognitive abilities because of the precarious and insidious nature of violence, and because of the prevailing atmosphere of violence that inundates our society. Studies in the literature that investigated the relationship between twins and violence were not reported in conjunction with other violence studies; those studies are also reported separately here.

In addition to the above variables, studies have documented the importance of the student's personal characteristics to academic development; therefore those characteristics will be examined. The discussion of noncognitive factors (university characteristics) follows student characteristics; these are contextual variables that many researchers had not previously considered. In that recent studies deemed noncognitive variables to be important to academic achievement, they are included.

In conducting the literature review, I consulted numerous primary and secondary sources. Preliminary references provided up-to-date listings of articles and abstracts of articles from various journals. Dissertation
abstracts, as well as completed dissertations were used to gather data for this review of the literature. Several computer databases were used to access data; those databases include ERIC, LOLA, DAI, and Lexus/Nexus (specifically Medline).

Background Factors

Socioeconomic Status

During the 1960s researchers began studying schools from an "input and output" perspective. When researchers study such relationships, they refer to the phenomenon as the education production function. As defined by Geske and Teddlie (1990, p. 194), "an education production function expresses mathematically the relationship between school inputs (e.g., socioeconomic factors, student characteristics, and teaching personnel) and school outputs (e.g., gains in achievement results, growth in cognitive skills and affective behavior)." Philip Hart (1984) used a model that incorporated the inputs and outputs of the education production function when he studied the institutional effectiveness of black and white colleges.

The Equal Education Opportunity (EEO) study, better known as the Coleman Report is the most prominent of the early education production function studies. The study involved some 570,000 students and over
60,000 teachers and administrators. The results of the Coleman Report suggest that the bulk of school characteristics considered had only a minimal effect on student achievement beyond the impact of family background. The report concluded, "That schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context; and that this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life..." (Coleman et al., p. 325).

In accordance with the findings, by the time students from lower SES backgrounds enter college, the educational disparities between them and their higher SES counterparts have generally become even more pronounced.

Walter Allen (1986) conducted an education production function study that was designed to increase our understanding of the black college experience by comparing black student characteristics, experiences, and outcomes at historically black and predominantly white, state-supported universities. Allen undertook the study because educators and researchers were particularly lacking in their understanding of what happens to black
students at critical steps along the way between college entry, the selection of a major field, and graduation or dropping out (Allen, 1982; Astin, 1982).

In determining how black students on black campuses differ from their black peers on white campuses, Allen studied student qualities as they were related to student background characteristics (e.g., parents’ SES, high school academic record), university characteristics (e.g., involvement in campus life, college adjustment, race relations on campus) and the student’s particular personality orientation (e.g., self concept, occupational aspirations). Allen emphasized connections between individual and institutional characteristics in the explanation of student outcomes (outputs); his key research questions were derived from these factors.

The data for Allen’s study were from the National Study of Black College Students (NSBCS), housed at the University of Michigan. He collected several waves of data, including data on the academic achievement (outputs) and backgrounds (inputs) of black undergraduate students attending selected state-supported universities. All of the institutions participating in the 1981 and 1983 NSBCS were chosen as a result of regional diversity and accessibility. The population was comprised of African American, currently enrolled undergraduate students. Participants
were selected via a systematic random sample with interval selection; the sampling procedure involved first stratifying students by year of enrollment. In the 1981 phase of the study, researchers collected data from black undergraduates at six predominantly white, public universities (University of Michigan; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; University of California, Los Angeles; Arizona State University; Memphis State University; the State University of New York, Stony Brook). In the 1983 phase of the NSBCS, researchers collected data from black undergraduates at nine predominantly black, state-supported universities (North Carolina Central University, Durham; Southern University; Texas Southern University; Jackson State University; North Carolina A & T University; Central State University; Morgan State University; Wilberforce; and Florida A&M University). The data sets were merged to compare and contrast black students at predominantly white versus those at traditionally black universities. The 1981 response rate was 27%, while the 1983 rate was 35%; the combined data sets included 1583 students.

Allen's findings (1986) suggest that black students who attend predominantly black colleges are disadvantaged economically compared to white students who attend predominantly white colleges. The parents of
black students on black campuses earn less money, have lower educational achievement, hold lower status jobs, and are more often separated or divorced. Correlation analyses associated with academic performance contradicted findings of the Coleman Report that students from higher SES families have higher GPAs. Academic performance was measured by a self-reported college grade point average, scaled as an integer number with one decimal place ranging from zero to four (e.g., 2.6 on a four-point grading scale where D=1 and A=4). Findings suggest that neither family income nor mother’s educational attainment are significant predictors of student GPA (respective Pearson’s r correlation coefficients were .051 and .052). Allen’s investigation found other predictors (discussed later) to be more valid predictors of student GPA than SES. Investigations by other researchers have found father’s educational attainment to be the best predictor of student GPA (class discussions, Spring 1986).

A number of other researchers have also investigated factors influencing the academic achievement process in black college students. Their findings regarding the deleterious disparities between black and white students in SES are similar to Allen’s findings. Gail Thomas (1984) proffers that black students differ from their white peers in several respects. The most notable
differences are with respect to family background. Thomas further states that upper-middle class students average approximately four more years of schooling than students from lower status family backgrounds. Jencks et al. (1972) estimated that less than 10% of the overall effects of family status on students' educational attainment can be explained by the fact that economically upper and middle class students have superior IQ genotypes. Instead, a greater portion of the variance is attributed to the fact that middle and upper class parents are able to provide their offspring with the type of skills, values, and cultural and social experiences that schools value and reward (Jencks et al., 1972; Thomas, 1981).

Bayer (1972) posits that black first time college students have fewer family financial resources than whites. In 1972, more than one half of the black first time college students surveyed were from families with incomes of $7,999.00 or less, compared to over one half of the white beginning college students who were from families with incomes of $15,000.00 or greater. One outgrowth of these SES inequities is a more pronounced need among black students, than among white students, for college financial aid (Bayer, 1972; Boyd, 1974; Thomas, 1981; Ramist & Arbeiter, 1984; Morris, 1979). Their findings also depict parents' education and income as
important correlates of a student’s educational progress and attainment. To succeed, the student should receive both emotional and financial support from his/her parents (Thomas, 1981). In a survey conducted by Thomas, over 40% of the fathers of black students had less than a high school education, while only about 13% of the fathers of white students were not high school graduates. Thomas also found similar patterns with respect to the educational attainment levels of mothers of black college students. Such statistics strengthen the connection between SES and academic achievement. In the section of the literature review relating to violence, the link between violence and SES will be made.

High School Academic Record

Researchers have consistently documented disparities in educational backgrounds between blacks and whites. One source states:

Blacks students tend to have lower grade point averages in school than do white students, and they are suspended more often and for longer spells than whites. Fewer black students remain in secondary schools beyond the compulsory attendance age, fewer graduate from high school, and fewer attend college and graduate school. A recent examination of the nation’s 17-year-olds by the National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that 92 percent of white students, but only 58 percent of black students were functionally literate (Inequalities, p. ix, 1977).
Researchers agree that black students on historically black campuses are disadvantaged relative to students (both black and white) on white campuses in terms of their high school academic records (Allen, 1986; Astin & Cross, 1981; Thomas, 1981). These students typically have lower scores on college entrance examinations (Ramist & Arbeiter, 1984) and the increased probability that they enter college after having received weaker high school preparation (Ramist & Arbeiter, 1984; Thomas, 1984; Morris, 1979).

While Allen (1986) found student background factors to be strongly related to student college grades, he suggests that high school grade point average (HSGPA) is the strongest predictor of college grades (partial regression coefficient (B) = .246, p < .01). Allen suggests that students whose grades were high in high school are significantly more likely to have high college grade point averages and report greater satisfaction with and involvement in college life.

Researchers have consistently documented the disparities between the standardized test scores of black and white students. Black students typically score below white students on standardized tests (Jencks et al., 1972). The low test performance of blacks creates an access barrier to
undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. This in turn hinders blacks from becoming full members in professions (e.g., medicine and law) that require the passing of standardized tests as a part of their licensing procedure (Hall, 1970; Odegaard, 1977; Evans, 1976).

Jencks (1972) noted that about a quarter of the correlation between test scores and educational access and attainment is explained by the fact that students with high test scores generally come from economically successful families. The College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB, 1974) similarly reported that the average family income for students who score between 750 and 800 points on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was $24,124.00 while students in the lowest SAT score range (200-249) had a mean family income of $8,639.00. To some extent, the low performance of blacks on standardized achievement tests has been compensated for by special admissions programs which have permitted blacks and disadvantaged students higher education access despite their lower test performance (Thomas, 1981). Nevertheless, the recent affirmative action backlash and legal actions aimed at destroying all vestiges of programs that compensate for academic disparities loom as formidable threats to special admission programs. The findings documented above allude to the connection
between SES and high school academic preparation. Students who are economically disadvantaged tend to be more susceptible to violence, as well (Pratt, 1993).

Wilson (1978) found in a study of two college settings that SAT scores in one university had a significantly lower correlation with performance for black students than for whites in the first year, and the differences were even greater for the latter years. The results were the reverse on a second campus measured at the same time. Wilson found similar differential effects for blacks and whites when combining standardized test scores with high school grades to predict first time college students’ grade point averages (GPAs) and cumulative college grade point averages (CCGPAs). He found that traditional admissions criteria of HSGPA and SAT scores were among the strongest predictors of both black and white students’ college performances. Wilson’s findings are consistent with Allen’s findings.

Evidence collected over a broad spectrum of colleges and universities supports the conclusion that adding applicants’ SAT scores to their HSGPAs improves predictions for first year college grades (Willingham et al., 1990). Estimates of the improvement in prediction from adding the
SAT to the HSGPA depend on the amount of range restriction used, colleges' selectivity, student populations, and curricula. Even after corrections for factors that typically lower prediction, the SAT and high school record together rarely increase the multiple correlation with first year students' grades by more than .10 over the high school record alone (Willingham et al., 1990).

Still other investigators consider additional variables in their quest to identify those salient factors that determine academic success. At the University of Pennsylvania, the high school class ranks (CLRs), SAT scores, and average achievement (ACH) test scores of 3,816 students were used to predict their cumulative GPAs. Linear regression analyses revealed that, whereas CLR and ACH contributed to the overall prediction, SAT scores did not. CLR was the only variable predictive of attrition and the number of uncompleted courses (Baron & Norman, 1992). Studies conducted by Blai, (1971), Ainsworth & Maynard, (1976), Duncan & Stoner, (1977), Pascarella & Terenzini, (1978) have provided consistent documentation that residential peer influence as well as on-campus academic environments have a significant effect on students' college achievement for both high aptitude and low aptitude college students.
Pascarella and Terenzini (1978) also found that the actual frequency and quality of student contact with faculty contributed to higher first year GPA as well as to students' personal and intellectual development. Similar results were obtained by Bean and Kuh (1984); however results of the Nettles et al. (1986) study contradicted those findings. Astin's study (1964) indicates that students entering college with well developed study habits earn higher grades and have higher rates of persistence in college. Astin's findings suggest that efforts by universities to assure that their students possess or learn good study habits will contribute to improved college performance.

During the Summer and Fall of 1988 at the University of Louisville, 1,854 first time college students completed at least one locally developed, basic skills placement test. The placement test scores were compared to the students' American College Test (ACT) scores as a measure of academic preparation. Although the placement test scores provided better estimates than did ACT scores, neither was strongly predictive of academic performance. Moreover, the test scores underestimated the academic performance of black students (Hudson, 1993).
Another study involving a review of 39 studies, 34 predicting college GPA and five predicting a specific course grade, revealed that the variables used, including high school CLR and entrance test scores, were poor predictors of college success. Only 25% to 30% of the explained variance in college performance could be attributed to the study’s prediction models (Mouw & Khanna, 1993).

A study conducted at a midwestern university to evaluate admission decisions demonstrated that, whereas 30% of the students who were predicted to graduate left school on probation, 50% of those who were predicted to fail succeeded. The investigators concluded that on the basis of the available information, any search for stronger predictor variables would likely be a waste of time. The recommendation was that admission policies recognize that academic success requires certain basic academic skills, that students can overcome a low objective skill level if they are willing to succeed, and that the will to succeed may occur dynamically (Mouw & Khanna, 1993).

Analyses of these studies appear to reveal conflicting data. Nevertheless, the data clearly indicate that standardized test performance constitutes important contingencies for black and white students in the college entry
process. It is important to note as well that there is a great deal of overlap in the kinds of experiences that impact upon the academic performance of black college students.

**Violence**

The study of the impact of violence upon achievement among African American college students is enhanced by placing violence within its proper theoretical framework. For that reason, violence has been divided into two categories—personal and community, and is being considered along with other pertinent background factors (SES and high school academic background). In that the medical literature is replete with studies documenting twins and violence, that data is also included in this literature review. While gathering research data for this literature review, I discovered that a growing body of research literature by physicians is beginning to document the patterns of exposure of children to violence and its pejorative psychological and academic consequences.

**Personal Violence.** The home is a sacred place. Children should feel absolutely safe, protected, and sheltered within their homes. Unfortunately for some children, they do not feel safe at home. Many children suffer physical, sexual and emotional abuse in their homes. Child abuse is a
serious problem with far-reaching consequences. Among the problems commonly associated with childhood physical and sexual abuse are the cardinal features of PTSD: intrusive, distressing recollections and dreams; avoidant behaviors and a numbing of general responsiveness; and symptoms of increased arousal (Armsworth & Holaday, 1993; Briere, 1992; Herman, 1992; Terr, 1990, 1991; Haviland, Sonne, & Woods, 1995; Viadero, 1995).

Many recent studies of psychic trauma in children have coalesced around those children who were victims of physical and sexual abuse or kidnapping. Terr (1990) suggested that such victims of violence can suffer long-lasting ill effects. Children who are victims of and witnesses to many acts of violence were found to demonstrate symptomatology fulfilling the four major DSM-III criteria for PTSD:

1. The perceived presence of a distressing, traumatic event; children will often describe it as so upsetting as never to be forgotten.
2. The reexperiencing of the occurrence; in young children this frequently takes the form of traumatic play and dreams, as well as intrusive images or sounds.
3. Psychic numbing or affective constriction; children may exhibit subdued or mute behavior, or commonly adopt an unemotional or third-person, nearly journalistic attitude toward the event.
4. Incident-specific phenomena that were previously not present; children are as likely as adults to suffer from startle reactions and avoidant behavior linked to trauma-specific reminders, and they may be especially susceptible to sleep disturbances. In addition, developmental factors affect the clinical picture and course of
recovery, influencing the child’s capacity to cope with the distress and to contend with traumatic anxiety (Eth and Pynoos, 1984).

PTSD is becoming a common focal point in empirical studies of child physical and sexual abuse. Results of those studies indicate that PTSD prevalence estimates vary widely, and it is not yet known what aspects of an abusive experience (e.g., victim characteristics, context, severity, chronicity) contribute to PTSD symptom severity (Haviland, Sonne, & Woods, 1995; Adam et al., 1992; Hillary & Schare, 1993). The findings of Haviland et al. (1995) on PTSD and disturbances in physically and sexually abused adolescents suggests that abused children experience generally high levels of psychological distress. As a group, they are anxious and depressed, they experience the symptoms of classic PTSD—they are disconnected from others, and they have difficulty assimilating reality. A very young child who is abused by a primary caregiver may seek safety and solace by withdrawing from others (i.e., becoming alienated). Anxiety and PTSD symptoms may then diminish, for the child no longer experiences the threat of interpersonal relationships (Haviland et al., 1995).

The symptoms of PTSD, when manifested in children, often interfere with social, physical, and intellectual adjustment (Haviland et al., 1995). PTSD symptoms may be expected to affect the cognitive, affective,
behavioral, and physical functioning of the traumatized child (Armsworth & Holaday, 1993). To effectively address the long-term problems associated with child maltreatment, clinicians ought to evaluate interpersonal and reality testing deficits, as well as PTSD symptom severity.

Shapiro (1992) investigated the cognitive functioning and social competence of sexually abused girls. His subjects were 53 black girls ranging from 5 to 16 years old. The purpose of the study was to explain the various degrees of maladjustment, and to assess behavior problems, social competence and cognitive functioning in sexually abused girls. Shapiro found that internalizing dysfunction was positively related to three cognition related variables: intellectual functioning, academic achievement and age. Age was found to be an important factor because anxiety over the abuse positively correlated with age. This finding lends credence to my contention that there is a relationship between early exposure to violence and later academic development.

In a recent study (McLeer et al., 1994) involving 26 sexually abused children and 23 non-sexually abused children, researchers found that in both groups attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) was frequently diagnosed. Concomitantly, the prevalence of PTSD among sexually abused
children was significantly greater. Such a diagnosis lends credence to the assertion of some educators and researchers (Terr, 1991) that PTSD symptoms are in many cases misdiagnosed, and treated as ADHD. According to Terr, traumatic stress conditions can be divided into two categories. Type I trauma produces the usual PTSD symptom picture and typically occurs after a child experiences a one time, sudden traumatic event. Type II trauma, however, is the result of repeated exposure to long standing trauma and may more likely result in reliance on coping mechanisms such as denial and dissociation rather than the symptom cluster seen in PTSD. Terr suggests that conduct disorders and depression are often diagnosed as ADHD.

Increasingly researchers are linking the lack of academic progress with past abuse. A study by Fine (1988) found that teenage mothers had generally been subjected to family violence and had lower educational achievements. Many of those teenage mothers are attending college now. When Elmer (1977) studied two groups of 17 year olds (abused and nonabused), the findings surprised him. His hypothesis was that the abused group would fall below the unabused group in many areas, including intellectual functioning. The results indicated more severe intellectual
impairment than had been anticipated; a very large number were achieving poorly in school. Results obtained in the above studies appear to agree with the present study’s contention that there is a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students.

Studies that were conducted to determine the coping mechanisms employed by children appear to provide conflicting results. Terry (1994) reports that doctors and therapists generally confront a difficult task when dealing with long term victims of sexual abuse that has occurred in the home. Terry found that coping mechanisms of the victims are determined by situational factors. Hence, a very young person is likely to feel extremely helpless when the perpetrator is a trusted adult and the abuse happens within the confines of the child’s home. When the child perceives low controllability, his/her emotional distress is increased. The child’s locus of control appears to play an extremely important emotional role. Terry’s findings appear to disagree with the results of a 1984 study.

Susan Folkman (1984) proffers that in earlier research it was assumed that believing that one has control over aversive outcomes is stress-reducing and that believing that one has little or no control over such situations is
stress-inducing. Nevertheless, as experiments were replicated and extended, it appeared obvious that the relationships between control and stress were not as simple as was expected. Believing that an event is controllable does not always lead to a reduction in stress, and believing that an event is uncontrollable does not always lead to an increase in stress (Folkman, 1984). These findings discount the importance of the child's locus of control. Folkman’s study was conducted 10 years prior to Terry’s study. I found it quite interesting that earlier studies had results similar to Terry’s findings. In 1984 Folkman’s results disagreed with those of earlier studies; in 1994, Terry’s results agreed with earlier findings, and in effect disagreed with Folkman’s findings.

Children are sometimes unintentional victims of domestic violence. Paisner (1991) states that every 18 seconds in the U.S., an incident of domestic violence occurs. Approximately 95% of domestic violence is committed by men against women. But domestic violence is not simply a problem between men and women. Children witness violence and are deeply affected by it. Because the environment is unstable and abnormal, the child’s ability to learn and academically succeed in the elementary school system is pejoratively affected.
Maslow's Hierarchial Need Theory posits that people must first have basic needs met, such as security and safety, before other growth needs can be satisfied. The theory is arranged in hierarchical levels and is comprised of five basic categories. At the bottom level of the hierarchy are physiological needs, which consist of such fundamental biological functions as hunger and thirst. Safety and security needs, the second level, derive from the desire for a peaceful, smoothly running, stable environment. The higher levels of the hierarchy relate to social activities, esteem and self-actualization. Elementary school students who live in violent homes have no safety and security, thus it appears doubtful that they would be prepared to reach to the higher learning levels of Maslow's hierarchy.

Researchers offer several reasons as to why the academic achievement of children from homes where domestic abuse occurs may be affected by poor school attendance. Elkind (1984) suggests that family problems are the main reason these children do not attend school. Lack of interest or inability to perform the assigned tasks are also submitted as reasons why students fail to attend school. Jaffe et al. (1990) contend that many children from violent homes are unable to concentrate in school. Children often feel responsible for the abuse and react in one of two ways (Afolayan, 1993):
(1) they may fake illness in order to stay home, or (2) they may actually become sick from worrying about the problem. Regrettably, in many instances the mother also feels that the child is responsible. Because the mother feels powerless and cannot confront the perpetrator, she blames the child for the existence of the violence, and uses the powerless child to externalize her anger. The situation is increasingly exacerbated when an infant is perceived to be the problem because mother-infant bonding is affected. Not only are these children often abused by a parent, but abusive and violent homes often critically injure and result in the deaths of children (Afolayan, 1993).

Unfortunately, these children may miss valuable school time. Children growing up in violent homes often feel that they have to stay home to “maintain peace.” Precious learning time is lost because they stay home to keep their parents from fighting. In many instances these children may be forced to stay home to care for younger siblings because mom cannot get out of bed or is hospitalized. Frequently the situation in the home is so desperate that these children strike out at others; they begin fighting in school and/or turn to a life of crime. Children may also miss days from school because they have been suspended or incarcerated (Afolayan, 1993).
Children from violent homes exhibit more behavior problems than children from nonviolent homes (Carlson, 1984). Violent tendencies are sometimes learned in the home, and as a result children from violent homes behave violently and aggressively. Such children model the conflict resolving skills they have learned from dysfunctional family members and become violent, aggressive adults (Afolayan, 1993). Children from violent homes often become incapable of solving problems via communication; instead they use violence as an acceptable outlet for their emotions, become easily frustrated, and often behave aggressively. Incarceration rates appear to be substantially higher for children from abusive homes; these children are frequently incarcerated as a result of drug abuse. For children from violent homes, drugs and alcohol are a means of escape (DiAnna, 1987). Drug or alcohol use allows the children to become emotionally dependent upon something besides oneself (Afolayan, 1993).

It has been well documented that abuse is associated with altered cognitive development in children. Bowlby (1976) demonstrated that abused children had significant intellectual and emotional delays, and Cohn (1979) showed that abused children had psychomotor and language deficiencies. Green (1983) observed that physically abused and neglected
children had neuropsychological deficits when matched with a control sample. Using a longitudinal study, Cicchetti and Rizley (1981) suggested that abused children suffer from psychomotor deficits and were socially maladjusted. When 64 maltreated children (physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect) and 48 nonmaltreated children from an outpatient clinic were assessed, achievement test results indicated that the maltreated children had lower academic achievement and IQ scores than a control group. In 1991, Wildin et al. found that 39% of abused preschool children had developmental delays and 46% of abused school age children had academic difficulties. These studies appear to lend credence to the existence of a relationship between academic achievement and violence being proffered in the present study.

Researchers do not understand the mechanisms underlying poor cognitive functioning in abused children. Studies conducted to identify those salient factors related to poor cognitive functioning yielded contradictory results. Early studies led to the hypothesis that mental retardation observed in physically abused children is a direct consequence of brain trauma from blows to the head and/or vigorous shaking. That hypothesis was rejected when Martin et al. (1974) showed that many
children who had suffered brain lesions as a result of physical abuse demonstrated no learning or neurological impairment, whereas other abused children with no apparent nervous system pathology showed learning difficulties. When the cognitive impairment theory was dismissed investigators began to search for other factors in the abusive environment (e.g., poverty, poor or chaotic parenting, understimulation and unstable learning environment) that might be responsible for the cognitive impairment.

Oates and Peacock (1984) found that physically abused children scored lower on the WISC-R and Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence when compared with nonabused peers matched for sex, ethnic group, and SES of parents. When sexually abused girls were matched for age, race, family income, and family constellation with a control group, the sexually abused girls were shown to have lower cognitive abilities and school achievement (Einbender & Friedrick, 1989).

Though the cognitive studies supply strong evidence to support their findings, other contextual factors probably exacerbated the vulnerability of the abused children (Carrey et al., 1995). Numerous investigators have examined the role of the visceroautonomic component (heart rate and skin
conductance changes) in preparing one to respond to or ignore environmental stimuli (Graham & Clifton, 1966; Sokolov, 1960; Lacey et al., 1962). Lacey et al. (1962) studied the physiological responses of college students when internal and external focusing was required. They found that cardiac deceleration was associated with “taking in” or focusing on information coming from the environment. Cardiac acceleration was associated with tasks requiring internal focusing (e.g., a math test). Lacey demonstrated the importance of the autonomic nervous system in processing information. Because many abused students suffer from problems that inhibit normal responses to stimuli (e.g., PTSD), their physiological reactivity necessary for academic success may be lost or diminished. The above results lend credence to my contention that violence impacts upon the academic achievement process, above and beyond traditional predictors of academic success in African American college students.

Carrey et al. (1995) compared the physiological responses of abused children to different stimuli with responses of children in a reference group to determine whether there were differences in intellectual and physiological functioning. They found that the abused children were significantly more introverted and displayed lower Verbal and Full Scale IQs than did the
reference group. Carrey et al. (1995) also observed that in their group of abused children, it appeared that the abuse had long-term cognitive and physiological effects. When they considered the collective data, the findings support the hypothesis that early abusive environments lead to an overall inhibition in both physiological and verbally mediated cognitive responding to the environment (Carrey et al., 1995).

Other researchers agreed with Carrey’s findings that verbal IQ scores were negatively correlated with the severity of the abuse that had been experienced (Friedrich et al., 1983; Salzinger et al., 1984; Tarter et al., 1984). Lewis (1992) posits that maltreated children display poorer expressive language skills because abused infants and toddlers are less able than nonabused children to express their feelings in words. Perhaps abusive environments affect children’s verbal abilities by raising anxiety levels, thereby disrupting attention, short-term memory, and language mediated concept formation (e.g., abstract reasoning skills such as ability to identify analogies and similarities). The neurological mechanisms mediating verbal processes are known to develop rapidly before puberty. Consequently, if the child is abused during this time period, there may be profound and permanent effects on verbal processes (Lenneberg, 1967). Research
findings appear to be progressively documenting the correlation between violence and academic achievement, above and beyond traditional predictors of academic success.

Community Violence. There are many indications that we live in an increasingly violent society, and in this climate of violence, our youth are particularly affected. Deaths by firearms increased significantly for young people between 15 and 24 years old in the late 1980s, while the firearm homicide rate for 15 to 19 year old African American males doubled between 1984 and 1988 (Fingerhut et al., 1991). In a recent survey of high school students in New York City, 36% reported being threatened with physical harm during the preceding school year (Centers for Disease Control, 1993). Another study revealed that almost half of the urban 11th grade boys reported easy access to guns (Callahan & Rivara, 1992) and more than 30% of high school boys in a national survey had carried a weapon in the previous month (Centers for Disease Control, 1991a). Many leaders in public and mental health are so alarmed by the present trend toward violence that they have voiced the need for a public health approach to community violence (Koop & Lundberg, 1992). The goal of this
approach is the prevention of physical and psychological injury and illness due to violence (Rosenberg et al., 1992).

A recent study by Richters and Martinez (1993) examined exposure to violence for 165 children aged 6 to 10 years old from a low income, moderately violent area of Washington, D.C. Of the first and second grade students, 19% had been victimized by some form of violence and 61% had witnessed violence to someone else; for the fifth and sixth grade students, rates of victimization and exposure were even higher (32% and 72% respectively). Both self reported victimization and exposure to violence in the community were related to distress symptoms (Richters & Martinez, 1993). Using a similar study design, Osofsky et al. (1993) reported similar results. High rates of violence exposure were found in 53 fifth grade children from a housing project in the New Orleans area. Mothers of 26% of the children reported that their children had seen shootings, 49% had seen woundings, and more than 70% had seen weapons used. Witnessing community violence was significantly associated with reports of stress symptoms (Osofsky et al., 1993).

Other researchers investigating community violence exposure among inner city youths also demonstrate links between violence exposure and
symptoms of depression (Freeman et al., 1993) and symptoms of PTSD (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993). While conducting a study of depressive symptomatology in 223 children aged 6 to 12 years, Freeman found that 57 (25%) of the subjects spontaneously reported exposure to at least one traumatic event occurring to themselves or to a relative or friend. Another study on low SES, inner city African American youth found that in a sample of 221 nonrandomly selected subjects, close to 85% had witnessed a murder. Researchers reported that having been directly victimized and having witnessed violence were strong predictors of PTSD symptomatology in children (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993).

Horowitz et al. (1995) conducted a study of PTSD symptoms in urban adolescent girls exposed to severe community trauma. The researchers indicated that “while urban residence is a risk factor for exposure to community violence in both adolescent girls and boys, adolescent girls more often report being victims of sexual assault and knowing others who have been physically or sexually assaulted (Horowitz et al., 1995; Gladstein et al., 1992; Bell et al., 1988). Sexual victimization can lead to rates of PTSD of up to 80% in populations who have been raped. Researchers report that after exposure to traumatic events, females may be at risk of developing
PTSD symptomatology by as much as five times more than males (Horowitz et al., 1995; Breslau et al., 1991). Fullilove et al. (1993) found a PTSD rate of 59% in a population of women drug users.

Horowitz (1995) questioned whether the PTSD found in adolescent girls is distinct from the PTSD found in other trauma survivors. The research suggested that PTSD symptoms may vary according to the specific nature of traumatic stressors. When comparing World War II (WWII) combat veterans with Vietnam combat veterans, Horowitz noted that the WWII soldiers' prolonged stays on the front line resulted in reexperiencing symptoms and overwhelming avoidant defenses, while the Vietnam soldiers' repeated rotations to positions of relative safety facilitated the maintenance of avoidance symptoms (reexperiencing symptoms appeared later after their return to the U.S., when avoidant defenses relaxed).

Interestingly, several researchers (Pelcovitz, et al., 1994) proffered that physically abused children who suffer repeated exposure to long standing trauma because they remain in the abusive environment may experience a "sleeper-effect," in that PTSD may not manifest itself until the adolescent leaves home. This observation may have far reaching consequences for first time college students.
The term "compounded community trauma" was used by Horowitz to denote the pattern of prolonged and repeated exposure to multiple types of community and domestic violent events, via multiple modalities of contact, in persons residing in communities where violence is endogenous—situations akin to war zones (Horowitz et al., 1995). Researchers also found that "hearing about" violent events (frequently) could be as devastating as "witnessing" a violent event, and that a history of sexual abuse has been found to lead to high rates of PTSD in the general population (Horowitz et al., 1995; Breslau et al., 1991).

Findings documented here and elsewhere paint a vivid picture of violence as a common fact of growing up in the inner city. Such findings also speak to the demand that is placed upon urban youth to accommodate in their cognitive and psychological development to conditions of chronic threat and lack of safety. When we consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it appears that these children may be stymied at a lower level of the hierarchy. The findings presented here appear to support my contention that there is a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American college students—above and beyond other traditional predictors of academic success.
When we consider another dimension, we become cognizant that as a result of the breakdown in the physical and emotional facets of the family, children are increasingly turning to street gangs. The street gangs then set the values and rules that the children must live by. Once children join street gangs, they may not attend school regularly, thus pejoratively influencing their academic achievement. If such students are able to relinquish their gang membership and eventually enroll in college, serious academic and other deficiencies may present learning problems.

As our nation grapples with the ramifications and repercussions of gang violence, it is time we begin to explore the impact that such violence has upon the academic achievement process. It appears as though gang violence is disproportionately prevalent in low income and urban communities. Tragically, students in these communities are already beset by a preponderance of problems, and gang violence further exacerbates their situation.

A group of Southern California medical researchers conducted four studies involving more than 1,600 children in grades six through 12; these children lived in and around Los Angeles. The researchers found that like war veterans, children who are exposed to violence in their communities can
suffer from PTSD (Viadero, 1995). The studies involved public school students, students attending continuation schools for returning dropouts, and incarcerated teenagers. The students reported having been beaten or mugged, physically assaulted, shot, or being at home while their houses were being robbed. Some of the older students reported having to regularly dodge bullets and having personal knowledge of someone who had been killed by an act of violence. The researchers reported that the students had been staggeringly exposed to violence. The percentages of students they found who had experienced violence were similar to those found in other studies of young people in large urban areas such as Chicago; Washington, DC; and Boston (Viadero, 1995).

Medical researchers found that as a result of having directly or indirectly experienced violence, many of the students met the full diagnostic criteria for PTSD, even though they had never been formally diagnosed. The students suffered from intrusive memories of the violent events they had witnessed. They went to extremes to avoid reminders of the episode, and when they had inadvertently come upon such reminders, their hearts beat faster, or they were exaggeratedly startled, among other symptoms. Many of the students were gang members and/or lived in violent neighborhoods.
The study relied to some degree on self reporting by the gang members and other participants, and as such, some of the reports may have been embellished. Viadero's report of the medical findings of PTSD symptomatology in students lends credence to my contention that the academic achievement of African American college students—who are generally exaggeratedly exposed to violence—is pejoratively impacted.

Brandon S. Centerwall conducted a study in which he sought to determine the effects of SES and crowded housing patterns on homicide rates in Atlanta (1984); he later replicated the study in New Orleans (1995). Both Atlanta and New Orleans are plagued by significant amounts of gang activity. Though the study did not specifically address academic achievement, the link between SES and the academic achievement process has been documented here and elsewhere and, as such, the results of the study are relevant. Centerwall, a black physician, studied 222 intraracial homicides in Atlanta, Georgia (1984) and 694 homicides in New Orleans (1995). "Intraracial homicide" is defined as a criminal homicide committed by a relative of the victim or by an acquaintance of the same race as the victim.
The SES of the victim’s census tract of residence was measured in terms of rates of household crowding, expressed as the percentage of households within the census tract with more than one resident per room. For tracts of mixed racial composition, rates of household crowding were determined separately for blacks and whites. The populations of the tracts were aggregated into seven strata by rate of household crowding. Each homicide was assigned to the victim’s census tract of residence. Homicide rates were calculated as the average annual number of homicide victims per 10,000 race-specific population, aged 15 years and above.

Centerwall concluded that the effects of inequality cannot be ignored. There appears to be a direct link between inequality and violence. As a result of the “cultural difference” models currently being proffered, there is a proliferation of interventions and preventive efforts aimed at the change of social values among members of high risk populations. Nevertheless, few recently proposed interventions have directly targeted the reduction of SES deprivation and inequality (Centerwall, 1995).

First in Atlanta, and then in New Orleans, Centerwall found sixfold differences between blacks and whites in rates of intraracial domestic homicide. Findings reveal that differences in SES between the respective
black and white populations were entirely responsible for the variance (Centerwall, 1995). This study has been included as a means of establishing and/or strengthening the link between violence and SES, and ultimately the influence of those variables upon the academic achievement process.

In a 1994 study, Burton et al. examined acute and stressful events experienced by male juvenile offenders and found that 24% of the subjects met full Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) criteria for PTSD. They found that both, exposure to gang (and other) violence, and family dysfunction were significantly associated with PTSD symptomatology. These findings suggest that youthful offenders may constitute a high risk group for exposure to multiple types of trauma and the development of PTSD symptoms related to such exposure. The inference is, if these students are fortunate enough to attend college, the violence in their backgrounds is detrimental to academic achievement.

In a study of African American inner city youth, Weisman (1993) examined the effects of crack dealing on emotionally disturbed adolescents. Crack dealing was most often found to have dynamics and consequences separate from those of crack use. Those consequences include PTSD and
other significant emotional disturbances arising from the violence associated with crack dealing, and the shaping of adolescent identity by the associated culture of gang violence and guns.

A study reported by Fitzpatrick and Boldizar (1993) examined the relationship between chronic exposure to community and gang violence and PTSD in low income African American youth. Results showed males were more likely than females to be victims of and witnesses to violence. PTSD symptom reporting for this sample (N = 221) was moderately high, 44 youth (27.1%) met all criteria for PTSD. When 64 students were screened for PTSD six to 14 months after a school shooting, possible developmental influences were detected (Schwarz & Kowalski, 1991). The PTSD symptomatology in this group appeared to be more closely associated with emotional states recalled from the disaster than with proximity. Findings such as these tremendously impact upon beginning college students who were previously residents of violence plagued communities and/or participants in gang activities.

Garbarino, Kostenly and Dubrow (1991) examined the developmental challenges faced by children growing up in situations of chronic danger linked to community and gang violence. The concept of PTSD as a result
of chronic and continuing traumatic stress associated with dangerous, violence plagued inner city neighborhoods was studied. The results of the study revealed that chronic stress and danger have a particularly detrimental impact on the child’s world view, social map, moral and intellectual development (Gabarino et al., 1991). That detrimental impact does not disappear when the student reaches college—in many instances, it becomes more pronounced.

In 1993, Patricia Krysinski conducted a qualitative study of several high schools in an urban school district in the northeastern section of the United States; the urban setting, SES of the parents, and various other contextual factors suggest the presence of gang activity. The initial focus of the study was school and student culture, curriculum, student expectations, academic achievement, attendance, and dropout rates. Eventually the study progressed to focus on how students survive the violence in their schools and communities. The schools were similar in size and environment—all required high levels of security. They were also similar in racial composition—the majority of the students were African American.

The schools were studied for one month via observation and interview techniques. During the second month, the investigator observed and
conducted in-depth interviews at two high schools. Anecdotal and archival records were used to supplement, verify, and cross check data. The primary informants for the study were 13 teenagers. While gathering data relating to how students cope in violent surroundings while maintaining their dedication to school and education, and their outlook for the future, the investigator learned that in one of the schools, eight students had been killed between May 1992 and January 1993. The students in the Krysinski study were found to have experienced a tremendous amount of violence; many African American students sitting in college classrooms today come from similar backgrounds.

Parker (1994) qualitatively documented the travails of a young black male who overcame the difficulties and violence endemic to street gangs to become the manager of a London youth center. Following the sudden death of the subject's mother, his teenage years had been dominated by the values and regulations of the streets. After years of being seduced by drug and gang cultures, the subject regained control of his life by acquiring knowledge and becoming qualified in areas that would create new personal opportunities for him. Using the wisdom and experience that he gained
while on the streets, he now counsels other males (usually black) who are involved in gangs and street violence.

Parker's study identified several problems that confront black males involved in street life. These problems include (1) early labeling due to ethnic or racial differences that lead to teacher expectations of low achievement, (2) few opportunities for unqualified blacks, (3) a struggle against bias for qualified blacks, (4) stereotypes of the young black male (e.g., the irresponsible unmarried father), (5) the negative role stereotypes of the black male in the family, (6) peer group pressures to achieve material success through crime, (7) mass racial harassment by police, (8) lack of positive community commitment to its youth, (9) contradictions between what is taught in school and what is taught on the streets, and (10) drug related violence (Parker, 1994). The personal perspective of the youth center manager provides valuable insight that was earned as a result of living a life dominated by drugs, violence, and gangs.

**Violence and Twins.** In the course of reviewing the literature on violence, I discovered that quite a bit of research that relates to violence and drug abuse has been conducted on twins and siblings. Gurling et al. (1991) investigated 25 pairs of monozygotic twins to determine the adverse cognitive effects of
alcohol. During the study researchers attempted to match the twins and their co-twins for background and personality factors. When data were analyzed, impaired performance was found in visual spatial ability, visual spatial recognition, vocabulary, category sorting, and tactual performance. The number of years of problem drinking correlated with inferior scores on subsets of the tactual performance tests. The investigators' findings indicate that alcohol and drug abuse produce long term cognitive impairment that may not be grossly evident in clinical practice and may occur even at relatively low levels of intake (Gurling et al., 1991). This study has significance for all college students, particularly low SES African American students who generally have educational deficits in their backgrounds. The alarming fact is that even low levels of alcohol intake may have long term cognitive consequences for these students.

Wilson and Nagoshi (1988) conducted a study to determine the effects of alcohol consumption on over 350 twins, non-twin siblings, and unrelated persons raised in the same home. Subjects who reported alcohol abuse in one or both parents were compared with those who did not report a pattern of alcohol abuse in their parents. Study results revealed marginally lower cognitive abilities in the group who reportedly grew up in homes where
alcohol was abused (Wilson & Nagoshi, 1988). These findings appear to concur with Gurling's findings. Such findings suggest that the cognitive effects of being raised in a home where alcohol is abused may not be innocuous.

Grove et al. (1990) conducted a study at the University of Minnesota to determine the inheritability of substance abuse and antisocial behavior. Their subjects included 32 pairs of twins and one set of triplets. The subjects were interviewed via the Diagnostic Interview Schedule. Researchers conducting this study specifically looked for the presence of psychiatric disorders and antisocial personalities. The variables for the study included alcohol related problems, drug related problems, childhood antisocial behavior, and adult antisocial behavior. Using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, researchers found that the drug scale and both antisocial scales showed significant heritability. The investigators then concluded that there appeared to be substantial commonalities in the genetic factors responsible for traits that show a propensity toward violence and substance abuse (Grove et al., 1990). As a result of these findings some researchers and educators concluded that the violent tendencies exhibited by many low SES African American students are strictly the result of inheritance. These
conclusions appear to be profound generalizations and, as such, are steeped in controversy.

**Student Characteristics**

When researchers study the role student characteristics play in the academic achievement process, they look at social-psychological variables. In such social-psychological (psychosocial) models, student characteristics are assumed to determine student adjustment to the college setting, thereby in turn influencing student performance. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that the academic achievement of black students suffers as a result of the problems they experience when attempting to adjust to the foreign environments presented by colleges, especially predominantly white colleges. Many of the adjustment problems are common to all students, but black students also face additional difficulties (Webster, Sedlacek, & Miyares, 1979) that may not be encountered by white students.

For purposes of this literature review, the psychosocial variables are being divided into three groups: locus of control, educational aspirations and educational expectations.
Locus of Control

When we examine locus of control we seek to determine whether the location of students' motivating factors is external or internal. The students' perceptions as to who or what controls the direction their lives are taking are of paramount importance. Pascarella (1995) conducted a study to determine the extent to which college students' development of internal locus of attribution for academic success during the first year of college was influenced by institutional characteristics, students' academic experiences, and their social (non-academic) experiences. The study was a part of the National Study of Student Learning. The sample consisted of 2,392 first year students attending 23 diverse two year and four year institutions located in 16 states throughout the country. Pascarella reported that a number of variables had significant, positive effects on end of first year attribution. Included among those factors are: attending a two year (versus four year) college, level of post secondary education, work responsibilities, the extent of course organization, instructional clarity, academic support given by instructor, and participation in intercollegiate athletics (Pascarella, 1995).
Allen (1986) found that when black students on black and white campuses are compared on the dimension of psychosocial development, those on black campuses seem to fare much better. Findings from an early study by Gurin and Epps (1975) support Allen's findings. Gurin and Epps found that black students who attend black colleges possessed positive self images, strong racial pride, high aspirations and a strong sense of direction.

Fleming (1984) and other researchers concur with those findings. Fleming found psychosocial development to be more positive for black students attending black colleges than for those attending white colleges. Black students on black campuses reported greater satisfaction with college, more constructive relationships with faculty, higher academic motives, and fewer feelings of stress or isolation. In order to counter their stress and isolation, black students on white campuses often divert vital energies away from intellectual pursuits into efforts to fill the interpersonal void created by their status as grossly underrepresented minorities (Allen, 1985; Allen, 1986; Fleming, 1984; Willie & McCord, 1972). Perhaps these findings lend credence to my contention that the relationship between academic achievement and certain independent variables exists, and that it varies from one type institution to another.
Black students on black campuses display more positive psychosocial adjustment, significant academic gains, greater cultural awareness and commitment, and higher educational attainment aspirations. While adjustment and aspiration levels are higher for black students on black campuses, their achievement levels are lower than those of black (or white) students on white campuses (Allen, 1986).

When Thomas (1981) conducted a survey to determine personality orientation, black men at both historically black and predominantly white universities gave themselves high ratings on athletic ability and on popularity with the opposite gender. Both genders in both types of institutions tended to rate themselves high on all dimensions except academic ability and mathematical ability. Yet in spite of the ratings, black students saw themselves as being intellectually self-confident and independent.

Thomas (1981) cautions, however, that first generation black students are often characterized and treated by faculty and college administrators in terms of their past socialization, rather than their potential for new learning and resocialization. Thomas (1981) states:

It is often claimed that black undergraduates do not have the ability to communicate effectively in terms of reading comprehension, writing and speaking skills. This purported problem is often defined in
cognitive terms (e.g., a failure to learn). The solutions to the perceived problems are traditional remedial approaches that have little or no impact on achieving the desired set of cognitive skills. However, when the problem of inadequate cognitive skills is alternatively defined as a lack of interpersonal skills and a lack of exposure, more productive solutions can be achieved.

Thomas depicted a scenario where 90% of the students she taught in a historically black institution were from rural areas of the state and had attended school in small, country districts. Beginning students displayed the range of reading comprehension, and writing and communication skills that were typical of their prior environment and educational training. Thomas instituted a two-step positive approach to address the problem: (1) recognition and conceptualization of the cognitive and affective socialization factors which account for the kinds and levels of communication skills that these students possess; and (2) implementation of a series of corrective activities designed to develop the interpersonal skills of these students.

The importance of values, attitudes, and behaviors of black first generation college students has been badly misunderstood and poorly interpreted. Despite their good faith intentions, many administrators, teachers, and researchers involved with black college students lack the relevant experience, perspectives, and role-taking ability to adequately
understand and respond to the educational needs and aspirations of first generation blacks. These experiences and an adequate understanding and acceptance of these students is paramount if members of the higher education community are to become more effective in the delivery of services to black undergraduates (Thomas, 1981; Allen, 1986). If first generation black college students are to develop and maintain healthy self-concepts and assume greater control over the direction their lives are taking, it is imperative that professors and university personnel embrace these students and work with them to modify and enhance their skills and learning experiences.

Thomas proffers that the learning, self direction and refinement of interpersonal skills for first generation black college students can be incorporated into college curricula and academic and professionally related activities through the collective efforts of faculty who are willing to serve as role models for these students. Some interested faculty have initiated these activities by regularly inviting black students to their homes, meeting and interacting with these students' friends and relatives, taking students to various local, regional, and national professional meetings and introducing these students to other appropriate role models. These series of structured
formal and informal activities can, and often do, lead to the modification of
dysfunctional values and attitudes that first generation blacks bring with them to the college environment (Thomas, 1981).

**Educational Aspirations**

Allen (1986) found that high educational aspirations are most common among students with higher grades ($r = .181$, $p < .01$). Allen also found that blacks on black campuses had higher career success aspirations and most often anticipated futures at the top of their chosen professions (61% versus 52%). That perception seems to contradict the finding that black students on white campuses are considerably more likely than black students on black campuses to anticipate future occupations in the highest prestige category (e.g., judge, corporate executive, physician), by a margin of 26% to 13%; this fact, coupled with the greater intensity of academic competition, may explain why black students on white campuses report lower occupational eminence strivings.

Allen's comparative study of blacks on historically black and predominantly white campuses revealed several significant facts concerning educational aspirations. Black students on black campuses are more likely to set their sights on M.A. level degrees (44% versus 32%). The rationale in
this instance may be the disproportionate enrollment on black campuses in professional training programs where the terminal degree is M.S.W., M.B.A., or M.R.P. Black students on black campuses are also more likely than black students on white campuses to report the Ph.D. degree as their ultimate goal (17% versus 8%). Conversely, black students attending white universities are significantly more likely than black students on black campuses to aspire to prestigious terminal degrees in medicine or law (29% versus 8%). A general consensus among the groups was that an astounding 80% of both campus groups expect to continue working hard until they are at least better than most people in their chosen professions.

Educational Expectations

Studies have shown that black student access and retention rates in higher education are disturbingly low. Several reasons have been proffered as to why blacks have not achieved maximum success in higher education. Educational expectations and the perceptions that minorities have concerning their chances of success at various levels of higher education are among those factors cited (Thomas, 1979; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

The literature paints a poignant picture of the high educational aspirations held by black college students, yet educational expectations have
been cited among those factors that preclude academic success for black college students. I surmise that when students perceive a greater sense of involvement with, and control over their environments, their educational expectations are positively impacted.

**University Characteristics**

Researchers have focused much attention on the differences between student populations at historically black and predominantly white colleges. They have studied the norms and values, degree of social integration and faculty-student interaction, and other noncognitive variables that affect the academic achievement process. Violence and campus safety have been essentially ignored in previous studies. In this study I address that omission in that I consider campus safety one of those pertinent variables that impacts upon academic achievement in black college students.

**Academic and Social Integration**

A study of black students at the University of North Carolina (UNC) suggested that their experiences were comparable to those of black students attending other predominantly white campuses around the nation. The students were (1) dissatisfied with their overall educational experience, (2) troubled by the limited numbers of blacks at all levels in the university, (3)
disappointed by the campus social life, (4) exposed to racial discrimination, (5) doing less well academically and in general, (6) disenchanted with the school (Kleinbaum and Kleinbaum, 1976).

Thomas (1981) attempted to determine whether similar conditions existed for black students then currently enrolled at UNC. The data were collected from a Spring 1977 survey of black undergraduates at UNC. The sample included 135 students—16% of all black undergraduates enrolled at UNC. Thomas’ findings (1981) are graphically depicted on the correlation matrix displayed in Table I. Several interesting patterns emerge when the matrix is studied. For example, occupational aspirations are significantly higher among students having better educated mothers, students from high schools with high percentages of blacks, and students with lower academic anxiety. Student academic performance level is highest where college satisfaction is high and feelings of alienation and academic anxiety are low. Students who evaluated campus race relations and UNC’s support of black students positively expressed greater satisfaction with college life. Conversely, dissatisfaction with college appeared more common for students having better-educated siblings, lower high school GPAs, and who report more feelings of academic anxiety and alienation (Thomas, 1981).
TABLE 1: CORRELATES OF BLACK STUDENT ADJUSTMENT, ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Satisfaction</th>
<th>Academic Performance</th>
<th>Occupational Aspirations</th>
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(Ten Interrelations)
Thomas states that while high student academic performance is associated with high college satisfaction, neither variable appears to be significantly associated with student aspirations. The matrix supports findings by Allen (1978) that black student occupational aspirations are strongly related to mother's educational attainment. Further, students who attended high schools with high percentages of blacks reported high aspirations and academic performance, even though there was not a high degree of satisfaction associated with the college experience at a predominantly white university. Findings also indicated that pronounced feelings of alienation and academic anxiety are generally detrimental to black student adjustment, achievement and aspirations (Thomas, 1981).

Though violence is not specifically mentioned in the above context, the relationship between black student achievement and the predominant race of the campus has been documented. Such findings tend to strengthen the link between poor academic performance and student alienation on campus. If a disparity exists between poor academic achievement in black students and student alienation on predominantly white campuses, then that relationship lends credence to my contention that there may be a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of black first
time college students on predominantly white campuses. Further, the magnitude of the relationship may differ between predominantly black and predominantly white campuses.

Several other significant themes are revealed by the matrix in Table 1. The illustration shows that alienation is greater among students having better educated siblings, higher high school grades, more years in two parent families and more academic anxiety. On the other hand, alienation is lower among students who have better employed fathers and a more positive evaluation of campus race relations and college support of black students. Students with less well educated mothers, less well employed fathers, and negative evaluations of UNC's racial atmosphere and support of black students, report significantly higher academic anxiety. Contrary to the researcher's expectations, involvement in black support networks did not appear to increase among alienated students, though there was a slight tendency among students with negative views of race relations, and a significant tendency among those reporting negative experiences with white professors, to be more involved in black support networks. Students with negative views of campus race relations also got along less well with professors and felt more alienated (Thomas, 1981).
When Allen (1986) studied university characteristics, many of his findings agreed with the findings of Thomas (1981). Allen posits that black students on black campuses differ from their counterparts on white campuses in terms of SES, high school academic record, and level of student satisfaction. A natural outgrowth of comparisons of black student populations on black and white campuses is recognition of the “special mission” of black colleges (Allen, 1986). Black colleges typically enroll students who might not otherwise be able to attend college because of financial or academic barriers (Thomas, McPartland, & Gottfredson, 1981; Miller, 1981; Morris, 1979). Black institutions pride themselves on their ability to take poor and less well prepared black students where they are, correct their deficiencies, and graduate them equipped to compete successfully for jobs or graduate/professional school placements in the wider society (Miller, 1981; National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities, 1980).

Investigations of black student academic growth and development on black campuses show consistently high gains. Fleming (1984) suggests that while black students who attend historically black colleges are initially behind academically, they display greater intellectual development than do
black students who attend white colleges. However, despite their greater relative intellectual gains (as measured by questionnaires and Thematic Apperception Tests) black students on black campuses continued to be disadvantaged in absolute terms *vis-a-vis* black (and white) students on white campuses (Fleming, 1984). Fleming also noted that the relative differences between black students on black campuses and both race students on white campuses had decreased after four years of college.

By way of contrast, findings from another comparative study of black student intellective development on black and white campuses suggest the absence of pronounced differences (Centra, Linn, & Parry, 1970). In either case, the findings compliment black colleges since although their student bodies are much more disadvantaged academically at the beginning of their careers, by graduation these students have managed to narrow the achievement gap between themselves and both race students on white campuses (Allen, 1986). Findings such as these tend to suggest the importance of the combined influence of academic and environmental factors on students’ eventual levels of academic achievement and status attainment. It is against this backdrop that we need to be reminded of the disproportionately high contributions made by black colleges to the current

Campus Safety

Bennett-Johnson (1996) conducted a study at Grambling State University. The study focused on crime and violence on American college and university campuses. According to the researcher, violent crimes in America are on the decrease, although crime in general is not. The violence has overflowed onto the college and university campuses. As antisocial behaviors escalate within the campus setting, they will likely affect the acquisition of knowledge which needs to take place within a "conducive environment." As the violence within our nation continues to permeate the campus environment, there will likely be a correlational rise in the number of students manifesting antisocial behaviors and an increase in the overall crime and delinquency rates.

When we consider Maslow's Needs Hierarchy Theory (Hoy & Miskel, 1996) it becomes apparent that campus safety is extremely important to the learning process. If college students are deprived of a safe environment—one that is conducive to learning—it is unlikely that they will successfully navigate the higher levels of the hierarchy (social activities, esteem and self-
actualization). I contend that there is a positive correlation between a safe campus environment and the academic achievement process in African American first time college students.

Summary of Literature Review

When crime, abuse and violence in our larger society takes a pejorative turn, that trend is correspondingly magnified in the nation’s African American communities. The devastating residual effects of violence and abuse are an American tragedy; many of the deleterious effects do not appear until years after the abuse has occurred. Results of investigations documented here and elsewhere indicate that early exposure to violence and other negative factors, greatly impact upon the later academic achievement of college students. Many African American first time college students are particularly at risk for sustaining academic problems, because in addition to being exposed to abuse and excessive violence, low SES students often lack the familial economic and emotional security, and the high school preparation necessary for academic success in college. Numerous research findings indicate that African American high school students do not perform well on the ACT, SAT, and other psychometric tests. This poor test performance has led educators and researchers to consider other
(noncognitive) variables when evaluating the academic potential of black college applicants.

Because many African American college students, even those who were expected to succeed, experienced problems and were not successful, noncognitive factors were examined to determine the role they play in successful college matriculation. Those studies generally indicated that black college students need a support system to provide emotional support. Black students were generally found to be happier and more successful when they attended predominantly black institutions. Black students who attended predominantly white institutions often had to network with other black students for emotional support. The locus of control, and educational aspirations and expectations of these students are also considered to be important factors in college success.

Perhaps the most alarming finding in the literature is the diagnosis of PTSD in many inner city students exposed to chronic violence. The news media provide the public with daily accounts of atrocities perpetrated by youthful offenders. The Centers for Disease Control recently reported that more than 50 murders or suicides involving children and teenagers occur each year—at or near schools. Approximately one third of the murders are
gang related (WAFB TV, 5:00 p.m. newscast, June 11, 1996). Perhaps if educators and others in the community were aware of recent research findings, strategies and support systems could be devised to assist these students. Unfortunately, such support systems are unlikely to materialize if educators concur with findings that suggest that violent and abusive tendencies are inherited.

Conceptual Framework

Over the years educational researchers have examined certain school related variables in an effort to determine why some students succeed academically, while others fail. Coleman et al. (1966) were among the first researchers to consider the relationship between student background factors (inputs) and the later academic growth (outputs) of students. Allen (1986) used an education production function to study black college students. Allen’s research provides the structural framework for the present study.

Like Allen, in my study I gathered data from black students at both predominantly black and predominantly white universities. In this study I also examined student qualities as they relate to student background characteristics (e.g., parents’ SES, high school academic record, personal and community violence), student characteristics (e.g., locus of control,
educational aspirations and expectations), and university characteristics (e.g., involvement in campus life, feelings of alienation, campus safety, availability of academic and emotional support systems, etc.).

Given the turbulent academic climate of the present and the prevalence of violence on university campuses, and in society in general, my primary focus in this study is the effect that the ubiquitousness of violence often exerts upon academic achievement. The impact of violence upon academic achievement is the central focus of this study because of the emphasis the literature places on the dire consequences associated with this phenomenon. The conceptual framework is depicted in Table 2.

Early exposure to excessive violence—over and above other personal, background, and university characteristics—exerts a tremendous influence upon academic achievement. It has been documented in the literature that various student inputs are related to the student’s gain in achievement results, and growth in cognitive skills and affective behavior. Given the tremendous amount of research currently proliferating medical literature documenting the deleterious effects of early exposure to violence on children's later cognitive, emotional, and physical development, it is my
TABLE 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>LOCUS OF CONTROL</th>
<th>ACADEMIC INTEGRATION</th>
<th>ACTUAL GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC BACKGROUND</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS</td>
<td>SOCIAL INTEGRATION</td>
<td>EXPECTED GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL VIOLENCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY VIOLENCE</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>CAMPUS SAFETY</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
contention that the academic achievement process in African American first
time college students is pejoratively influenced by such violence.

There is presently little research upon which a theoretical model
encompassing academic achievement and violence can be built. Current
educational research has not addressed the academic problems associated
with violence. Nevertheless, given the turbulent atmosphere and the
prevalence of violence associated with present day educational institutions,
vio lence must be considered along with other salient variables usually
connected with academic achievement. In accordance with the
aforementioned, and because recent studies have indicated an increase in
deviant and antisocial behavior, the present study adds exposure to violence
to other variables in an effort to determine the influence of violence upon
academic achievement in African American first time college students.
There are possibly factors other than those identified in this study that affect
college success, but I am not focusing on those variables in this study.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

In this section the conceptual and operational definitions of the variables
used in this study are presented. The conceptualization and
operationalization of the study’s background factors—SES, high school
academic record, and personal and community violence are defined first. The conceptual and operational definitions of student characteristics—locus of control, educational aspirations and expectations follow. University characteristics—academic and social integration and campus safety are then operationally and conceptually defined. The original intention of this study was to use freshman GPAs as the dependent variable. Unfortunately, I was unable to get actual GPA data from one of the participating universities. As such, the students’ expected grade point average (EXGPA) will be used as the outcome variable resulting from several input variables—background factors, student characteristics and university characteristics.

**Socioeconomic Status**

SES is one of the five important determinants of academic achievement in black first time college students. SES relates to a combination of social and economic factors. The SES of the family is often considered to be dependent upon the educational levels and occupations of the parents (Thomas, 1984). Some educators tend to believe that the father’s educational level is the most cogent indicator of family SES. Parents who are better educated tend to motivate and encourage, thereby inculcating higher educational aspirations in their offspring.
The gender and marital status of the family head are also important determinants of family SES, particularly in urban areas. Female headed families comprise a growing proportion of the poverty population (Wilson, 1987). Many of the families in the study conducted by social scientists Kenneth Clark, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Lee Rainwater were headed by females. The study examined the cumulative effects of racial isolation and class subordination on inner city blacks. The research vividly depicted various aspects of ghetto life and attempted to illustrate the connection between the economic and social environment into which many blacks are born and the creation of patterns of behavior that frequently amounted to "self-perpetuating pathology" (Wilson, 1987). In this study, operationally I use parents’ educational attainment levels and family income as a proxy for SES.

**High School Academic Preparation**

High school academic preparation refers to the training and skills received by the student prior to enrolling in college. Included in that training are educational preparation, counseling, study skills and technological (e.g., computer literacy) knowledge and training. When we think of academic preparation, we typically refer to the student’s ability to
score successfully on psychometric instruments (e.g., SAT and ACT tests) and to maintain an adequate college GPA. The Institute for the Study of Educational Policy (1976) states that black college students as a rule score lower on college entrance examinations and are more likely than whites to be graduates of less academically strong high schools. Thomas (1984) proffers that the most significant positive predictors of full time persistence in college are the student’s past academic achievement as measured by high school grades, SAT score and enrollment in a college preparatory curriculum in high school. In that there is controversy (Thomas, 1984; Jencks, 1972) surrounding both the quality of pre-college counseling black students receive and psychometric test scores, I operationally define High School Academic Preparation as the students’ high school GPAs.

**Personal and Community Violence Exposure**

Violence may be defined as the exertion of physical force, perpetrated with the intention of abusing or causing injury to someone; it is usually an intense, turbulent and destructive action or force. When personal violence is discussed here, I refer specifically to mental, physical and sexual abuse, and domestic violence that the respondents were recipients of. Community violence alludes to physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or violence.
that students experience vicariously; they may witness or hear about the violence. Much of the community violence in low SES areas is gang related. The connotation suggests small, crudely organized groups that determine the rules and values that their members will adhere to. Generally when we refer to gangs the connotations are negative ones that tend to disparage or belittle. Abuse is used here to imply wrong or improper use of a person or persons.

In light of the far reaching consequences, and the seriousness of the problems associated with personal and community violence, this issue appears to be a crucial factor in later cognitive development. According to Carrey et al. (1995), it is well documented that abuse is associated with altered cognitive development in children. Bowlby (1976) demonstrated that abused children had significant intellectual and emotional delays, and Cohn (1979) showed that abused children had language and psychomotor deficiencies. Green (1983) observed that physically abused and neglected children had neuropsychological deficits. These findings appear to support the inclusion of violence as one of those salient variables that impacts upon the academic achievement process. For purposes of the present study, I
define violence as the degree of exposure of students to personal and community violence (victims of, witnesses to, and hearing about).

**Student Characteristics**

Student characteristics are defined as those special qualities that distinguish one student from another. The student characteristics being considered here are the psychosocial variables: locus of control, and educational aspirations and expectations. Locus of control alludes to the location of the students' attribution for academic success—internal or external. Educational aspirations refers to the degree of intrinsic desire on the part of the student for achieving high or great educational status. It has been suggested that the type of educational institution that black college students attend directly influences the students' locus of control and educational aspirations (Fleming, 1984; Allen, 1984). Educational expectations refers to the extent to which students perceive that they will be able to actually attain their aspirations. The previous discussion of emotional and academic support systems is also relevant for student characteristics. The most significant factors that must be considered in the discussion of student characteristics are psychosocial adjustment, academic achievement, cultural awareness and commitment, and education attainment.
aspirations (Allen, 1986; Gurin & Epps, 1975). Specifically, this variable is measured using students' locus of control, educational aspirations and expectations.

University Characteristics

Previously much of the attrition research on black college students focused on student background factors (e.g., SES and high school preparation). Recently an examination of the university environment has been added to those salient factors that are studied when attempting to explain attrition rates among black college students. Among those factors considered when investigating university characteristics are students' social and academic integration and perceptions of campus safety.

Academic integration represents the students' perceptions about the attitudes and behaviors of the faculty. Perceptions of favorable attitudes (academic integration) is significantly associated with high GPAs. Academic integration also measures faculty accessibility and interest (Nettles, Theony, & Gosman, 1986).

Social integration—students' feelings of belonging and acceptance by their peers (and faculty)—is just as important as academic integration. The lack of social integration experiences may affect students' intellectual
development by decreasing the intensity (depth) and extensity (length of
time) of their exposure to and involvement within the intellectual milieu of
the campus (Nettles, Theony, & Gosman, 1986).

Campus safety refers to the degree to which students perceive that they
are physically safe within the context of the campus environment. In
Bennett-Johnson’s (1996) study, findings indicate that crime and violence
are increasingly proliferating the sacred ivy walls of academia; students are
unable to concentrate and excel academically when they constantly perceive
the possibility of danger or violence.

It is important in the context of predicting students’ college performance
and achievement, to broaden the scope to include campus environmental
variables that affect students’ learning and performance outcomes (Allen,
1986; Thomas, 1984). In this study, I measure university characteristics by
the degree of social and academic integration reported by the students, and
by their perceptions of campus safety.

**Academic Achievement**

Academic achievement may be defined as the quality of students’ work
that is the result of dedication and effort; it is the output that results from
certain inputs on the part of the student. Numerous factors are sometimes
inadvertently overlooked when determining the school's role in producing enlightened citizens who are capable of achieving academically. Creativity, self-confidence, aspirations, and expectations are all needed for future success in school and adult life. Other factors that impinge upon the academic achievement process in black college students include various personal and background related variables (e.g., SES, high school academic background, degree of exposure to personal and community violence, and student and university characteristics).

Present ways of measuring academic achievement in college students tend to be quite controversial. Standardized tests (e.g., SAT, ACT) are generally used to determine the degree of academic proficiency students possess. As has been documented here and elsewhere, researchers have consistently found disparities between the standardized test performance of black and white students; blacks typically score below whites on standardized tests. Because of the dichotomy presented by psychometric test scores, researchers began to seek other noncognitive variables as a means of predicting academic success in black college applicants.

When all background and contextual aspects of the student are taken into consideration, universities are better able to provide opportunities for black
students to develop intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and physically. It is methodologically difficult to determine the extent to which this "total student" development is taking place—and if it is taking place. Therefore, in an attempt to minimize the effects of some of the potential methodological problems in this study, I focused on the achievement of students as the benefit/output production function that is produced by educational institutions. Universities should, in fact, be providing many other benefits and services to students in addition to achievement gains. This measure, which was to be based upon university transcripts, was intended as the primary dependent variable for the study. Because of the lack of availability of actual GPA data, this measure reflects the respondents' expected grade point average at the end of the first year.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

Despite the fact that researchers have documented fundamental
differences in the manner in which black and white students learn (King &
Taylor, 1989), relatively little research addressing the academic achievement
of African American college students has been conducted. The absence of
data presents a problem, and if African American students are to be
successful, we must learn more about the relationship between early
exposure to violence relative to the impact of other personal, familial and
institutional factors and the successful acquisition of knowledge.

The problem is exacerbated in that the United States, in recent decades,
has experienced an explosion of violence amongst its youth. Yet very little,
if any, research has been conducted to explore the potential consequences of
early exposure to violence upon the academic achievement of African
American first time college students. The present research assists in filling
that void.

Much of the literature is an aggregate of conflicting views regarding the
relationship between academic achievement in African American first year
students and certain salient variables. For many years researchers have sought an explanation for the differences in the achievement levels of these students. The early phases of this research focused almost exclusively on background factors relating to family and high school academic preparation. More recently psychosocial variables and university characteristics were examined as possible explanations of discrepancies in achievement levels. This study extends this work by incorporating background violence in the model.

In this section I provide information about data collection methods and statistical procedures involved in my study. I begin with a description of the population from which the subjects were selected and the sampling procedures that were used. This is followed by a discussion of the statistical methodology that was employed.

**Design**

Mixed methodology is the chosen vehicle for addressing the problem in this study. The two paradigms I used are generally referred to as "quantitative" and "qualitative" research or inquiry. The quantitative research paradigm has been built largely on the research traditions and methods that were initially developed in the physical and biological
sciences. The qualitative paradigm was developed by anthropologists and sociologists, and during the past 20 years, this method of conducting educational research has slowly gained acceptance in education (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Patton (1990) posits that the use of mixed methodology strengthens a study. Nevertheless, in spite of Patton's contention, researchers in the past tended not to mix the methodology procedures, and preferred to rely exclusively on quantitative studies. Several reasons have been offered as possible explanations as to why researchers in the past used quantitative studies exclusively; those reasons include the following: (1) qualitative methods were not well defined, (2) research sponsors were unwilling to sponsor qualitative studies, (3) journals were unwilling to report qualitative studies, and (4) academic programs did not encourage qualitative research (Patton, 1990).

When both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are employed, researchers refer to this mixed methodology as triangulation. Triangulation is a powerful solution to the problem of relying too heavily on any single data source or method, thereby undermining the validity and credibility of findings because of the weakness of any single method (Patton, 1990). The
two methods are very different and both methods have strengths and weaknesses. One of the major differences between the two paradigms lies in the fact that qualitative research begins with a fact, and ends with a theory. Conversely, the quantitative paradigm begins with a theory and ends with a fact. Qualitative methods are quite subjective, but they permit the investigator to study selected issues in depth. Studying a phenomenon in depth produces a plethora of information that results in an increased understanding of the cases and situations studied. In qualitative studies the objective is not the generalization of findings; instead, the objective is transferability or comparability of findings. Quantitative research relies on its objectivity to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions. This method permits great aggregation of statistical data, and allows researchers to generalize their findings.

**Quantitative Research Design**

A research design can be defined as a process of creating an empirical test to support or refute a knowledge claim. Most quantitative research in education can be classified as one of two types—descriptive studies and studies aimed at discovering causal relationships. Descriptive studies are primarily concerned with finding out “what is,” whereas causal research
involves determining causal relationships between variables (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Research designs may be further distinguished in terms of their effectiveness in establishing causal links between two or more variables. The causal-comparative method is aimed at discovering possible causes for the phenomenon being studied by comparing subjects in whom a characteristic is present with similar subjects in whom it is absent or present to a lesser degree. The causal-comparative method cannot confirm relationships, it can only be used to explore relationships. Correlational studies attempt to discover or clarify relationships between variables via use of correlation coefficients, but like causal-comparative designs, cannot definitively ascribe causality. Both causal-comparative and correlational research designs tell the researcher the magnitude of the relationship between two variables. The experimental research design is the most powerful research design for identifying causal relationships. The experimental design is ideally suited to establishing causal relationships when proper controls are used. The key feature of this design is the fact that a treatment variable is manipulated.
I used the correlational method to explore relationships between variables in the present study. I selected that particular method because the correlational method of analyzing research is very useful in studying problems in education. It was very amenable to this study because it permitted me to analyze relationships among a large number of variables in a single study. Further, the correlational method allowed me to analyze how several variables, either singly or in combination, might affect a particular pattern of behavior. This method also provided information concerning the degree of relationship between the variables being studied.

The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to analyze the data. SAS is an integrated set of computer software tools for data management, data analysis and report preparation. SAS accesses data via many locations and formats which can then be rearranged, edited, modified and/or combined. It facilitates data analysis in that it can produce simple descriptive statistics, as well as a wide range of inferential statistics, from simple univariate and bivariate statistics to model-building (linear and nonlinear) and sophisticated multivariate techniques. Relatedly, the SAS program also facilities presentation of data in that SAS can generate tables, lists, plots, graphs and customized reports (Wozniak & Geaghan, 1994).
Quantitative Sampling and Population. Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Initially all of the students participating in this study were to be randomly sampled (all members of the population of interest had an equal chance of being included in the study). Scheduling problems at the predominantly black university precluded the random sampling approach, and I had to sample students whose class times coincided with my schedule; an alternative approach, convenience sampling, was used in lieu of the former approach. The large number of students participating in the data collection process (one third of the approximately 2,000 enrolled first time students), minimized the impact of not being able to obtain a random sample.

Quantitative methods typically depend upon large samples that are randomly selected because the logic and power of quantitative sampling lies in selecting a truly random and statistically representative sample that will permit confident generalization from the sample to a large population; the purpose is generalization. The sampling frames—lists of students—were provided by Junior Division personnel at the respective universities. The students of interest in this study—the target population—were currently
enrolled, African American first time college students. These are the students to which I generalize the results of my research.

The smaller, workable group—the experimentally accessible population—consists of subjects enrolled in two large, Southeastern universities (one predominantly black, and the other predominantly white). The universities were selected because the accessible population appears to be closely comparable to the target population on a large number of variables. My contention was that if the data demonstrated that the accessible population was closely comparable to the target population on those variables that appear most relevant to the study, then population validity would have been established. Ecological validity—the extent to which the results of an experiment can be generalized from the set of environmental conditions created by the researcher to other environmental conditions—is a genuine concern for most researchers. When results can be replicated by subsequent researchers, the findings are said to have high ecological validity. If the results can be obtained only under a limited set of conditions, or only by the original researcher(s), the findings are not very useful. Therefore, establishing ecological validity is very important.
I address population validity in this study by the inclusion of a large number of subjects; the universities from which the students were selected are very diverse and representative of my target population. Relatedly, sufficient details were provided so that additional researchers will be able to replicate the study and thereby establish ecological validity.

**Quantitative Instrumentation.** The quantitative instrument used in this study is an adaptation of the instrument used by Walter Allen (1986). In that I add an additional variable—specifically violence—for the study, I added items to the instrument to measure that variable. Items on violence that I added to the instrument were gathered during the literature review. The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) provided items that were used to measure locus of control.

The following formula illustrates the model:

\[
\text{Academic Achievement} = \\
\text{Background Factors} (\text{SES} + \text{HSGPA} + \text{personal violence} + \text{community violence} + \text{gender}) \Rightarrow \\
\text{Student Characteristics} (\text{locus of control} + \text{educational aspirations} + \text{educational expectations}) \Rightarrow \\
\text{University Characteristics} (\text{academic integration} + \text{social integration} + \text{campus safety}) \Rightarrow 
\]
The resulting instrument consists of 27 items that measured the perceptions of students regarding sense of family social status, degree of academic preparedness for college, self evaluation and future expectations, prevailing conditions and degree of social and academic integration on campus, and the pervasiveness of violence in their personal, community and university settings. Each perception variable has various items on the questionnaire to serve as measures.

Socioeconomic Status. SES is defined with respect to responses given by students on a survey questionnaire (Appendix A) which requested specific information about parental education levels and earnings range. Questions three, four, and five on the questionnaire were used to determine students' SES. The possible responses to the items that measure parental education levels range from one to eight years of schooling to the completion of a Ph.D. or professional degree. Responses indicating parental earnings range from $12,000.00 or less to over $100,000.00.

Walter Allen (1986) used father's and mother's educational levels and family income as indicators of family SES. The NELS instrument also used father's and mother's educational levels and family income as indicators of
family SES. Therefore, those indicators of SES were also used in the present study.

**High School GPA.** This measure is the self reported high school GPA of students that completed the survey. GPA has been traditionally accepted as a measure of knowledge attainment. Walter Allen (1986) and Thomas (1984) used GPA as indicators of high school achievement; I concur with those researchers and use GPA, as well.

**Personal Violence Exposure.** Personal violence, for purposes of the present study, is defined as the degree of exposure of students to trauma that is actually perpetrated upon the individual. This measure is the sum of the seven components of item 25 of the survey questionnaire. Carrey et al. (1995) proffer that abuse is associated with altered cognitive development in children; other researchers tend to agree with that assessment. Bowlby (1976) found abused children to have significant intellectual and emotional delays, and Green (1983) observed that physically abused and neglected children had neuropsychological deficits. In a recent study on violence and antisocial behavior that was conducted at Grambling State University, Bennett-Johnson (1995) used similar indicators as predictors. Similar items were also used in the medical literature when the extent of exposure to
personal violence was measured. Because past studies have found these
predictors to be reliable, they are used in the present study.

**Community Violence Exposure.** I define community violence as the
degree of exposure of students to trauma that is perpetrated within the
neighborhood, school settings, etc. The respondent may have witnessed the
violence or merely heard about it. This measure is defined as the sum of
five components of item 26 on the survey. For these items, respondents
were asked to indicate the number of violent incidents (i.e., murders,
robberies, etc.) occurring in their neighborhoods during the past five years.
Medical studies used similar predictors when they measured the extent of
exposure to community violence. Bennett-Johnson (1996) also used similar
predictors when violence among college students was studied. I examined
those predictors and agreed that they are valid; I use them in this study.

**Locus of Control.** Item 16 is based upon data used to measure the
location of the attribution for academic success in respondents. Pascarella
(1995) used similar predictors when he studied locus of control in college
students. The NELS:88 study used similar items when locus of control was
determined. Because other studies have found these items to be reliable
predictors when measuring locus of control, those predictors are also used in the present study.

**Educational Aspirations.** For purposes of the present study, I defined educational aspirations operationally as the degree of intrinsic desire on the part of the student for achieving high or great educational status and it is measured by questionnaire item 17. Researchers have suggested that the type of educational institution that black college students attend directly influences the students’ educational aspirations (Fleming, 1984; Allen, 1984). Allen (1986) used this measure when he studied the educational aspirations of black college students.

**Educational Expectations.** In this study I define educational expectations as the respondents’ perceptions of the advanced degrees he/she is actually likely to attain. I measure this item by the second component of item 17 on the survey. Research studies have shown (Thomas, 1979; Gurin & Epps, 1975) that educational expectations and the perceptions that blacks have concerning their chances of success at various levels of the higher education hierarchy affect their academic achievement in higher education. In that research studies have found these predictors to be reliable, they are used in the present study.
**Overall Relations.** This variable measures the perceptions of students regarding their overall relations on campus with faculty, staff, and students, differentiated by race. Respondents were asked to rate the relations as excellent, good, fair or poor. This measure is defined as the sum of the six components of survey questionnaire item 19. Allen (1986) used similar predictors when he studied campus relations.

**Academic Assistance.** This measure is defined as the sum of the four components of item 20 of the survey questionnaire. These items addressed the student's comfort level when seeking academic assistance from faculty and students, differentiated by race.

**Social Integration.** In this study I define social integration as the sum of the four components of item 22 from the survey. In this context social integration refers to the students' feelings of belonging and acceptance by their peers and faculty and staff members. Nettles et al. (1986) found that the lack of social integration experiences may affect students' intellectual development by decreasing the intensity (depth) and extensity (length of time) of their exposure to and involvement within the intellectual milieu of the campus. Other researchers posit that it is important in the context of predicting students' college performance and achievement to broaden the
scope to include campus social integration variables that affect students’
learning and performance outcomes (Allen, 1986; Thomas, 1984). Because
I concur with previous researchers (Allen, 1986; Nettles et al., 1986;
Thomas, 1984) that these indicators are good, I use similar predictors to
measure social integration.

**Academic Support.** I define this measure as the sum of the two
components of item 21 from the survey. These items addressed students’
use and sense of availability of support systems on campus (e.g., computer
laboratories, etc.). Academic support was one of the pertinent factors
Pascarella found when he studied locus of control in college students. As
has been documented here and elsewhere, other researchers have also found
the availability of academic support systems to be a critical factor in the
academic achievement (and retention) of African American students.
Pascarella and others found these predictors to be valid and reliable; I use
similar predictors.

**Alienation.** I define this variable as item 18 on the survey. The item
was designed to reflect the extent to which students feel a connection with
campus life. Thomas (1981) found that pronounced feelings of alienation
and academic anxiety are generally detrimental to black student adjustment,
achieved, aspirations and expectations. When Kleinman and Kleinman (1976) conducted a study at UNC, they found student alienation to be detrimental to academic achievement. These indicators have proven reliable in previous studies, therefore I will use them to measure this variable.

**Campus Safety.** This measure is defined as six components of item 27 from the survey. These items reflect the extent to which students perceive the campus to be free of threats of violence. Students were asked to indicate whether or not they felt the campus environment was safe. The items also measured the extent to which students felt comfortable when traveling, socializing, etc. on campus at night. Respondents were asked to indicate if they felt that fellow students had propensities toward violence, or had formerly been members of street gangs. Items also measured student perceptions regarding drug and alcohol use on campus.

**Freshman Grade Point Average.** This measure, which was to be based on university transcripts, was intended as the primary dependent variable for the study. Unfortunately, at the last moment officials were unwilling to release this information.
**Expected Freshman Grade Point Average.** This measure reflects the respondents' anticipated GPA at the end of the first year. It is based on item nine from the survey. It is coded 1 ‘below 2.0’ to 5 ‘B+ to A’.

**Quantitative Data Collection.** I started the quantitative data collection procedure by requesting a list of currently enrolled first time students from Junior Division personnel at both universities. After obtaining the sampling frames I mailed questionnaires to all African American first time students on the list supplied by the predominantly white university. Because of the tremendous diversity of the student population, questionnaires were mailed, as it was not practical to administer the questionnaires in classroom settings. Approximately 350 surveys were distributed and 95 of the surveys were returned for a 27% return rate. A transmittal letter accompanied the questionnaires (Appendix A). The letter stressed the importance of the solicited data in helping to improve the academic achievement of all African American first time college students.

Data collection at the predominantly black university was much more efficient in that I was able to personally administer the surveys in the classrooms. In many instances I was assisted by the class professor and a student worker. The procedure was very successful in that I was able to:
(1) explain the purpose and significance of the study, answer questions carefully and truthfully, and (2) immediately collect all of the surveys that had been distributed and completed by the respondents. The average length of time required to complete the survey was 15 minutes. I found many students to be very interested and desirous of receiving feedback from the study. Some students even volunteered to become part of follow-up focus groups. In spite of the fact that the questionnaire assured confidentiality, many students included their names, addresses and telephone numbers. The anticipated problems relating to my inability to conduct a random sample were minimized as a large number of subjects were sampled.

Quantitative Data Analysis

In this study on violence I shed light on the following issues:

1. Is there a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at HBCUs?

2. Is there a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at PWIs?

3. If the relationship does exist, does it differ on the two campuses?
4. Does the relationship make a difference above and beyond traditional predictors of academic success for African American students?

**Research Questions One and Two.** The Pearson correlation was used to address research questions one and two. The t-test was used to test the hypothesis that the simple correlation of violence score and GPA at each of the campuses is 0. This test was conducted at the 0.05 significance level. Prior to conducting the statistical test, the assumption of the Pearson correlation procedure was checked and the data were inspected for outliers, missing data, etc.

**Research Question Three.** Initially, the Fisher Z test was to be used to address research question three. This question addressed potential differences between the correlations of background violence and first year academic achievement between the two institutions. Because these correlations were not statistically significant, the Fisher Z test was not performed.

**Research Question Four.** The sequential multiple regression procedure was used to address research question four. Specifically, in one step, student background variables were used to predict social psychological variables. In step two, both background and social psychological variables
were used to predict students' perceptions of university characteristics. Finally, all three clusters of antecedent variables were used to predict students' academic outcomes. This strategy is similar to that used in path analysis and helps explicate the role of background violence in academic achievement. To assess the impact of background violence on the academic achievement of African American first time college students, the analysis focused on unstandardized regression coefficients. Conclusions regarding the role of background violence were based on the statistical significance and the direction of relationships.

The assumptions associated with multiple regression (homoscedasticity, etc.) were checked by an examination of residuals. Additional analyses were conducted to check for problems of collinearity, outliers, etc. The Statistical Analysis System was used to perform all analyses involved in testing the study’s hypotheses.

Quantitative Limitations. Though the literature has been reviewed and previous research findings have been studied, this study has limitations to consider when attempting to generalize the study’s findings. The study has deliberately been restricted to state-supported universities. That approach was taken because the majority of black students currently enrolled in four
year degree programs attend state-supported universities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1985). Nevertheless, the generalizability of the study’s findings may be impacted to some degree. Private universities and colleges provide different environments than those of large, state-supported universities. As a result, some findings from this research may not be applicable to private institutions.

The second area of concern was the restriction of the data to first time college students. Perhaps some bias may result from that restriction. Subjects included in the present study were selected from only two universities that are located in the same geographical area. The possibility exists that questions may be raised about the representativeness of the students who participated in this sample; the sample did not include students from all state-supported universities that black students attend. In addition to quantitative data, case studies involving students from various parts of the country are included as a means of overcoming the geographic restriction. The first time student classification is necessary to this study, as those are the only students of interest to the present study.

The unavailability of pertinent grade point average data presented a problem. During the initial stages of this study, university officials
promised that they would release the desired data. Because the officials were unwilling to release the cumulative grade point average data, I was forced to rely upon self reported expected grade point average data as a proxy.

Possible sources of error may also result from the study’s methodology. Self-completed questionnaires are often subject to bias resulting from misunderstood questions and/or inconsistent answers. To compensate for that limitation, I personally administered 643 surveys in face-to-face situations and was able to answer questions and provide assistance. A detailed transmittal letter accompanied those questionnaires that were mailed, and space was provided for those students wishing to make comments.

Though there may be weaknesses, the strengths of this study far outweigh its weaknesses. Very few national databases on black students in U.S. higher education are available beyond aggregate, summary statistics (Allen, 1986). This study utilizes current, detailed information obtained from students in college. The present research departs from many studies in that it specifically focuses on black students, includes sufficient numbers for detailed analysis, and addresses the special circumstances of black students
in college. Overall, this study is not without its flaws, but it is a helpful, unique source of information about the current status of black students on state supported campuses in the United States.

**Qualitative Research Design**

Data for the qualitative portion of this study were gathered via observations, interviews, archival materials, police documents, and school and newspaper records. My role in this study is that of a **participant observer**. Participant observation serves as an omnibus field strategy in that it simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection (Patton, 1990). As a participant observer, I was fully engaged in experiencing the setting under study, while at the same time trying to understand that setting through personal experience, observations, and talking with other participants about what was happening. During the data collection process I shared as intimately as possible in the lives and activities of the subjects of this study. My purpose was to develop an insider’s view of what was happening. I wanted to not only see what was happening, but to be a part of the setting.
Qualitative Sampling. Perhaps nothing better captures the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods than the different logics that undergird the sampling approaches. Qualitative inquiry focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n = 1), selected purposefully. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990).

The qualitative portion of this study focuses on three information-rich cases (first year students); they are all former or present students. I used the critical case sampling procedure to select subjects for participation in this study. Student number one was arrested, convicted and imprisoned for selling illicit drugs. Student number two was currently serving time in prison on a bank robbery conviction. Student number three was currently serving time in prison for murdering a young man (on campus) at the time when this study was conducted; the murder victim was not a student.

Qualitative Instrumentation. According to Patton (1990), the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry. He proffers that there are four variations in interview instrumentation: (1) informal conversational
interview, (2) interview guide approach, (3) standardized open-ended interview, and (4) closed, fixed response interview. The format selected for interviews in the present study was a combination of the standardized open-ended interview and the informal conversational interview. Those two formats were used because the best features of both instruments were combined to allow greater access to data while maintaining structure. When combined, those two methods tend to increase the salience and relevance of data gathered, while discouraging interviewer bias.

Qualitative Data Collection. Qualitative data were collected via observations, interviews, school records, police interviews, witnesses, telephone interviews, exchange of letters, police records and court documents. I used a modified Spradley's Directional Research Sequence (DRS) to guide the data collection. In some instances I was able to interview the student subjects. In other instances I had to rely on other informants. I gathered information on each student for several weeks. After gathering the necessary data I analyzed the information and constructed domains for each subject. I then used the domain analyses to search for patterns in my data. Once the domains had been refined, the semantic relationships, included and cover terms, and taxonomic and
componential analyses were developed. The domains, taxonomies, and componential analyses (paradigm) graphically depicted similarities and differences between the subjects.

**Qualitative Data Analysis.** Data gathered during the observations and interviews were analyzed and recorded. In that I used the standardized open-ended interview along with the informal conversational interview, the wording and sequence of questions were determined in advance, but that particular format also allowed questions to emerge from the immediate context and during the natural course of the interview. Combining the two interview techniques allowed complete access to information on respondents, while allowing comparability of responses; responses were more salient and relevant because the interviews were built on and emerged from observations. The standardized open-ended interview helped to establish interrater reliability and facilitated organization and analysis of the data (Patton, 1990).

**Qualitative Limitations.** Patton (1990) posits that both interviewing and observing as methodologies have limitations. Qualitative interviews depend upon the subjective perspective of the informants. The perceptions and perspectives reported by participants are always subject to distortion due to
personal biases, anger, anxiety, prevailing conditions, and lack of awareness. The accessibility and willingness of informants often present a problem in qualitative studies. Time constraints certainly present a problem. Nevertheless, I relied on multiple approaches to data collection to help minimize the impact of the limitations.
CHAPTER 4

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of data regarding the influence of violence upon the academic achievement process in African American first time college students. The primary question alludes to a statistically significant relationship between early exposure to violence, above and beyond traditional predictors of achievement, and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students. Relatedly, this relationship is thought to vary among African American students enrolled in HBCUs and black students enrolled in PWIs.

In this chapter I present the results of the study. Descriptive statistics for variables included in the model are discussed first. Next the results of correlation statistics which address research questions one and two are discussed. The Fisher Z test that was to be used to address research question three was not conducted, as there was not a statistically significant difference between the correlations for the two universities. Finally, the multiple regression analyses that were used to address research question four, and to build the final explanatory model are discussed.
The universities in this study were selected because the experimentally accessible population appears to be closely comparable to the larger target population on a large number of variables. One of the universities is predominantly black, while the other is predominantly white. The students were asked to complete a 27 item questionnaire (Appendix A) that measured the perceptions of students regarding their sense of family social status, degree of academic preparedness for college, self evaluation and future expectations, the prevailing conditions and degree of social and academic integration on campus, and the pervasiveness of violence in their community and university settings.

A total of 738 students were surveyed. First time students at the predominantly black university comprised 87.1% of the students surveyed—a total of 643, while first time black students at the predominantly white university constituted 12.9% of the sample respondents—a total of 95. The first time student enrollment at the black university is approximately 2000. Survey questionnaires were administered to 643 students in regular Junior Division classrooms; a convenience sampling technique was used. The 643 completed questionnaires were collected immediately. Approximately 350 survey questionnaires were mailed to the 400 black first time students at the
PWI. Students completed and returned 95 of the surveys for a completion rate of 27%.

Means and Standard Deviations

The **mean** is the measure of central tendency that was used to describe the average of the scores in this study. The **standard deviation** designates the extent to which the scores in the distributions in Table 4 deviate from their mean. When students' SES (parents' income and education levels) was calculated, each item was standardized to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.0. The average of these standard scores was then obtained for each respondent. This average was transformed to have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Values above 50 indicate students from relatively advantaged backgrounds, whereas those below 50 indicate that a student's background is relatively less advantaged than others in the sample. The Pearson correlations among the items were all positive and ranged from 0.37 to 0.51.

When other background factors—HSGPA, personal violence and community violence—are considered, the HBCU data reveal that HSGPA has a mean of 2.45, and a range of 1.0 to 4.0. HSGPA is above the midpoint. Data collected at the PWI indicate that HSGPA had a
considerably higher mean (3.37) than at the HBCU. Personal and community violence had means below the midpoint on both campuses.

When student characteristics at the HBCU were examined—locus of control, educational aspirations, educational expectations—it appears that locus of control, which has a range of 3.0 to 12.0 is significantly above the midpoint with a score of 9.10. Educational aspirations and educational expectations are also above the midpoint with respective means of 2.34 and 2.14 (ranges are 1.0 to 4.0). Data collected from students at the PWI reveal similar patterns.

The third group of variables are university characteristics—academic integration, social integration and campus safety. In order to measure the degree of academic and social integration present on campus, the instrument measured a number of distinct variables; these include student perceptions of overall relations, academic assistance available, feelings of alienation, and campus safety. Overall relations addressed six components (survey item 19) and the majority of the Pearson Correlations among the six components were in the .4 to .8 range. A principal components factor extraction with varimax rotation revealed that there were two distinct dimensions to students’ responses to these items: relations with other blacks
Table 3 gives descriptive statistics on the variables considered in the present study.

**TABLE 3: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.79</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
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<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
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<td>.98</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.99</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.99</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
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**Abbreviations:**
- N = Number of Valid Observations
- Mean = Sample Mean
- Std. Dev. = Sample Standard Deviation
- Minimum = Sample Minimum Score
- Maximum = Sample Maximum Score

HSGPA = High School Grade Point Average
LOCUS = Locus of Control
EDASP = Educational Aspirations
EDEXP = Educational Expectations
OV RELAT = Overall Relations
SEEK = Seeks Academic Assistance
SOCIAL = Social Integration
SUPPORT = Support Systems
PER VIOL = Personal violence

SUPPORT = Support Systems
RELATE W = Relations With Whites
COM VIOL = Community Violence
RELATE B = Relations With Blacks
ALIEN = Alienation
CAMPUS SAF = Campus Safety
GENDER
EXGPA = Expected Grade Point Average
and relations with other whites. The correlation among these components was .50. This distinction will be used for supplemental analysis.

When the four social components (survey item 22) of university characteristics measured students' perceptions of opportunities to interact socially with others on campus—differentiated by race—the majority of correlations among these variables were in the .25 to .50 range. All of the variables within this group had means above the midpoint at the HBCU. When the same variables were measured at the PWI similar results were obtained, with the exception of campus safety, which had a mean of 2.6 (range 0 to 6.0).

When students were asked to indicate their EXGPA, students at the PWI indicated a slightly higher mean score expectation (3.14) than students at the HBCU (2.39). The possible range for scores was 1.0 to 4.0. It appears that the EXGPAs at the HBCU were below the expectations of black students at the PWI.

**Correlation Coefficients**

Table 4 presents the correlation matrix for the variables considered in this study. The Pearson correlation was used to address research questions one and two. The model had to be changed somewhat because of the lack
of availability of actual GPA data. In lieu of using actual GPA data, the model uses EXGPA. Results of the present model follow. Pearson correlations among many of the variables proved statistically significant \( (p < .05) \). The correlations among the variables in this study were very strong, and there appears to be a great deal of interdependence among the variables.

In terms of the direction, it is immediately apparent that there are no negative values in the table. Correlations between background factors (particularly violence) and other variables are discussed below.

Research question one hypothesizes that there is a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at HBCUs. Results show that HSGPA and personal violence were the only two background factors that appeared to have strong correlations. When I examined correlations between background factors and student characteristics, I found very strong correlations between HSGPA and the following variables: locus of control, EDASP and EDEXP. Exposure to personal violence had a strong correlation with locus of control.

HBCU results also reveal strong correlations between background factors and university characteristics—HSGPA and support systems, personal violence exposure and relations with whites, personal violence...
### TABLE 4
PEARSON CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES

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*p = < .05* Underlined values are statistically significant

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p < .05  Underlined values are statistically significant
exposure and campus safety. Community violence exposure had strong
 correlations with the following variables: social integration, support
 systems available, relations with blacks, relations with whites, and campus
 safety. Interactions between EXGPA and other variables for HBCU
 students yielded the following correlations: HSGPA, locus of control,
 EDASP, EDEXP and support systems available.

 Research question two hypothesizes that there is a statistically significant
 relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic
 achievement of African American first time students at PWIs. Background
 factors did not exhibit statistically significant correlations among
 themselves. When I examined correlations between background factors and
 student characteristics, however, there were strong correlations between
 HSGPA and locus of control, and exposure to community violence and
 locus of control. Correlations among background factors and university
 characteristics for respondents at the PWI reveal a relationship between
 HSGPA and campus safety, and strong correlations between exposure to
 personal violence and social integration, exposure to personal violence and
 feelings of alienation, community violence exposure and relations with
 whites, and community violence exposure and feelings of alienation on
campus. Correlations between EXGPA and other variables at the PWI indicate that the only strong correlation is with HSGPA.

When the conceptual framework is considered in proper perspective, the relationship between EXGPA and background factors—specifically violence—at both universities becomes apparent. Using the four background factors as independent variables, they influence the next group of dependent variables (student characteristics). The background factors and student characteristics (independent variables) then influence the dependent variable—university characteristics. The three groups of variables then act as independent variables and ultimately impact upon the students’ EXGPA.

Regression Results

The objective of this portion of the study was to gain insight into the manner in which violence in a student’s background impacted upon academic achievement during the student’s first year in college. Regression analyses were used to address research question four. Research question four inquires as to whether the relationship make a difference above and beyond traditional predictors of academic success for African American students? Toward this end, the results of the regression analyses conducted for this study are presented in Table 5. The results of eight regression
models are presented. These models reflect the **sequential modeling** strategy (similar to that used in path analysis) used for this study. In particular, the background variables (SES, HSGPA, personal violence, community violence, and gender) were used to predict social psychological variables. The second model used both to predict students' perceptions of university characteristics. The final model used all previous predictors to predict students' expectations for their first year grade point averages (EXPGPA). This strategy is similar to that used in path modeling and it helps elucidate the role of violence in a student's background in the achievement process. The results of these analyses are presented separately for the HBCU and the PWI.

With respect to predicting the social psychological variables in the model, both universities yield squared multiple correlations in the .05 - .06 range. The difference in the significance levels of the model for the two universities is due to the differential sample sizes. Nevertheless, the results for the HBCU are interesting. As expected, there are positive correlations for EDEXP and locus of control, and HSGPA and SES. The coefficients linking personal experience with violence with locus of control, however, is negative. Apparently, students who have experienced violence in their
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Underlined values are not statistically significant at the .05 probability level.

(*) Overall regression is not statistically significant at the .05 probability level.
personal backgrounds, irrespective of SES or HSGPA, have less of a sense of control over the environment than their more fortunate classmates.

With the exception of SUPPORT, the models used to predict perceptions of university characteristics appear to be hardly meaningful. While the overall regression equations for the HBCU are occasionally significant, the squared multiple correlations indicate that only a small fraction of the potential variance is explained. However, the model for support yielded a significant equation, which is due largely to the locus of control variable. The negative sign of the coefficient indicates that the greater the student’s sense of control over the environment, the more positively the university is perceived with respect to academic support systems.

With respect to students’ expectations for end of year performance, both universities yield relatively large squared multiple correlations. However, it should be noted that the number of predictors to sample size for the PWI is below the 10 to one ratio recommended by some authors. The results for this particular campus, therefore, should be interpreted with some caution. Nevertheless, some patterns emerge across the two settings. HSGPA is clearly a potent predictor of expected college performance. Locus of control and educational expectations, are also significant predictors.
CHAPTER 5
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I presented the results of the statistical tests relating to the influence of violence—as well as of background factors, student characteristics, and university characteristics—upon academic achievement among African American first time college students. In the present chapter I discuss three male, African American college students whose lives have been devastated by violence. The qualitative portion of this study differs from the quantitative section in that I specifically address research question one. I examined contextual conditions to support my contention that early exposure to violence impacts upon the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at HBCUs.

The case studies reported here describe various scenarios that resulted in the incarceration of my former students. My role is that of a participant observer. I provide detailed descriptions of the circumstances surrounding the tragic events that led to their convictions and incarceration. In each case study I provide a description of the students' backgrounds, as well as of the type of college preparation they received in high school. The degree of
integration of each student into the campus environment is also examined.

The fact that the students were incarcerated tended to restrict the interview process somewhat; however, family members, friends, and former teachers were interviewed. Police officers, witnesses, and others involved in the crimes the students were alleged to have committed were also interviewed. Additional information was obtained from police reports and transcript records. After commonalities among/between the students were identified, the domains, taxonomic, and componential analyses were constructed.

College Environment

Each of the students depicted in the following case studies was enrolled in the medium-sized, Southeastern university where I am employed. The college is a publicly supported, coeducational, open-admissions institution with a black student population of 91%, a white student population of 6%, and three percent other ethnic backgrounds. The enrollment figures show 10,546 students in attendance; Fall 1996 first year student enrollment was approximately 2000. Of that number, 67% of the students were enrolled in developmental education courses.

The Developmental Education Program is designed to provide instruction and other support services for students who are deficient in the
basic skills of reading, English/writing, mathematics and study skills. Each area also provides tutorial laboratories and computer assisted instruction. Exit criteria have been developed for each course to ensure that students have attained the competencies and skills required to move to the next course level; students are required to demonstrate competency and pass proficiency examinations and standardized tests. The minimum grade for passing developmental courses is "C." Students who earn less than a grade of "C" must re-enroll in the class. The university awards institutional credit for developmental courses; the credit cannot be used for degree credit.

The subjects of the following case studies were enrolled in several developmental classes. Courses offered in developmental education are Developmental English, Developmental Reading, and Developmental Mathematics. Students are placed in developmental education classes on the basis of their ACT and SAT scores. Students scoring zero to 13 on the English section of the ACT, or 200 to 300 on the verbal section of the SAT, are assigned to Developmental English classes. If students score below 14 on the reading section of the ACT, or below 320 on the verbal section of the SAT, they are required to enroll in Developmental Reading. Students having scores of zero to 15 on the mathematics section of the ACT, or 200
to 360 on the mathematics section of the SAT are required to enroll in Developmental Mathematics. Students enrolled in developmental education classes in reading and English are also required to take a study skills class. Those students enrolled in more than one developmental education class are limited to a maximum of 15 credit hours during a regular semester. The recommended class size for developmental courses is 25 students.

The fact that the students depicted in the case studies were enrolled in at least one developmental education class lends credence to the expectation that these students' preparation for college was inferior to some degree. The existence of tutorial laboratories and computer assisted instruction, in addition to developmental classes attest to the university’s resolve to admit underprepared students and to provide learning experiences designed to address and rectify their educational disparities. Atmospherically, the university is very nurturing and maternalistic. Over the years I have developed very positive, warm relationships with my students and am very cognizant and protective of their emotions and overall well being. I enjoyed a close and nurturing relationship with all but one of the students depicted here; in that the third subject’s (Case Study C) legal encounters occurred in close proximity to the beginning of his college experience, we did not have
a chance to get to know each other. We are presently communicating via mail and through his father and getting to know one another.

Case Study A

Students enrolled in developmental reading classes are allowed to “test out” of the classes. They are required to take the Nelson-Denny Test on three different occasions; tests are administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. If students score satisfactorily, they are allowed to move to a higher level reading class, or to exit the reading classes altogether. Tom had been assigned to my lower level developmental reading class, but had scored substantially higher than the necessary score for exiting the class. While working with Tom to have him placed in the proper class, I found him to be quite intelligent, but very reserved and somewhat introverted. As I chatted with him in an effort to establish rapport, he offered to return and speak to my class on the dangers of drug use and abuse. It was then that I learned that he was on probation resulting from drug charges. Other teachers in the department also embraced Tom and he became one of our favorite students. Relatedly, he was very well received by other students and quickly became admired and respected.
Family

Tom was from a lower middle class family, but they were by no means affluent. They lived in an area of town where crime and violence were regular occurrences. Both of his parents were college graduates. Even though Tom's parents were educators in a Southern town, they did not earn much money. In addition to being an educator, his father was also the minister of a small, rural church. For many years Tom's father had been involved in civil rights activities; Tom's dad used his pulpit to rail against racial injustice. As is typical in the South, the reverend orchestrated boycotts of local business establishments that reportedly engaged in unfair practices in transactions involving black citizens; he was also instrumental in getting black men and women to register to vote. Essentially, Tom's father was a "thorn" to the police department of that Southern town.

Tom felt that his father was so intimately involved with other activities that he did not have time to spend with his family. The children suffered emotionally from that lack of attention. The lack of bonding and a strong, positive father-son relationship led to a schism between Tom and his father. Tom was the third of seven children; he had four brothers and two sisters.
Because the area in which he lived was a haven for drugs and the turbulent atmosphere that accompanies the drug trade, Tom became acquainted with violence at an early age. He began to experiment with drugs at the tender age of seven. He had been introduced to marijuana by older cousins and other drug users in the neighborhood. They seemed to be having such a good time that he wanted to try it. Eventually Tom discovered the “down side” of drugs; drug habits need a means of support. Being very young, he had no means of supporting his habit—other than by becoming a drug dealer. In order to sustain his drug addiction, the seven year old experimenter became a drug pusher.

**Drug Pusher**

At 14 years old Tom was introduced to cocaine (both powder and crack). Since he needed a means of supporting his cocaine habit, he reasoned that his only viable alternative was to become a cocaine pusher. Once he was introduced to crack cocaine, the sweet young boy became temperament, arrogant and abrasive. Tom’s behavior was consistent with research findings. In a study of African American inner city youth, Weisman (1993) examined the effects of crack dealing on emotionally disturbed adolescents. Crack dealing was most often found to have dynamics and consequences...
separate from those of crack use. Those consequences include PTSD and other significant emotional disturbances arising from the violence associated with crack dealing, and the shaping of adolescent identity by the associated culture of violence and guns. Moreover, Gurling et al. (1991) posit that alcohol and drug abuse produce long term cognitive impairment that may not be grossly evident in clinical practice and may occur even at relatively low levels of intake. In that Tom’s experience with drugs has spanned many years, perhaps the case can be made that he has sustained cognitive impairment.

Tom’s business began to “boom,” so the young entrepreneur dropped out of school in the 11th grade to “pursue business interests.” By that time he had become extremely confident and never imagined that one day his crimes would catch up with him and he would have to pay for his indiscretions. Tom was confident that he was smarter than the police, but he also became paranoid; he never knew when he would be injured or murdered because of his cocaine business. His relationships with family and friends became even more strained as a result of the stress connected with his drug dealing. He found it difficult to make or sustain emotional attachments. He felt that everybody was “out to get him.”
Tom's illicit activities were eventually discovered and he was arrested for selling drugs. His first offense resulted in little more than a slap on the wrist. Naturally, with the enormous amount of money he was making, he was not dissuaded by a slap on the wrist. The second time he was arrested, he was sentenced to four years in a detention center. The incarceration devastated Tom's fragile emotions even more.

**Jail Experiences**

When Tom speaks to beginning college students or elementary/junior high school groups, he begins by telling them, "If you can't do the time, then don't do the crime." He stresses the importance of getting a good education, as he learned from experience that there is no substitute for preparing oneself to meet life's challenges. He realized, after incarceration, that the only means of escaping the quagmire he had created for himself was a college education. With that revelation, he began taking classes at the penal facility. He also enrolled in correspondence courses that he needed to prepare himself for college. Tom earned his General Equivalence Diploma (GED) while incarcerated; apparently the educational institutions he had attended had not adequately prepared him to successfully complete the GED without additional effort.
Being incarcerated and trying to prepare for the future were definitely not easy for Tom, as he found prison life to be very hard and inflexible. Prisoners were given three meals a day; the milk was usually sour. If prisoners complained about the sour milk, they were told that they should not have come there in the first place. After 4:00 p.m. prisoners were not allowed to have food. A typical breakfast consisted of hard grits, with no salt. Lunch was generally cold soup. Dinner included hard, smelly bread and an accompanying meal that was just as distasteful. There were two people assigned to each cell, and bathroom facilities were not private. Each cell received one roll of toilet paper per week. At 10:00 p.m. the cell was locked and lights, radios, and television sets had to be turned off. Sometimes night guards would attempt to make inmates talk, just so that they would be disciplined.

The work and discipline were extremely hard in prison. Inmates had to be awake at 6:00 a.m. They were then sent to the fields with tools that were old and delapidated. If the tools were broken, the inmates were beaten. On occasions when inmates had been beaten, parents/wives were not allowed to seen them on visiting day. They were told that the inmates had been moved to another facility. If prisoners were sent to lockdown--disciplinary action--
they were beaten severely and forced to obey prison rules. Prisoners had to be attentive to guards and abide by prison rules; there was no other alternative. Throughout Tom’s incarceration, the severity of prison life never diminished.

**Probation**

When Tom entered the university, the criminal justice system had placed him on probation for two years. He now had to account to a probation officer and a judge. Tom often spoke of the harsh, derogatory statements made by his probation officer; he felt that the officer deliberately used demeaning tones when addressing him. Racial taunts and threats were among the abuses heaped upon him. Sometimes Tom was certain that the probation officer was trying to provoke a confrontation. Nevertheless, he was determined to avoid trouble, so he remained calm and passive throughout those episodes. I attempted to assist Tom by having teachers write letters to his probation officer and the judge in charge of the case.

**Rehabilitation**

Tom felt that he had a mission to accomplish. He had to tell his story, just to keep some other young person from making the same mistakes he had made. Subsequent to enrolling at the university, he began to seek ways
of helping other students avoid the pitfalls of drugs. After consulting with several teachers, it was decided that Tom would share his experiences with various classes; thus affording him an opportunity to share his prior experiences with other young, impressionable beginning college students.

During those sessions, Tom warned the students of the hardships that lay ahead if they became involved with drugs. Numerous medical and physical problems that result from drug abuse were also discussed. The abuse of drugs was placed in a very pejorative context; it was not glorified. Tom never failed to discuss the constraints that the criminal justice system’s probation places upon one’s life; he attempted to get the students to vicariously experience his predicament. In addition to speaking to college students, Tom also became a very vibrant and prolific speaker at other youth gatherings.

**Conclusion**

This case does not have a happy ending. There is great uncertainty and I am left wondering about Tom’s present status. I have made many unsuccessful attempts to contact him. I sent him a Christmas present via his parents’ address, but I am uncertain as to whether he received it. The last time I saw Tom, he had come to my classroom and was extremely upset.
He told me that his parole officer had ordered him to submit to an unscheduled drug test. It was the parole officer’s contention that he had tested positive for drugs. Despite the fact that an independent laboratory disproved the probation officer’s allegations, Tom was being returned to prison. In spite of many attempts, I have been unsuccessful in obtaining information relative to Tom’s present whereabouts and/or status.

Case Study B

My second case study involves a student from a different family configuration than the student depicted in the first case study. Dick was born in California. He lived with his mother, stepfather, and several siblings. He described his stepfather as an arrogant and abusive man who often beat Dick and his mother; he did not indicate that his siblings were abused. They lived in a poor section of town and Dick attended public school. Street gangs were prevalent in the area in which they lived; robberies and murders were commonplace. The school he attended was located in an area that was very prone to violence. Dick described those early years as very unhappy, apprehensive ones.

When he was nine years old the family moved to the South. Things were pretty much the same in the new setting, except for the rage and hostility
that had begun to grow in Dick. He became angry with the world for allowing the abuse that he suffered. He wanted to strike out at others to relieve his own pain. He lived in constant fear of his stepfather's rage.

Dick was put out of school several times for fighting with other students. He also threatened the teachers. He felt bad and unlovable; he felt that all of the bad things that were happening in his family were his fault.

Dick's behavior is consistent with research findings. Children from violent homes exhibit more behavior problems than children from nonviolent homes (Carlson, 1984). Violent tendencies are sometimes learned in the home, and as a result children from violent homes behave violently and aggressively. Such children model the conflict resolving skills they have learned from dysfunctional family members and become violent and abusive (Afoloyan, 1993). Afoloyan also proffers that children who are victims of violent homes often feel responsible for the violence. Abused children have significant emotional and intellectual delays, problems with social adjustment, and neuropsychological deficits (Bowlby, 1976; Cohn, 1979; Green, 1983).

As Dick grew older, he decided that he would not continue to be abused. With that resolve, he left home at a relatively young age and sustained
himself by engaging in illegal activities. He was arrested several times for committing misdemeanor crimes. Eventually he met and married a young lady whose background was very similar to his. The lack of marketable skills and his inability to secure and maintain a job put a strain on the marriage. The marriage survived several “rocky” years.

**College Experiences**

After having four children and not being able to get a decent job, Dick enrolled in the university as a first time student. I met him that first semester and found him to be filled with anger and rhetoric; I found Dick to be very much a black activist. Because his high school academic experiences had not adequately prepared him to master the educational demands that first semester placed upon him, his problems were exacerbated.

Our class invited guest lecturer, Ed Pratt, editor of *Saturday Advocate*, to discuss racism and violence with the students. The activity was videotaped and Dick was one of the students involved in the videotaped presentation. During that discussion period I became acquainted with Dick’s experiences with racism and violence. He had a criminal record, as he had been involved with the judicial system on several occasions. But he saw college
as a chance to “make his family proud of him.” He did not have a chance to get very involved with college life because of family obligations. There were several students that Dick became closely aligned with, but he was generally a loner. His militant attitude precluded close associations with many of the faculty members, but those who truly understood him were very supportive of his plight.

Family Problems

I invited Dick and his wife to go to church with me, because I felt that his attitude needed modification. He visited my church and talked with the pastor, but it appeared as though he was not destined to escape family problems. Dick and his wife separated on several occasions. His wife had become very disenchanted over his inability to support the family. She was also a student at the university. He was devastated and relied upon me as a confidant. Sensing that there were things that he could not discuss with a female, I cultivated a relationship between Dick and a young male counselor. I felt that a man could better understand his predicament and advise him from a male’s point of view (Dick had never had a positive, male role model). The situation worked very well and Dick appeared to make much progress. He continued to come in and talk with me on a
weekly basis. I always inquired about his family and his employment situation. The last time he came in to see me, he told me that he had been promised a night job at a local plant, so things were looking promising for him.

**Bank Robbery**

The following week, as I left the building to go home, I saw Dick's wife. I inquired as to how he was progressing. She asked me if I had heard about him, and she quickly learned that I did not know what she was talking about. Tragically, during the next five minutes I felt as if a shotgun had ripped my insides apart. She told me that Dick had been arrested for robbing a bank that was located about a mile from the university. The following week, Dick telephoned me at school and sought my assistance; he promised that he would phone again, but he never did.

**Bank Teller**

According to interviews with police officers, witnesses, and booking records, Dick was identified as the black man who entered the bank and brandished a handgun. Dick reportedly entered the bank and yelled, “Give me all the money, this is a robbery.” A teller at the bank says she then heard him say, “Give me your 20s, 100s, and 50s.” She stated that she
glanced up and saw a black male wearing a cap, dark sunglasses, and a jogging suit. She said that the suspect told her, "I'm not playing." After giving him the money in her drawer, she stated that he moved to the next teller; other tellers corroborated the first teller's account. An extra duty deputy, stationed at the bank, chased the suspect through a wooded area after he exited the bank.

The Arrest

One of the witnesses reported that he saw Dick enter the bank with a gun in his hand and went next door to a convenience store and called the police. An extra duty policeman stationed at the bank across the street monitored the call and observed the chase. He proceeded to drive around to the side of the wooded area where he expected the suspect to exit. The policeman stated that he stopped a black male subject after the subject exited the wooded area. The police officer identified Dick as the subject that he saw exiting the woods. Reportedly, Dick was sweating profusely and was very nervous. He said he found it odd that Dick was sweating profusely about his face and forehead, but his clothing was dry. The officer stated that Dick appeared to have been running through the woods because of the heavy perspiration and green leafy vegetation in his hair. The officer said that he
then placed Dick in his patrol car and advised him of his Miranda Warning Rights. In spite of the officer’s allegations, Dick had nothing in his possession.

The officer in charge of the investigation stated that he then called for a K-9 officer. The K-9 officer followed the suspect’s tracks from the point where the first officer reportedly began chasing him. The lead officer stated that the dog exited the woods at the same location that the arresting officer had seen Dick exit the woods. According to the lead officer, the dog tracked the robbery suspect to that point and located a blue book bag (affixed with a Southern University logo) that has been stuffed into a rusty barrel; the dog also found clothing and a semi-automatic weapon.

**Evidence**

The detectives retrieved a large amount of U.S. currency from the book bag and later confirmed that the currency was “bait money” from the bank that had just been robbed. When the origin of the weapon was traced, detectives learned that the weapon had been purchased from a local pawn shop. Upon obtaining a copy of the bill of sale and the firearms transaction record, the detectives learned that the weapon had been purchased by Dick’s estranged wife. The detectives then questioned the former wife and were
told that the weapon had been stolen from her purse while she was visiting at an unknown address; she contends that she reported the theft, but the officers said they could find no record of the theft claim.

**Sentencing**

In spite of the fact that the bank teller could not identify him in a police line up, Dick was booked into City Prison and charged with armed robbery. Dick's family did not have sufficient means to hire a lawyer and he was represented by the Public Defender's Office. His lawyer advised him to plea bargain in an attempt to get a reduced sentence. Dick followed his lawyer's advice and was sentenced to five years—with credit for time served. During the sentencing phase of the trial, Dick’s attorney was commended for having done an excellent job. The judge went on to say that if the case had gone to trial, and Dick had been convicted of the charge, he would have been sentenced to 20 to 30 years in jail. Dick’s lawyer had cooperated with the prosecution and was able to have the charge reduced from armed robbery to first degree robbery. The judge further admonished Dick by saying, “I’ll inform you that you will be a habitual offender if you ever do this conduct again. If you come into my court on a charge of anything like this again, I’ll sentence you to jail for the rest of your life.”
Dick thanked the judge for his concern and reassured him that he would never again appear in a court of law as a result of committing a crime.

Dick's wife never visited him, nor did she come to his trial.

**Conclusion**

I have not heard from Dick since the week after he was arrested. At that time he called me at school; he also called the male counselor that I had introduced him to. He asked us to help him. I told him that I would make inquiries and he was to call me back. I spoke with several people in an attempt to assist him. One of the persons I spoke with is a homicide detective—a family friend. He was not pleased that the young man had called me, but he did tell me exactly what the circumstances were.

Ironically, Dick did not call me back. I will always believe that the young detective threatened him and demanded that he not contact me again. I have spoken with Dick's wife several times since his incarceration. I feel pretty powerless in this situation; nevertheless, I pray that this incarceration does not quench Dick's thirst for academic pursuits.

**Case Study C**

Perhaps the most tragic and devastating experience I have had with a student involves a young man from the East Coast. Harry was born and
raised in New York City and attended the public schools in that area. He lived in an area where African American and Latino gangs frequently staged gang wars. Though he did not acknowledge being a former gang member, his speech and mannerisms were indicative of other gang members that I had taught. His mode of dress and his quick temper also caused me to question his gang membership status.

Harry entered college during the Spring semester, and in approximately three weeks found his young life encumbered by deadly circumstances. Ironically when Harry's father drove him to the university for the first time he said to a relative, "Take care of Harry, I don't want to lose him." I later learned that other children in the family had succumbed to the violent street life that surrounded them.

Because the events that are detailed here occurred very close to the beginning of the second semester I had only encountered Harry several times. I vividly recall those times, as he usually arrived late for class, and I prefer having students arrive promptly. Many of the students in that class had bonded, as it was the second semester, but Harry did not appear to be close to any of them. A large percentage of the class members studied
together, as they also had other common classes. Several of them had shared classes during the first semester, as well.

**Family**

Harry was raised by his grandmother. He said that he never lived with his mother or his father long enough to get to know them; I presumed from the tone that they were never married. He never indicated whether or not his siblings were also raised by his grandmother. I got the impression that they had different mothers. Harry said that times were hard, but there was a tremendous amount of love between him and his grandmother. Yet he longed for the presence of a strong male figure in his life. To fill that void, he sought out other role models that were not very positive ones. They taught him to survive on the streets. Those years on the streets caused him to become hard and indifferent. He never wanted to put himself in a position where he would be emotionally hurt again.

**Drug Problems**

New York is a city where gangs flourish, but Harry contends that gangs were not a problem for him. According to Harry, the etiology of his problem—like that of today’s youth—is the seduction of drugs and television. He says that the drug dealers are the problem, as they are the ones that
young people in poverty stricken communities emulate; the lust and seduction of gold, cars, clothes and beautiful women are fueling the quest for drug dealing. Harry contends that drug dealers have destroyed our communities and the institutions that educate our young. He said that drugs are being sold in our public schools, as well as on university campuses. He had witnessed drug transactions in the dormitory in which he was housed, as well as in the building where I teach (how frightening). Harry emphatically stated, “The start of a bad future is to start selling drugs.”

The Murder

Several different accounts of the events that transpired that fateful night were given. Harry maintained that he had never seen the shooting victim until two days prior to the shooting. He said that he was standing outside a dormitory with a friend who was talking with a young lady. Several young men approached them and became verbally abusive. Harry said that he walked away from the confrontation. The incident so frightened Harry that he began carrying a gun that he had purchased earlier. Harry went on to say that two days later, while standing in front of the same dormitory, several young men drove by and said that they were going to shoot him. The victim of the shooting is alleged to have exited the car and run toward Harry. It
was then that Harry pulled his weapon and fired several shots before running into his dormitory. He called a relative who quickly picked him up and ushered him away from the campus. Later that night, after learning from news reports that the young man had died, Harry turned himself in to police. He never denied the fact that he shot the young man; however, he maintained that it was self defense.

**Events Following the Shooting**

Witnesses to the shooting contradicted Harry’s version of the events. Students who witnessed the altercation did not report the victim being in possession of a gun. According to several witnesses, the victim had exited his vehicle to speak with another university student. Harry is alleged to have intervened and shot the victim at point blank range with a .38 caliber pistol. Witnesses contend that as the victim fell he yelled, “Why me?”

Harry was accused of then standing over the helpless youth and firing two more shots.

The eyewitness accounts of Harry standing over the dying youth and firing the gun several more times caused me to wonder if he could possibly be suffering PTSD symptoms. To deliberately kill someone without provocation is definitely not a normal reaction. Could it possibly be that the
young victim triggered a repressed memory or caused Harry to recall a scene from the past? To my knowledge, no medical evaluation was conducted to determine if a medical connection exists.

Harry's reaction appears to be consistent with findings from a Southern California study. The findings from a study conducted by medical researchers indicates that as a result of having directly or indirectly experienced violence, many students met the full diagnostic criteria for PTSD, even though they had never been formally diagnosed. The students suffered from intrusive memories of the violent events they had witnessed. They went to extremes to avoid reminders of the episode, and when they inadvertently came upon such reminders, their hearts beat faster, or they were exaggeratedly startled, among other symptoms (Viadero, 1995).

Much controversy arose when it was learned that a high ranking university administration official was at the scene of the shooting, but rather than intervene in an effort to prevent the murder, he ran. That revelation led teachers and students to label him the "track star." Not only was a university administrator involved in the case, but a faculty member—a relative—picked Harry up following the shooting and took him to his home.
It was the faculty member who urged Harry to turn himself in to police; he accompanied Harry to the police station.

**The Trial**

When the case went to trial, the Assistant District Attorney was very hard on the relative who had transported Harry following the shooting. The relative was asked if he had observed police officers affixing the yellow tape that designates a crime scene. The relative responded that he had seen the tape. When the prosecutor inquired as to whether he thought his young relative had been involved in the crime, he answered “yes.” The prosecutor also asked the relative if he loved Harry and whether he thought that aiding and abetting a fugitive is unethical.

The defense attorney in the case attempted to convince the jury that the shooting was in self defense and that Harry should be convicted of manslaughter. He proceeded to paint a picture of the university as a very violent, drug infested environment where students live in virtual fear of their lives. The defense attorney pointed out that the victim was not a university student, but was typical of those in surrounding communities who invade the campus environment. At that point the prosecutor objected to the defense attorney’s attempts to portray the university as a criminal...
atmosphere in which weapons must be carried. (The prosecutor is an alumnus of the university). The prosecutor vehemently stated, "The atmosphere at (the university) has nothing to do with the murder of (victim)."

The prosecuting attorney was not the only person appalled by the defense attorney's tactics. The victim's mother expressed dissatisfaction with the portrayal of her son. She said, "(His) lawyer tried to make my son look like a hoodlum. My son was a good son." She expressed great confusion over her son's demise. She lamented, "I can never see him again. I'm still no further now than I was in the beginning, my baby is dead. This man can go to prison and still see his family. This child needs to pray and put Jesus in his life."

The prosecutor confided that in retrospect he feels that this case differs significantly from other cases he has tried because there was no motive involved in the shooting. It appears that the victim was shot for no apparent reason. The aspect of the case that was most troubling to the assistant district attorney is the fact that he had to prosecute a young, black man—a black male who was enrolled in college; he said it was a winless situation. Nevertheless, it eases his conscience somewhat that he has
vindicated a victim who left behind a little girl and a mother. Perceivably this sentence will send a message to other students who carry weapons; the moment you shoot another person, you could very well spend the rest of your life in a six by six cell. No drugs were found in the system of either the offender or the victim.

**Sentencing**

Harry was indicted for second degree murder and pled not guilty. Following a trial by a 12 member jury, he was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to serve a term of life imprisonment at hard labor without the benefit of probation, parole or suspension of sentence. In spite of the fact that the sentence appears hopeless, Harry passes the time by reviewing court transcripts and preparing for his appeal. We communicate frequently, but I was appalled when prison officials recently returned several pieces of religious literature I had mailed to Harry. The note accompanying the returned material stated that religious literature from individuals is prohibited. I seize every available opportunity to encourage Harry to prepare for his future and to take advantage of circumstances and situations that will further his education. He assures me that he is doing so. He contends that in addition to looking forward to the future, he is
becoming very familiar with legal jargon as he prepares for his appeals. I pray that things will work out well for him.

Findings: Spradley’s DRS

In this study of the influence of violence, as well as certain other pertinent variables, upon the academic achievement process in African American first time college students, the observations, interviews, and various documents and records used to gather data provided great insight as I organized the domains and taxonomies. After the data were collected, I analyzed them to uncover commonalities and differences among the subjects of the case studies.

The grand tour and mini tour observations and interviews allowed me to categorize and refine the data. By searching for cultural patterns, I was able to construct a domain analysis. Following my very general observations, I became more focused and began searching for semantic relationships between cover terms and included terms (Appendix B). Cover terms name the cultural domains, while included terms are names for all of the smaller categories inside the domain; the semantic relationship links the two categories together.
After constructing the cultural domains, I then sought to determine the manner in which the cultural domains were organized—the taxonomies. Very much like the cultural domain, a taxonomy is a set of categories organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship. The major difference between the two is that a taxonomy vividly depicts relationships among the components of the cultural domain. Essentially, I looked for similarities based on the same semantic relationship (Appendix C).

Following my taxonomic analysis, I became even more focused and selective in my observations. The final step, componential analysis, allowed me to systematically search for the attributes associated with the cultural categories. I looked for contrasts among the members of the domains; contrasts may be viewed as attributes or components of meaning. Constructing a componential analysis allowed me to look for the units of meaning that people assign to their cultural categories (Appendix D).

The graphics in Appendices B, C and D display the findings revealed by Spradley’s Developmental Research Sequence. The domain analyses reveal characteristics that the students shared. The taxonomic analyses reveal diversities among the students. The componential analyses reveal similarities, as well as differences.
Domain analysis

Following focused observations, an intense analysis of the data gathered on the students uncovered several cultural domains; the cultural domains allowed me to construct a domain analysis. Domain analyses indicate that all students share the following characteristics: student classification, race, gender, course offerings, behavior, college, jail, interactions with law officers and other people. The semantic relationships in this section are strict inclusion, function, location for action and cause-effect. A number of included terms fell under the respective domains.

Taxonomic analysis

Following the focused observations I turned my attention to constructing a taxonomic analysis to uncover relationships among the included terms in each domain. When constructing taxonomic analyses, I considered the relationships and developed the following categories: legal officials, crimes, rationale, tests, courses, family background, family structure, SES, abuse and geographic areas. Taxonomic analyses allowed me to graphically depict the dimensions of contrasts among the students.
Componential analysis

Once I completed the taxonomic analyses I began to make selective observations. As I began the selective observations, I asked contrast questions based on the differences that exist among the terms in each domain. As a result of posing the questions, I identified several differences in student characteristics. Once the selective observations were complete, I began to construct a componential analysis. During this stage of Spradley's DRS, I set out to organize and represent all of the contrasts that had been uncovered. A componential analysis includes the entire process of searching for contrasts, sorting them out, grouping some together as dimensions of contrast, and entering all the information onto a paradigm. The dimensions I included are: perpetrated crime, currently incarcerated, supportive family, first time college student, developmental student, African American, male, poverty background, academic preparation, integration into the college environment, traditional family, devastation by violence, abusiveness of family, community violence, influence of drugs and gangs, and behavior problems. Similarities and differences among the categories are striking.
Conclusion

Once the cultural domains, and taxonomic and componential analyses were constructed, I discovered a number of similarities among the cultural domains. All of the case study subjects were African American males who were products of relatively poor families and grew up amidst violent surroundings. The three subjects were exposed to personal and/or community violence very early in their lives. They were all victims of physical, and/or emotional abuse. The students avoided discussing sexual abuse, but the literature shows that it is a common problem associated with “street life.” None of the students admitted being former or present gang members, but the volatile environments from which they hail are testament to the fact that they were influenced by gang activities. They were all first time college students and were enrolled in developmental education courses; they were all academically underprepared for college. All of the subjects are currently incarcerated and serving time for breaking the law.

The taxonomic analyses graphically show characteristics that differ among the students. Those differences included family construction, geographic areas in which they live, types of abuse sustained, interactions with legal officials and types of crimes committed. While there were some
differences among the case study subjects, the commonalities they share far outweigh the differences.

The componential analyses compare and contrast students on a number of points. The paradigm reveals that all students are African American, male, first time college students. They have committed crimes, are currently incarcerated and their lives have been devastated by violence. All of the students were academically underprepared for college. The students differ on a number of points as well. Their family construction differs; Tom was raised by both his natural parents. Dick was reared by his mother and stepfather. Harry grew up in an extended family situation; he was raised by his grandmother rather than by his parents. Tom was striving to become an integral part of the college environment prior to his latest incarceration. Dick and Harry were very much estranged and totally absorbed in their own problems. Tom, unlike Dick and Harry, admitted to being seduced by illicit drugs.

The lack of emotion and the unusual responses demonstrated by Harry when he murdered the young man is indicative of one or more of the symptoms of PTSD. Perhaps Tom’s emotional problems that appeared to be related to drug dealing are also early indications of PTSD. Ben certainly
exhibited severe emotional symptoms. Perhaps the early abuse that he 
suffered contributed to the development of PTSD symptoms. Quite 
possibly early intervention would have helped all of them. The tragedy is 
that none of these students were ever treated for emotional problems. The 
early exposure to violence experienced by these students certainly appears to 
have affected their emotions and their sense of control over their 
surroundings, as well as their ability to succeed academically.

The following chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and 
recommendations of this study on the influence of violence upon the 
academic achievement of African American first time college students.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study was designed to explore the influence of early exposure to violence—as well as SES, high school academic background, student characteristics, and campus environmental factors—upon academic achievement among African American first time college students.

Historically, educators and researchers have sought to explain factors that play the greatest explanatory role in student achievement. Traditionally, violence has been ignored by researchers as one of those cogent variables that impacts upon academic achievement.

The results of studies that examined the other variables that are included in this study have been contradictory. Some findings indicate that those variables have little to do with academic achievement, while the findings of other research studies suggest that those variables play an important role in student achievement. Violence tends to be an intangible variable, as do student characteristics and campus environmental factors, while SES and high school academic preparation tend to be more measurable. Violence
may be further classified as a nonschool variable in that its repercussions are already embedded in students prior to their arrival at a university.

Although researchers have conducted many studies in an attempt to link various factors to student achievement, few (if any) researchers have examined the impact of violence upon achievement. Violence, as a cogent variable that impacts upon the academic achievement of African American first time college students must be considered in lieu of the prevailing climate that surrounds educational institutions today. It is crucial to examine every variable that impacts upon student achievement because individuals have different needs that must be addressed. This study's literature review clearly shows that black students are disproportionately affected by violence.

This study has several variables—background factors, student characteristics, and university characteristics. The output variable in this study is academic achievement, or more specifically EXGPA. The conceptual framework that drives this study is an intricate and interesting one. Background factors (SES, HSGPA, personal and community violence exposure) are the independent variables that were used to predict student characteristics (locus of control, educational aspirations and expectations).
During the subsequent phase of the conceptual framework, background factors combine with student characteristics to predict students' perceptions of university characteristics (campus safety, academic and social integration). Finally, the three sets of independent variables—background factors, student characteristics and university characteristics—were used as predecessors to predict students' academic outcomes.

A mixed methodology approach that incorporates both, quantitative and qualitative techniques was used to address the research questions in this study. Quantitative procedures permitted the gathering of data from a large sample of students at the participating universities. The quantitative instrument gathered vital information on the experimentally accessible population. The data gathered via the quantitative instrument and other modalities allowed comparisons between the experimentally accessible population and the target population to be made. Concomitantly, while the qualitative data only addressed research question one, that data provided an in-depth study of black students attending HBCUs who have become casualties of the violence that coalesced about them. A plethora of data was gathered via various modalities (observations, interviews, archival data, etc.) through use of the qualitative approach.
Summary of Quantitative Findings

Initially I proposed to address four research questions in this study. Question one alludes to a statistically significant relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at HBCUs. Black students attending the HBCU had a HSGPA mean of 2.45. That score is slightly above the midpoint. The range of scores was 1.0 to 4.0. Exposure to personal and community violence had means below the midpoint. The range of scores for personal violence exposure was 0 to 7.0, while the range for community violence exposure was 0 to 15.0. Student characteristics, especially locus of control, had means above the midpoint.

While there were many statistically significant correlations among the variables, there were no negative coefficients. There were strong correlations between personal violence and HSGPA. There were also statistically significant correlations between HSGPA and locus of control, EDASP, and EDEXP. Exposure to personal violence correlated significantly with locus of control. EXGPA and locus of control also had very strong correlations.
Research question two suggests a statistically significant relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at PWIs. Black students at the PWI had a HSGPA mean of 3.7, which was significantly above the midpoint. The range for scores was 1.0 to 4.0. Exposure to personal and community violence both had means below the midpoint. The range of scores for personal violence exposure was 0 to 7.0, while the range for community violence exposure was 0 to 15.0. Student characteristics, especially locus of control had means above the midpoint. Under university characteristics, students at the PWI had a mean of 2.6 for campus safety. The range of scores was 0 to 6.0. Students at the PWI also had a higher mean for EXGPA than students at the HBCU.

Correlational analysis revealed many statistically significant correlations among the variables. There was a significant correlation between HSGPA and campus safety. Exposure to personal and community violence had many significant correlations with other study variables. There were strong correlations between EXGPA and HSGPA.

Research question three was designed to test the differences between correlations that resulted from analyses conducted on research questions one
and two. In that the correlations were not statistically significant, the Fisher Z test was not performed.

Research question four inquires as to whether early exposure to violence makes a difference, above and beyond traditional predictors of academic success for African American students. To address that question, regression analyses utilizing the sequential modeling strategy was used. With respect to predicting social psychological variables in the model, both universities yielded squared multiple correlations in the .05 to .06 range. At the HBCU, there were positive correlations for EDEXP and locus of control, and HSGPA and SES. The coefficient linking personal violence exposure with locus of control, however, is negative. With the exception of SUPPORT, the models used to predict perceptions of university characteristics appear to be hardly meaningful.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Data were gathered on three African, male, first time college students. All three are currently incarcerated for perpetrating crimes. This section of the study alludes specifically to research question one, as all students attended a predominantly black university. The data from the case studies were analyzed via Spradley’s DRS. Using Spradley’s DRS, I constructed
domain, taxonomic and componential analyses that permitted me to analyze the similarities and differences among the subjects of the case studies.

Once the domains were constructed and analyzed, I found that the students had the following characteristics in common: student classification, gender, race, college course offerings, behavior problems and interactions with the legal system. Their SES was also similar in that none of the students came from very affluent homes; one was perhaps lower middle class.

Taxonomic analysis (appendix C) shows that even though there are many similarities among the students, some differences are apparent. For example, all students committed crimes, but their rationale for perpetrating the crimes differed. Other apparent differences are the various instructional support systems available to the students. There were also different categories of crimes, legal officials, tests administered, developmental courses offered, family configurations, geographic areas represented and types of abuse suffered; all students were victims of abuse.

The componential analysis is essentially a paradigm that graphically displays dimensions of contrast. The paradigm reveals likenesses and differences among the case study subjects. The two main themes that
dominate the paradigm are the existence of behavior problems and the academic underpreparation of all three students.

Conclusions and Discussions

The quantitative and qualitative results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at HBCUs. The data further show that there is a relationship between early exposure to violence and the later academic achievement of African American first time college students at PWIs. The relationship does not appear to differ on the two campuses. However, the relationship does make a difference above and beyond traditional predictors of academic success for African American students.

The generalizability of this study's findings is enhanced because the experimentally accessible population is very similar to the target population on a large number of variables. Statistics indicate that black females comprise 57% of all black students enrolled in four year university programs; likewise, females are more likely than males to respond to study questionnaires on both black and white campuses (National Center for Education Statistics, 1982). When Allen (1986) conducted his study of
African American college students, the respondents were primarily female. Data for the present study show that 56.1% of the respondents were females, while 43.9% of respondents were males. Females are more likely than males to volunteer for research in general, but less likely than males to volunteer for physically and emotionally stressful research (Borg & Gall, 1989). Hence, the overrepresentation of black females among respondents in this study mirrors the gender representation of the target population.

Data from several other studies also indicate that students in the present study are typical of black college students nationwide. Allen's (1986) study shows that as in the present study, the response rate for black students at PWIs was 27%. When educational studies employ correlational research, the demands on the subject are usually greater, and consequently it is virtually impossible to obtain the cooperation of all subjects selected by random sampling. As a result, nearly all educational research must be conducted with volunteer subjects; statistics show that volunteer subjects have been found to be a biased sample of the target population (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Allen's (1986) findings also complement the findings of the present study in terms of the geographic regions represented. Allen had an
overwhelming majority of participants from the South (75%). In Thomas' study (1981), data on degree attainment status indicated that predominantly black institutions, particularly those in the South, continue to play a major role in educating blacks at all levels of higher education. Those institutions awarded over one third of all degrees earned by blacks in the U.S.

Information gathered during the present study also agrees with Allen's study (1986) and the National Center for Education Statistics (1982) findings that the majority of African American first time college students attend predominantly black institutions. Findings from several studies also contend that these students typically have lower scores on college entrance examinations and enter college after having received weaker high school preparation (Ramist & Arbeiter, 1984; Thomas, 1984; Morris, 1979). When students in the present study were asked to evaluate their study skills, they indicated average abilities in the areas of note taking, organizational skills, preparation for quizzes, reading for speed and analytical abilities; students indicated below average abilities in reading comprehension and understanding lectures.

The present respondents indicated that they were very inexperienced in certain very important aspects of computer usage. While these students
were very experienced in playing computer games, they were severely handicapped when attempting to perform the more sophisticated, advantageous computer functions. Responses show that 68.1% of the students were very experienced in playing computer games, and somewhat experienced in the use of graphics packages (47.3%) and CD Rom functions (47.3%). Data further show that students were very inexperienced in the use of electronic mail (53.8%), database searches (54.3%), online discussion groups (55.8%), and use of the world wide web (WWW).

The majority of respondents at the HBCU aspired to attain a master’s degree (41.9%), while a majority of black students at the PWI reported the Ph.D. as their ultimate goal (34.4%). In addition to educational aspirations, the level of exposure to violence appears to be very similar. Paisner (1991) reported that every 18 seconds in the U.S., an incident of domestic violence occurs; over 53.0% of students in the present study have witnessed violence in their homes or neighborhoods. Carlson (1984) and Afoloyan (1993) found that students from violent homes exhibit more behavior problems than students from nonviolent homes. Respondents in the present study indicate that 15.7% hail from violent homes, 16.6% have inflicted violence against others and 4.8% have served time in jail or prison for perpetrating
violence against others. Several students indicated that they had previously been gang members (6.8%). Some respondents have been victims of crime in their neighborhood or school (27.2%), while 49.6% of respondents have witnessed violent incidents.

In this study, I collected data from volunteer African American first time college students. According to Borg and Gall (1989), volunteers may differ from nonvolunteers in their level of motivation. However, the volunteers in the present study were selected from the population of interest to this study; therefore, the characteristics found in the volunteer samples allowed me to draw tentative conclusions about the population from which the volunteers were selected. Qualitative data collected on students from various areas of the country also assisted in forming a more complete picture of the population of interest. The qualitative studies address background factors, student characteristics, university characteristics, and academic and behavior problems experienced by the students.

The qualitative results for this study reinforce the quantitative results. Qualitative results indicate that patterns exist across the domains (primarily across specific classifications of perceptions) with respect to early exposure to personal and community violence and academic achievement in college.
The subjects of the three case studies grew up in turbulent, violent areas—where gang activity likely flourished—and were subjected to abuse in their homes and/or neighborhood. All three subjects had academic problems. Relatedly, the students had behavior problems and were unable to exercise control over their lives. They all exercised poor judgment and made unwise decisions. All three enrolled in college, but are currently serving prison sentences for committing felony crimes.

The actions and academic abilities of these students appear to be consistent with findings from the literature. Researchers have found that being victim of, witness to, and hearing about violent events (frequently) can lead to high rates of PTSD in the general population (Horowitz et al., 1995; Breslau et al., 1991). Situations of chronic stress and danger have a particularly detrimental impact on the child’s world view, social map, moral and intellectual development (Gabarino et al., 1991). Shapiro (1992) investigated the cognitive functioning and social competence of abused students and found that internalizing dysfunction was positively related to three cognition related variables: intellectual functioning, academic achievement and age. Age was found to be an important factor because anxiety over the abuse positively correlated with age.
The quantitative results indicate many statistically significant correlations among the variables in this study. Exposure to personal and community violence had strong correlations with locus of control, HSGPA, and EXGPA. Regression analyses indicated that HSGPA, EDEXP, and locus of control are significant predictors of academic achievement. The negative coefficient linking personal experience with violence with locus of control indicates that students who have experienced violence in their personal backgrounds, irrespective of socioeconomic background or high school achievement, have less of a sense of control over the environment than their more fortunate classmates.

Most importantly, violence, especially early exposure to personal violence, plays a role in academic achievement. Specifically, violence plays a role in determining the orientation of the student’s locus of control. The student’s locus of control then determines the fervor with which the student will engage academic pursuits. This relationship inextricably links achievement related behaviors such as seeking academic assistance from faculty members and other students, using academic systems, et cetera with locus of control.
Implications

The challenge confronting interested researchers, educators and policy makers today is to identify cogent variables and formulate strategies that will improve the educational experiences and outcomes of black students in U.S. institutions of higher education. In seeking solutions to the plethora of problems currently confronting these students, it is helpful to review all pertinent literature and incorporate new and perhaps improved strategies to complement the existing substructure. Certainly it would be unproductive to finance programs that are designed to improve the academic performance of black students at HBCUs and PWIs and not include provisions for addressing the abundance of violence related problems presently proliferating on college campuses. I offer implications for theory, practice and future research.

Theory

In this study I have identified an important new variable—violence—that researchers should consider adding to those cogent predictors of academic achievement. The ideal goal of educational change for blacks in higher education over the coming years, should be realistic efforts to combine the useful characteristics of HBCUs and PWIs. Further, the link between
exposure to violence, EXGPA, and locus of control that has been made in the present study suggests that early intervention strategies aimed at improving the persistence rates of black students should carefully examine methods of modifying students’ locus of control. In order to compensate for background factors, however, sincere efforts will have to be made to confront the inequalities in SES and other variables. Such actions not been forthcoming over the years, but this devastating problem is definitely one that needs to be confronted.

Practice

I offer several suggestions for improving the black college experience. Immediate attention needs to be given the role of admission offices, including student recruiting officers. College admission offices need to devise questionnaires that will enable them to identify students who may be at risk for violence related academic problems. Violence and other noncognitive variables should be considered when selecting applicants; many institutions depend entirely upon psychometric test scores. Student recruiters should be trained to recognize and communicate effectively with students who may be products of excessive violence, or may exhibit symptoms of PTSD. Administrators, faculty and staff members should be
trained by experts to interact with students who suffer from violence related problems. Students found to have extensive background violence exposure should receive counseling services. Special classes, or focus groups, that will permit violence victims to vent frustrations, share feelings, and seek assistance, should be incorporated into the curricula.

**Future Research**

Literature relating to violence and its deleterious effects is clearly missing in educational literature, whereas medical literature is replete with such studies. The observed inconsistency between medical researchers and educational researchers unquestionably suggests an area of research that must be explored. Collaboration between medical practitioners and educational practitioners needs to occur if this serious discrepancy is to be addressed sufficiently. Upon perusal one can clearly discern that violence studies proliferate in the medical literature. Conversely, studies that relate to violence are conspicuously absent in educational research literature. That omission needs to be rectified.

Perhaps educational and medical practitioners need to contemplate combining their resources and talents to devise ways of effectively managing and/or eliminating the violence and destruction that prey upon our
youth. Had such an arrangement been available and utilized for this study, the results would probably have been much more relevant and practical. Further investigations and collective endeavors between educational and medical practitioners are needed to elucidate the causal relationship between early exposure to violence and academic achievement.

Terr (1990) suggested that victims of violence can suffer long-lasting ill effects. Children who are victims of and witnesses to acts of violence have been found to demonstrate symptomatology fulfilling the four major DSM-III criteria for PTSD. Other researchers have documented the deleterious cognitive effects of early exposure to violence (Bowlby, 1976; Cohn, 1979). It is against this backdrop that I remind educational and medical researchers that if we cannot address the actual source of the violence problem, it is incumbent upon us to provide as much knowledge, support and assistance as possible to ensure successful college matriculation for our students who suffer from violence related problems.
REFERENCES


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Dear Student:

I am an African American doctoral student at Louisiana State University (LSU). I am surveying your class, the 1996 Freshman class, in an effort to help us improve our understanding of the influence that violence and certain other factors often exert upon academic achievement in African American college freshmen. Your assistance is very important. Without you I will not be able to gather vital information that is needed to devise strategies that will help all black college freshmen.

Please do not write your name or social security number on this survey. The survey respondents should remain anonymous. It is very important, however, that all members of your class participate to make the survey results as valid as possible. Please complete all items and return to:

Diana F. Kelly  
c/o EDAF  
111 Peabody Hall  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Thank you very much for your assistance. All information will remain confidential and will only be used in group summaries.

Diana F. Kelly  
Ph.D. Student
CAMPUS SURVEY

Directions: Please indicate your response to the following questions. For some question more than one response may be necessary.

PART I: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Please indicate your gender.
   □ Male
   □ Female

2. Please indicate the gender of the person who heads your family.
   □ Male
   □ Female
   □ 1-8 years
   □ 9-11 years

3. Indicate the highest number of years of school completed by your father.
   □ 1-8 years
   □ 9-11 years
   □ High school graduate
   □ Some college
   □ Bachelor's degree
   □ Master's degree
   □ Ph.D. or professional degree
   □ Don't know

4. Indicate the highest number of years of school completed by your mother.
   □ High school graduate
   □ Some college
   □ Bachelor's degree
   □ Master's degree
   □ Ph.D. or professional degree
   □ Don't know
5. From the list below, please indicate your parents/guardians combined income for the previous calendar year.

- $12,000 or less
- $12,001 - $21,000
- $21,001 - $40,000
- $40,001 - $70,000
- $70,001 - $100,000
- over $100,000

6. Are your parents

- both alive and living with each other?
- deceased: [ ] father? [ ] mother?
- unknown to you: [ ] father? [ ] mother?
- never married?

7. The following questions pertain to your family home.

Your family home is

- owned (being bought) by your parents/guardians.
- rented by your parents/guardians.
- other ________________________________

located in which of the following geographic areas.

- Northeast (including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, etc.)
- North Central (including Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, etc.)
- West (including Los Angeles, Oakland, Las Vegas, etc.)
- South (including Houston, Dallas, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Memphis, etc.)
- Southeast (including Miami, Atlanta, Mobile, etc.)

located in

- the inner city.
- a suburban area.
- a rural area.
- other ________________________________

is located in an area that is

- quiet.
- prone to violence.
- prone to gang activity.
- other ________________________________
PART II: HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION

8. What was your high school cumulative grade point average (GPA)
   □ 3.5 [B+] - 4.0 [A]
   □ 3.0 [B] - 3.4 [B+]
   □ 2.5 [C] - 2.9 [C+]
   □ 1.0 [D] - 2.4 [C-]

9. Indicate what you expect your freshman year GPA to be.
   □ 3.5 [B+] - 4.0 [A]
   □ 3.0 [B] - 3.4 [B+]
   □ 2.5 [C] - 2.9 [C+]
   □ 2.0 - 2.4 [C-]
   □ Below 2.0

10. Indicate the number of hours per week you studied outside of class in high school.
    □ 0 - 10
    □ 11 - 20
    □ 21 - 30
    □ more than 30

11. Indicate the number of hours per week you expect to study in college.
    □ 0 - 10
    □ 11 - 20
    □ 21 - 30
    □ more than 30

12. On a scale of 1-5 [when 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Fair, and 5=Poor], indicate your present ability in the following areas by blackening the appropriate number for each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   † Note-taking
   † Organizational skills
   † Preparation for quizzes and exams
   † Reading and comprehension
   † Reading for speed
   † Understanding lectures
   † Analytical skills
13. Blacken the number that indicates your level of experience with each of the following uses of computers [1=Very Experienced], [2=Somewhat Experienced], [3=No Experience].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Indicate which of the following experiences you had as part of your pre-college education (check all that apply).

- Pre-college counseling
- College preparatory curriculum
- Computer literacy course
- Computer programming course
- Other

15. Indicate your score on the following test(s).

ACT____________ □ didn't take
SAT____________ □ didn't take

16. How do you feel about each of the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops me.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My plans hardly ever work out, so planning only makes me unhappy.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I make plans, I am almost certain I can make them work</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times I feel that I am useless or no good</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I do not have much to be proud of</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about myself</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel worthy, the equal of others</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with myself</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Considering your ability, financial situation, societal attitudes, etc., how far do you want to go in school?
   - Bachelor's degree
   - Master's degree
   - Ph.D./Ed.D.
   - Professional degree (Medical/Law)
   - Other______________________

   actually expect to go in school?
   - Bachelor's degree
   - Master's degree
   - Ph.D./Ed.D.
   - Professional degree (Medical/Law)
   - Other______________________

PART III: UNIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS

18. How much do you feel a part of general campus life, insofar as student activities and government are concerned?
   - Not at all involved
   - Little involvement
   - Moderately involved
   - Very involved
   - Other______________________
19. How would you characterize your relations at this university with 
black faculty members? □ Excellent □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
white faculty members? □ □ □ □
black staff members? □ □ □ □
white staff members? □ □ □ □
black students? □ □ □ □
white students? □ □ □ □

20. You feel comfortable when seeking academic assistance from 
black faculty members. □ □
white faculty members. □ □
black students. □ □
white students. □ □

21. Academic support systems (e.g., computer laboratories, tutor, etc.) are available to you. □ Agree □ Disagree
are used by you. □ Frequently □ Rarely □ Occasionally

22. You have opportunities to interact socially with 
black faculty members. □ □
white faculty members. □ □
black students. □ □
white students. □ □

23. Do you feel that there is a great deal of unity and sharing among blacks at this university?
□ Agree
□ Disagree
□ Other____________________
PART IV: VIOLENCE (Neighborhood)

24. Have the following crimes been perpetrated against your family members or friends?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Murder</th>
<th>Rape</th>
<th>Other Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>friends</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family members</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. Have you (ever)

- been a victim of violence in your home? ☐
- witnessed or been aware of domestic violence in your home or neighborhood? ☐
- inflicted violence against others (e.g., murder, rape, robbery, assault, etc.)? ☐
- served time in jail/prison for inflicting violence against others? ☐
- been a member of a street gang? ☐
- been a victim of crime in your neighborhood or school (robbery, etc.)? ☐
- witnessed a violent incident (robbery, etc.)? ☐

26. Approximately how many of the following violent crimes occurred in your neighborhood during the past 5 years? (answer all that apply)

Murders ______
Robberies (personal, home, business, etc.) ______
Rapes ______
Gang related crimes ______
Other violence ____________________________
VIOLENCE (Campus)

27. Indicate Yes or No to the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you live on campus?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that your campus environment is safe?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you comfortable when traveling, socializing, etc., on campus at night?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you sometimes feel that some fellow students may be prone to violence?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you aware of any students who may be present or former gang members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think drug use is a problem on campus?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think alcohol use is a problem on campus?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the last page please write any comments that would be helpful in improving the academic performance of African American college students. If you would like to either discuss this survey, or receive feedback, please write your name, address and telephone number on the comments page.

Thank you very much for assisting me. Please return this survey to:

Diana F. Kelly  
c/o EDAF  
111 Peabody Hall  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
COMMENTS:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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APPENDIX B: CULTURAL DOMAINS

**Domain: Student Classification**
- **Cover Term:** Race
- **Semantic Relationship:** Is a kind of
- **Included Terms:** Freshman, First-time Student

**Domain: Race**
- **Cover Term:** Black, White

**Domain: Sex**
- **Cover Term:** Female
- **Semantic Relationship:** Is a kind of
- **Included Terms:** Male

**Domain: Course Offerings**
- **Cover Term:** Develop. Reading, Develop. English, Develop. Mathematics

**Domain: Behavior**
- **Cover Term:** Bank Robbery, Murder, Drug Abuse
- **Semantic Relationship:** Is a kind of

**Domain: School**
- **Cover Term:** University, High School

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**DOMAIN**

- **Jail**
  - **Is a kind of**
  - **City**
  - **Prison**

  - **Semantic Relationship** (strict inclusion)
  - **Included Terms**

**DOMAIN**

- **Law officer**
  - **Is a kind of**
  - **Detective**
  - **Policeman**

  - **Semantic Relationship** (strict inclusion)
  - **Included Terms**

**DOMAIN**

- **Person**
  - **Is a kind of**
    - **Subject**
    - **Judge**
    - **Policeman**
    - **Witness**
    - **Teacher**

**DOMAIN**

- **College**
  - **Is used for**
    - **Getting an education**
    - **Maturing**
    - **Socializing**
    - **Networking**
    - **Preparing for the future**

  - **Semantic Relationship** (Function)
  - **Included Terms**

**DOMAIN**

- **Incarceration**
  - **Is a result of**
    - **Drug abuse**
    - **Bank robbery**
    - **Murder**

  - **Semantic Relationship** (Cause - effect)
  - **Included Terms**

**DOMAIN**

- **Incarceration**
  - **Is a place for**
    - **Participating in sports**
    - **Preparing for life**
    - **Meeting the opposite sex**

  - **Included Terms**

---

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APPENDIX C: TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS

Legal Officials
- Police Officers
- Detectives
- Judges
- Lawyers

Crimes
- Robbery
- Murder
- Drug Abuse

Rationale
- For Drug Abuse: Pleasure, Fear
- For Committing Murder: No Job, Need Money
- For Bank Robbery: Need Money

Tests
- ACT
- SAT
- Nelson-Denny

Courses
- Developmental
- College Level

Tests
- Tutorial Laboratory
- Computer Instruction
- Tutorial Laboratory
- Computer Instruction
- Tutorial Laboratory
- Computer Instruction
Family Background
- Raised by Natural Parents
- Raised by Mother/Stepfather
- Raised by Grandmother

SES
- Middle Income
- Low Income

Families
- Traditional
- Alternative
- Extended
- Father
- Mother
- Stepfather
- Grandmother

Abuse
- Domestic
- Child
- Emotional
- Physical

Geographic Areas
- South
- East
- West
## APPENDIX D: COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS

### DIMENSIONS OF CONTRAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>TOM</th>
<th>DICK</th>
<th>HARRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrated Crime</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Incarcerated</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Family</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Time College Student</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Student</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Background</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically Prepared</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Into College Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Family</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Devastated By Violence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Family</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Violence Exposure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Violence Exposure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced By Gangs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced By Drugs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Problems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits PTSD Symptoms</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA

Diana Franklin Kelly received a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Southern University in 1967 and completed a master’s degree in Education (reading specialty) at Louisiana State University in 1974. Diana taught in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System for 20 years. Following retirement, she served as a tax auditor for the Internal Revenue System. Diana has taught communication skills in Southern University’s Junior Division, and has served as program manager for Southern University’s Environmental Sustainability Initiative—2000 (ESI-2000). In addition to teaching in Junior Division at Southern University, Diana has also served as Retention Analyst for Louisiana State University’s Junior Division.

Presently, Diana resides in Baton Rouge with her husband, Albert Lionel Kelly, Sr. She is the mother of two sons—Albert, Sr. and Dedrick; both sons are engineers and graduates of Southern University. Albert, Jr. is married to Nedra Joseph Kelly (a New Orleans native) and has three daughters—Ashley, Amber, and Alexis; they reside in New Orleans, Louisiana. Dedrick (Ricky) Lionel Kelly is married to Andrea Rogers Kelly (formerly of Queens, New York) and is the father of one daughter, Aria; they reside in Houston, Texas. Albert is an engineer with BP Oil; Ricky is employed...
with C & E Computer Consulting Firm and is co-owner of Rhema Designs Computer Consultants.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Diana F. Kelly

Major Field: Educational Administration and Supervision

Title of Dissertation: The Influence of Violence Upon Academic Achievement Among African American First Time College Students

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

March 12, 1997

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