Community Action Through Manhood Development: A Look at Concepts and Concerns from the Frontline[1]

Roderick J. Watts[2]

DePaul University

Community programs for young African American men have proliferated in the last few years. These "manhood development" organizations draw on many ideas to improve the life chances of black youngsters. This study identified key themes in manhood development as understood by the activists who work with the young men. Their perspectives were compared to those of African Americans scholars and community psychologists. The use of participative research methods — interviews and qualitative analysis — allowed the respondents to speak and define concerns for themselves. Six themes emerged: Family; Culture and Race; Community; Behavior; Psychosocial Development, and Spirituality. These themes generally matched those voiced by African American scholars, and some echoed ecological thinking in community psychology. However, respondent notions of prevention and their emphasis on "giving back" to the community were distinctive. Respondents also valued cultural socialization and spirituality as key elements of manhood development.

From one of our respondents:

> Our written goal, amongst many, is to prepare them for manhood, to prepare them to take care of their respective family, to prepare them to take the role of the elders because the elders will leave the scene and elders look up to them to carry on. We prepare them to represent the Black community in the future — economically, spiritually, culturally.

Unfortunately, efforts to uplift young African American men as described above get less attention than the sensational, negative aspects of the black man's circumstances. This paper, however, concerns itself with the positive side of the equation: The committed African American men who foster growth in these young people and the interface of this work and community psychology.

For readers unfamiliar with the horrific statistics on black men in the United States, see Gibbs (1988) for a comprehensive review. My mention of these statistics is brief, just enough to recapitulate the motivating forces behind manhood development initiatives. According to Mauer (1990), one in four black men in his 20s is incarcerated or on supervision — some 609,690 men, as against the 436,000 black men in this age group enrolled in college. This rate is far higher than comparable figures for white men (1 in 16) or Hispanic men (1 in 10). If African American men manage to avoid prison, they face other perils: A rate of homicide, substance abuse, unemployment, and inferior education unequaled by any other racial or gender group in this country (Staples, 1987). Life expectancy for black men in Harlem is lower than that of men in Bangladesh (McCord & Freeman, 1990). Many believe that black men are now an "endangered species" (Gibbs, 1988), whose fortunes will continue to deteriorate unless major sociopolitical, cultural, and personal initiatives occur (Madhubuti, 1990; McGhee, 1984; White & Parham, 1990).

PERSPECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Black intellectuals have long considered the status of African American men a priority area. Two of the most prominent perspectives are the Black Consciousness perspective and the Social Policy perspective. They echo the duality that DuBois (1968) called "double consciousness" in African Americans — that is, their dual African and American heritage. The Black Consciousness perspective emphasizes a grounding in African cultures while the Social Policy perspective emphasizes action through (European-) American social and political institutions.

Madhubuti exemplified the Black Consciousness perspective on African American men, one that emphasizes cultural awareness and self-help over social-policy solutions that rely on government resources and action. Similarly, black intellectuals such as Karenga (1984) have been combining African and African American cultural traditions as a basis for manhood development since the 1960s. On July 15, 1964, the cover of Life Magazine featured a powerful photograph of Karenga's "Simba" (young lions) program for black boys.

More recently, Madhubuti's (1990) book, *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?*, proposed a variety of strategies to overcome oppression and counterproductive behavior in black men, including: cultural development, education, spirituality, healthier lifestyles, and a family orientation (Table I). Madhubuti sees this work as a struggle that requires "the ability to function productively with other Black people in an organized manner. The building of institutions, parties, and nations depends first on effective building of Black individuals and families" (p. 108). The work he proposes is, in essence, empowerment and self-help. Similarly, psychologists such as White and Parham (1990) recommend empowerment and self-help strategies for black men, which they call "Ideas of self-determination: when individuals come to realize that they have personal control and power over their lives and use such power to maintain and enhance the individual and collective self" (p. 154). Other exponents of this perspective include Oliver (1989), who set forth the following propositions in his article entitled "Black Males and Social Problems: Prevention Through Afrocentric Socialization."

America's cultural ideology has been deliberately designed to glorify whiteness and denigrate blackness. Consequently, this process has led to the cultural annihilation of Black Americans . . . . The failure of Blacks to develop an Afrocentric cultural ideology is a major source of psychological, social, political, and economic dysfunction among Black Americans. (p. 19)

This quotation, which argues the centrality of cultural ideology in black empowerment, captures the central thesis of Black Consciousness scholars. It has its roots in the cultural nationalist movement among blacks in the 1960s, and earlier efforts by Marcus Garvey and others. Oliver's work is also strongly influenced by Karenga's (1984) *Nguzu Saba* (Seven Principles of Blackness). Along with the "inclusionist" strategies of Martin Luther King, and the avowedly revolutionary ideologies of the Black Panthers and others, black consciousness is a leading ideological basis for social action (Watts, 1992b).

In contrast to the Black Consciousness perspective there is the Social Policy perspective, which is often silent on the issue of cultural socialization and instead calls for the mobilization of the United States' prevailing institutions and government resources. The foremost exponent of the social policy perspective is Gibbs (1988), whose edited book *Young, Black and Male in America: An Endangered Species*, is among the best. Like the Black Consciousness perspective, her authors often indict this country's long history of racial oppression in the understanding the status of black men. Unlike the Black Consciousness perspective, there was no mention in her 363-page volume of the role of culture, empowerment, or self-help in improving the conditions of black youth. Her concluding chapter makes recommendations for action in several areas: family assistance, education,

Table I. Comparisons of Two African American Social Change Strategies

Black consciousness	Social policy
Common priorities	
Education and analytical skills	Education
Family oriented[a]	Family assistance
Fights Black-on-Black crime	Violence and life-threatening behaviors
Health-conscious behavior	Health and mental health
No drug use	Substance abuse prevention
Work oriented, disciplined	Employment
Differing priorities	
Cultural development and the arts[b]	—
Collective/cooperative[b]	—
Collective economic development[b]	—
Committed to Black Liberation[b]	—
Spiritual[b]	—
Values excellence	—
Self-reliance	—
—	Teenage parenthood
—	Delinquency prevention

[a] Consistent with Oliver's (1989) ideas.
[b] Parallels one or more of Karenga's (1984) Seven Principles of Blackness.

employment, delinquency and substance abuse prevention, teenage parenthood, health and mental health, and violence. Table I compares the Social Policy perspective with that of Black Consciousness and reveals both similarities and differences. Although social policy is silent on culture, both agree on at least five areas: Education, family/family assistance, crime/life threatening behaviors, health-conscious behavior/mental health, and drug-free lifestyles.

There is common ground between black activist-scholars and community psychology. Like the more strident thinkers in community psychology, black activist-scholars emphasize social action over conventional social service programing. Perkins (1975), based on his ethnographic study of young men in Chicago youth gangs and his historical analysis of youth policies,

concluded that prevailing notions of community and social services are rooted in the needs of European ethnic immigrants during the 1920s and do not meet the needs of African Americans:

> Unlike the white immigrant, the black man was not trying merely to get into the mainstream of American life . . . he was struggling to gain acceptance as a free human being . . . Social service agencies did not address themselves to liberation but, instead, assumed that black people's problems could be solved with the same services provided to impoverished whites. (pp. 114-115)

He charged that interventions aimed solely at building personal competencies fail to challenge the social order. Instead, he called for

> alternative structures which will help them rise above their environment. These new institutions must teach a child more than just how to survive (though they cannot exclude the teaching of survival skills) but how to take command of himself and begin to *strengthen his community* through positive actions. (p. 115, emphasis added)

"Gaining freedom" and "liberation" are rarely topics for community research, but there are those who study or promote social-change interventions (e.g., Albee, 1980; Prilleltensky, 1989; Serrano-Garcia, 1984).

According to Wolff (1993), community psychology has not met Perkin's challenge. He argues that community psychology has failed to honor its social-change values, and the findings of Speer et al.'s (1992) content analysis of the two major community psychology journals tend to support his position. They found that research on adjustment, coping, and skill-building variables dominated the literature. On the other hand, there is no evidence that manhood development programs are doing a better job of incorporating community activism; the limited research on manhood development programs does not address social activism.

Manhood Development Interventions

One nexus for scholarship and action on African American males is the frontline community organization, where interventions for young men range from mentoring to rites of passage programs. They rely on various combinations of conventional social-science prevention principles, cultural and religious values, and educational and vocational programming. Collectively, I call them manhood development organizations (MDOs) to highlight their comprehensive, human development approach. They differ from single-focus programs on pregnancy prevention, interpersonal problem-solving, and the like. Several African American activist-scholars have helped shape these interventions: Hare and Hare (1985), Hill (1992), Karenga

(1984), Kunjufu (1983, 1986), Warfield-Coppock (1990; Warfield-Coppock & Coppock, 1992), Mensa (1991), Oliver (1989), Perkins (1975, 1986), and Ghee (in press). Activist-scholars occupy a privileged role in action-research because of the *personal* stake and involvement they have in their action, research, and theory. Their work must contribute to their own liberation as African Americans as well as to the literature.

The first widely available study of manhood development programs by Ferguson (1990; personal communication, October 1992) examined nearly 30 programs. He concluded that MDOs do four things: (a) establish "nurturing relationships" that engage young men; (b) expose young men to opportunities and avenues for personal advancement; (c) build the competencies needed to pursue opportunities; and (d) build self-esteem so the young men will feel confident and worthy of their success.

Using motivation and need for achievement theory (e.g., McClelland, 1987), Ferguson described how community-based programs used skill development, role models, and education about life options to help young men realize their needs for achievement, influence, and affiliation. Ferguson devoted little attention to cultural socialization in his results. His selective use of quotes, without a presentation of the themes in the mission and ideology statements for his sample as a whole, makes it difficult to discern the role of cultural socialization. His recommendations for program development and funding policy stress teaching youngsters options, skills, and strategies, and mobilizing their need for achievement. Although he did not address cultural socialization in his work, Ferguson sees it as an important part of manhood development (personal communication, October 1992).

The Present Study: The Voices of Praxis

The purpose of this study was to explore perspectives on manhood development from "the frontline" using ideas from African American scholarship and community psychology as a framework. The perspectives and experiences of practitioners are important because they are in a position to test concepts for "field validity"; that is, utility in real-world applications. At this early point in manhood development programs, however, we know little about the frontline perspectives of people in the field. Most do not publish their ideas, so we must resort to other ways of gaining their insights. One way to document their experiences is in personal interviews. Thus, as in Ferguson's work, this study took a qualitative, quasi-ethnographic approach. Personal interviews also served one of the project's action-objectives which was to build a communication network among programs.

Impersonal surveys do not build relationships, and they require more a priori decisions about complex concepts (such as prevention) than seemed reasonable given the very limited information on these programs. Participative methodologies also allow the investigator and the participant to *share* control over the construction of meaning. If methods are truly participative, researchers must be prepared to revise their objectives based on the concerns of other research participants. This study used informal and formal interviews to facilitate a flexible, collaborative research process. Participative methods are consistent with diversity-conscious, democratic, and collaborative research (Kelly, 1986; Walsh-Bowers, 1992; Watts, 1992a). Interviews were also desirable because they are consistent with the oral communication tradition in African American culture (see Jones, 1989; Smitherman, 1977).

Another goal of the research was to relate indigenous concepts as described by the respondents to those in psychology and Black Consciousness literature. Terms like Africentric,[3] empowerment, self-help, self-esteem, and prevention have a tradition of meaning in academy, but in the field these words are imbedded in a larger context of cultural, ideological, and practical ideas. These associations give the concepts local meaning and energize the people involved. For example, the militancy and racial solidarity that produced "Black Power" contextualize what is now called empowerment in the psychology literature. Similarly, the Nation of Islam's slogan "Do for Self," where self represents black people collectively as well as individually, is not captured by current notions of self-help in psychology. Recognizing and supporting these context and population-specific indigenous concepts will bring us closer to a praxis that affirms human diversity.

In summary, the research question were

1. What are the key concepts and concerns in manhood development for young African American men in the eyes of people who run manhood development organizations?

2. How do they understand, define, and operationalize these concepts?

3. Which themes predominate in manhood development: Those of Black Consciousness or Social Policy?

4. How do the leading concepts and concerns on the frontline relate to those of Community Psychology?

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[3]The generic term *Africentricity* includes work variously referred to as Afrocentric, African-centered, and Africentric. "Afrocentricity" is most often associated with Asante (1988) who wrote a book with that title.

Table II. Sample Characteristics

Variable	Median	Range
Age of organization	4	20 – <1
Youngest member[a]	10	4 – 16
Oldest member[a]	18	12 – 65
Annual budget[b]	25	0 – 500
Number of adults	10	2 – 300
Number of young men	40	12 – 200
Number of staff (full- and part-time)	0	0 – 12

[a] One organization said only "very young" and two others only "very old." Some organizations considered adults members, but others did not, hence the high upper age range.
[b] In thousands of dollars.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were leaders of 40 manhood development organizations from around the country (14 states were represented). We used five strategies to generate the sample. Their approximate contributions to the sample total, from largest to smallest, were (a) participant referrals; (b) networking at conferences and other events on African American men's issues; (c) a list of participants from Ferguson's (1990) research; (d) personal contacts; and (e) mailings to 120 black-interest bookstores around the country. Any organization that (a) considered itself a manhood development organization for young African American men and (b) was not a single- issue group (e.g., employment, sex education) was eligible.

Some characteristics of the organizations are summarized in Table II. The sample was heterogeneous. The median age of the organizations was four years. Median size (adults plus boys) was 50, with ages ranging from 10 to 18. The budgets were typically very small ($25,000) and many had no paid staff. Ferguson's (personal communication, July 1992) site visits of programs suggests that verbal estimates of membership may exceed actual size. Most of these statistics are comparable with those of Ferguson's (1990) sample.

All respondents were black and all, except one, were male. No qualified organizations declined to participate. The sample was not random, but it was impossible to determine the extent of sampling bias because the size and composition of the universe of qualified organizations was unknown.

Procedure

The author and his graduate research assistants conducted all of the interviews by telephone, except three that were done in person. Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, with an average of approximately 70 minutes. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed with informed consent. Nearly all questions were asked of all respondents, but there were times when the respondents' sense of priorities required the interviewers to eliminate certain peripheral questions in the interest of time.

Instruments

The interview instrument evolved from a series of informal conversations with program directors and from my personal experience with African American men's groups and young men's programs. This led to several informal interviews by the author and four formal pilot interviews by the author and two other interviewers.

The final instrument contained 65 interview questions and probes. It was a mix of open-ended, structured, and rating scale items. Topics of the open-ended questions included program mission, objectives and ideology, types of people targeted by the programs, current projects and program "high points," membership requirements, use of the adult members' skills and expertise, indicators of program effectiveness, and threats to organizational survival.

Structured questions included queries about membership demographics, budget, funding sources, and affiliations. The section on program effectiveness criteria included rating scales.

The interviewers discovered that questions about program mission and objectives elicited the most comprehensive responses related to research Questions 1 and 2. Additional questions about important program activities (e.g., program "high points") were also useful in eliciting data on research Question 2. Respondents addressed Question 3 most effectively when asked to define concepts that were important to their mission or ideology.

The questions were standardized, but interviewers reworded questions that produced no substantive response.

Analysis

To answer the first research question "what are the key concepts?" I conducted a content analysis of key words in the interviews. According to Krippendorff (1980) and Holsti (1969), content analysis is an appropriate means of discerning culture-related norms and patterns of meaning from interview data.

Like the development of the interview instrument, the content analysis strategy unfolded over time. Members of the research team discussed themes and key words in the interviews during weekly research team meetings. We continually added to this initial list as new ideas arose. Once all the interviews were completed, formal content analysis began of the over 150,000 words in the transcripts. First we created a master file of responses to the seven open-ended and semistructured questions used for the content analysis with *Textbase Alpha*, a commercial computer program designed for qualitative data analysis. It was used primarily for computing word frequencies and restructuring the master file into a data file composed of responses to seven open-ended questions: mission, ideology, program model, objectives, program effectiveness indicators, and program "high points." Approximately 80,000 words were in this pool of responses. Structured questions were not included because they generated little data outside the specific categories provided by the questions. Unlike the open-ended questions, the structured questions were very pointed and the responses reflected the questions' terminology more than the respondents'. For example, "how much of your funding comes from grants, dues, [etc.]?" These responses provided essential descriptive data on the programs, but because the questions led the respondents in a specific direction, these data were not included in the content analyses.

In the content analysis phase, it was essential to use word counts to guide the theme-generation process to prevent the investigators from excessive reliance on their own a priori themes. The examination of word counts helps the data to reveal its own themes. As noted previously, a key word list was evolving all along. This list of about 100 words was organized into a thematic scheme based on the following four priorities, in order of diminishing importance: (a) remaining faithful to the apparent patterns of meaning in the data; (b) creating enough themes to distinguish meaningful variations among concerns; (c) keeping the number of themes small enough to insure parsimony and to maintain several concerns per theme; and (d) constructing themes related to existing constructs in community psychology to help determine how the respondents' ideas related to community psychology (research Question 3).

Six themes were created from the initial pool of about 100 key words: Family; Culture and Race; Community (and concerns with sociopolitical systems); Behavior-related concerns; concerns related to the Psychosocial Development; and Spirituality (or the institutions associated with it). Two strategy concerns were included as well: concerns related to didactic strategies for the development of the young men, and relationship strategies that use personal and emotional bonds to effect change.

Validity is a concern when word counts are used to construct themes. To check validity, and then reliability, the following procedures were used. First, I wrote several Word Perfect macros to create separate files for each key word and its "chunk" of surrounding text. To insure that key word usage by the respondents reflected a value on, and concern with, the concept in question (i.e., validity), it was necessary to delete usages that did not meet this criterion. For example, if a respondent said, "we *do not* consider economic development an important issue" this use of *economic* should not be included in the frequency count. After some discussion, we created decision rules for deletion. To check the reliability of these rules, two team members reviewed a random sample of key word chunks independently. A 92% level of simple agreement (i.e., hits/number of judged items) was achieved between raters. The author then used these rules to review all the files of key word chunks for usage and context.

This analytic strategy combines elements of "sign-vehicle" and "semantic" analysis as described by Krippendorff (1980), based on work by Janus (1965). In sign-vehicle analysis, the vehicle for an idea (here, a word) is counted and assumed to be a "sign" that a given concept is being discussed. Word counting alone can weaken validity because context and meaning are ignored. Therefore, we examined chunks of text for meaning. The use of context is a semantic approach. A fully semantic approach is focused only on meaning; theoretically, it is superior because no specific words need be designated as signs. In practice, however, the complex judgments involved in pure semantic analysis makes it exceedingly difficult to attain adequate interjudge agreement with text-based data.

Once the files were cleared of invalid references, a member of the research team was again involved to double-check the reliability of the author's use of the deletion strategy, and to check for "drift" in the classification process. A reliability check between the author and a member of the research team, using a random sample of 50 raw chunks, produced an agreement coefficient (Scott's Pi, 1955) of .96. Pi compensates for chance agreements. Thus, all frequency counts reported in the results are virtually free of invalid references to key words. For simplicity's sake, only key words

used by six or more of the respondents (15% of the sample) were reported. As a final validity check, I distributed a draft of this article to two respondents who are published authors and MDO program directors, one of whom is a psychologist. Their feedback was incorporated into the final draft.

RESULTS

The word frequency in the final list of 85 key words had a mean frequency of 9.6 (SD = 7.4). These numbers are respondent counts; that is, they reflect the number of respondents who mentioned the word and ignore multiple mentions by the same person. Thus, the respondent count indicates the relative importance of a concern for the sample as a whole. The distribution was positively skewed with a break approximately 1 standard deviation above the mean at 17. The 10 key words at and above this break, along with the leading five concerns for each of six thematic categories, are presented in Table III. The 10 key words at least 1 standard deviation above the mean were parents, black(ness), Africa, community, academics/school, family, women/girls, culture, self-esteem, and prevention. Concerns one standard deviation below the mean were stress, guidance, alcohol, delinquency, nurturing, health, violence, marriage, antisocial (behavior), social change, racism, and AIDS.

It can be inferred that some key words represent concerns that are of great concern to a few, but not to others. For example, some respondents repeated a word frequently or used it to answer a wider range of questions. This "intensity" dimension is the sample count. It is the *total* number of times a concern was mentioned in the sample overall, including multiple mentions by the same person. Figure 1 depicts the mean sample count and coefficient of variation (i.e., SD/M) for the 10 leading concerns. These means (i.e., mean count per respondent) include only the people who mentioned the concern at least once. The mean denotes intensity while the coefficient of variation provides a measure of agreement (higher coefficients of variation indicate *greater* disagreement). For example, intensity was highest for Africa, community, and black, but agreement was highest for concerns about women/girls, culture, and prevention, as shown by their lower coefficients. High agreement means that intensity about a concern was similar for all those who mentioned it. In contrast, agreement was lowest for school, parents/parenting, (self-) esteem, and Africa. This suggests a range of opinions on the importance of these ideas among those who mention them.

Table III. Five Leading Concerns for Each Theme Based on Respondent Counts

Theme and concern	Frequency
Family theme	
Parent[a]	35
Family[a]	25
Father	14
Home	10
Mother	10
Culture/race theme	
Black[a]	32
Africa[a]	28
Culture[a]	22
Africentric	16
Rites	16
Behavior theme	
School/academic[a]	26
Prevention[a]	17
Behavior	16
Skill	15
Drugs	13
Community/systems theme	
Community[a]	26
Politics	15
Economics	13
Neighborhood	10
Country	7
Psychosocial development theme	
Women/girls[a]	23
Self-esteem[a]	17
Development	15
Attitude	14
Values	13
Spiritual theme	
Spiritual	16
Church	15
Religion	11
God/Supreme Being	5
Manhood development strategy theme	
Mentor(ing)	15
Role models	15
Support	13
Motivate	10
Training	10

[a] Respondent counts that are 1 SD or more above the mean. Mean respondent count = 9.6; mdn = 8; SD = 7.4.
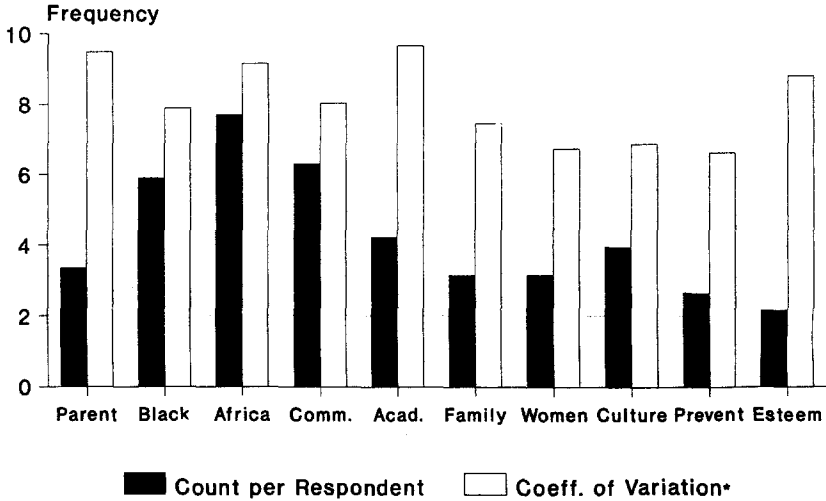
Frequency

Fig. 1. Indicators of "Intensity" and agreement about key words based on word frequencies.

THEMES IN MANHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The content analysis identified the leading concerns for the sample as a whole. This increases the likelihood that quotes will reflect actual patterns in the data, rather than only the interests of the investigator. Quotes are used in this section to address research Question 2: How the respondents understand and define key concepts. Quotes allow respondents to construct meaning for themselves. They also permit the reader to assess the face validity of themes. Unlike its role in quantitative research, face validity is crucial in qualitative research (Lather, 1986).

The introductory summaries that precede each set of quotes highlight some of the investigator's overall impressions. Minor editing of the quotes was done for readability.

Family, Parents, and Parenting

Several ideas were apparent within the Parent/Family theme: The role of the parent/family in the young man's functioning, the role of the parent/family in enhancing the intervention, the relationship between family and community, and strategies to strengthen families.

We don't only focus on the student, we focus on the family because we recognize that just to focus on the students' problems spring from home and when you look into home you have many problems. So we try to work with the whole family, if the family permits us to. I do my home visits consistently.

There's a part for the elders to play. There's a part for the politicians to play. There's a part for family themselves to play. And so what we're trying to do is to bring that all back together again.

Race and Culture

Africa, Africentric, Culture. The frequent use of the term *black* reflected the preeminence of race in the respondents' understanding of their mission. Africentricity was understood in a range of ways; respondents who answered the question conceptually tended to quote specific authors. Others dealt with the practical application of the ideas, usually to the cultural socialization of youth through exposure to African history, traditions, values, and spirituality.

[We promote] African and African American History — awareness and appreciation. Becoming totally aware of the African and African American history and traditions . . . having an appreciation for those histories, and in turn having an appreciation for who the hell they are. It gets into knowledge of self, the concept of "who am I." If you feel good about your past, you'll probably feel good about your present. If you feel good about your present, you'll probably have a lot of promise for the future.

When I think of Afrocentric I think more of a cultural embracing of our African culture, rituals, and educational aspects of our culture. An educational focus on our roots and where we come from.

I think that the cultural orientation is one of the most dominant aspects of what the organization is about . . . Cultural socialization has as it's final goals the political and economical empowerment of Black people.

Rites of Passage. Ancient, yet new to many, is the concept of "rites of passage." Since the 1960s, black scholars have been fashioning adaptations of age-old African cultural practices to aid the transition from boyhood to manhood for African American youth. Rites of passage programs are slowly being standardized, but currently everything from one-shot ceremonies to lifelong personal and community development activities is called rites of passage by their proponents.

Rites of passage is a process which punctuates the psyche of youth with commitment for family and race, community and nation . . .

We are very sensitive about making a distinction between our program as an African American Rites of Passage Program versus a mentoring program . . . they're trying to motivate young Black people to integrate themselves into the mainstream opportunity structure [by] exposing them to role models . . . defined by virtue of their educational status, income and most importantly occupation. We feel that this is not enough, and that to a certain extent this brings a certain degree of elitism . . . so our program places a heavy emphasis on helping the young person to identify themselves as an African American, and also to internalize a sense of [responsibility] with respect to the survival and progress of African Americans. And also certainly we want to have people in our program who have some of these mainstream indicators of success.

Community and Systems

The "Black community" was an important concept for most of the respondents; that is, the ecological, sociopolitical, cultural, and economic circumstances that they believed linked African Americans together. They often linked the fate of the young men to their social-geographic community. Also in this theme category were systems perspectives — remarks about the importance of sociopolitical systems surrounding the individual and his family or community. This includes the world of politics, regional, national, or international circumstances.

> We inspire our young people to internalize an African American mission. More specifically, trying to get them to understand that they must assume a certain responsibility for African Americans in how they conduct themselves personally, how they interact with their immediate family, and hopefully making a contribution to the wider African American community.

> One of our goals for 1990 is to develop a cadre of [successful] Black men nationwide who will return to our communities and provide leadership for those who are locked out of opportunity.

> I think that our group is political in the sense that we are very much involved in helping our children to understand the sort of power dynamics that have influenced the conditions under which African American's live.

> They need to be aware that without economic power they have no freedom, beyond the extent that is offered them by the controlling economic powers that prevail.

Behavior

Respondents talked more about general behavior than about psychosocial development. Concern with general behavior also outranked concerns with specific problematic behaviors.

> We reinforce certain positive behaviors that the fathers demonstrate — whether it's going to school, obtaining employment, [or whatever] . . . being consistent.

> encourag[ing] them to recognize self control, to engage in behavior that does not result in a problem for themselves or problems for the African American community.

School. I classified School under the behavior theme because the respondents usually emphasized school behaviors and accomplishments resulting from school behaviors rather than school attitudes or values. Unlike afrocentricity, culture, and community, school-related activities were usually viewed in instrumental terms.

> We have a group called The Tomorrow Scientist Managers Technicians programs (TSMT), a club for high school students in which the students are [required] . . . to take classes in math, science and English and maintain at least a C average in those classes.

One is to have the young men interact with adult male role models; to redirect their energy toward constructive channels; to help them improve their vocabulary and writing skills; to increase their school attendance.

Prevention. Because it was highly ranked by the respondents, and it is a central concept for community psychology, the notion of prevention demands special attention. The most striking aspect of the respondents' understanding of this idea was the emphasis on broad patterns of behavior rather than on the specific risk behaviors typically targeted by social science-based programs. This notion of prevention often involves a focus on environmental variables and psychosocial development as a means of redirecting undesirable and high-risk behavior. A few of the programs also viewed prevention in the social-science sense; especially respondents who worked in university settings or human service settings.

We're not simply trying to prevent young people from having babies, that's not our job. What we're trying to do is empower young people to understand who they are and how to make the best of their lives. That doesn't fall in line with other people's concept of prevention. When I talk about prevention, I'm preventing our young people from falling prey to the ills of society . . . our young people are guilty of that. Our young people are victims of the ills of society; there are no jobs to support a child. We try to help a young person feel empowered, to get an education, to create his own job or compete for jobs. We're not there to prevent him from having a child. But we teach all the responsibilities and ramifications of having a child.

We're definitely considered prevention. It's primary prevention in that to a certain extent we're making our young people aware of the dangers that they are vulnerable to as a result of being African American, and secondary prevention in the sense that we are targeting a lot of low-income youth from single-parent families as well as youth who have been having difficulties in the school system or with the juvenile justice system. And in that sense it becomes secondary prevention in that we're targeting at risk youth, at risk for involvement in a wide variety of problematic behavior.

Psychosocial Development

The theme "psychosocial development" does not imply that respondents viewed their charges from a deficit orientation. On the contrary, they saw these young men as highly skilled and competent, but misdirected or damaged by environmental influences. To look at it another way, the respondents viewed their work as military training. Training a soldier for battle does not imply she or he is inadequate; it is simply a recognition that life or death circumstances require special preparation.

Women. Concerns about women, girls, "sisters," and females were combined. The two major subthemes here were sense of inclusion — that young black women need attention too. There is also the issue of male-female relationships. Several respondents alluded to parallel programs run for young women.

[We want the young men] committed to having better, high quality male–female relationships. Okay? That is very significant. High quality male–female relationships, starting out with concern about who you are as a man, who you are as a woman, that's the thing.

Self-Esteem. Self-esteem is one of those psychological terms that has achieved wide use in the general population. The respondents also used it frequently and described what they saw as a lack of self-confidence, or limited experiences of success with activities valued in middle-class America. Self-esteem was both a cause and an outcome of achievement in the eyes of the respondents.

Self-esteem building — That is probably the largest focus of our program. If they can feel good about themselves they can usually attain the other goals. If they have self esteem automatically they take that to the community and the level of the community rises.

We teach them about their heritage and their culture to enhance their self-esteem.

You cannot parent and feel good about yourself and have a high level of self-esteem unless you are economically in the mainstream of America and supporting yourself and able to support your family.

Spirituality

Most foreign to community psychology is the concept of spirituality. Yet respondents talked about it and the church frequently. Respondents typically made a distinction between spirituality and religion, with the former referring to an outlook on life and a personal relationship with God and the latter to the doctrines of spirituality, or perhaps just the power of the church as an institution in black communities.

For me when I say spiritual I think of that as simply . . . recognizing the work of every living person, the value of them as people, and that we are all part of the same creation.

The reason I'm separating spirituality from religion is that we don't want to separate anyone [from] their religious beliefs.

To promote the psychological necessity of calling on a power greater than thyself. As for what power you call on, we leave that up to the clergy.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand some key concerns in manhood development for African American youth *in the eyes of those who work with young men,* and relate these ideas to community psychology and African American scholarship. This section begins with an integration of the findings for the first two research questions on key concepts by classifying them into four thematic categories and contrasting them with concepts in the academic literature. Following this is a discussion of how the data relate to the two themes in the African American literature (research Question 3). Throughout the discussion I contrast indigenous concepts to those in community psychology.

The Centrality of Family

Although young men were their focus, respondents viewed parents and family as the most important units of analysis and as key players in a successful intervention. They often linked family life to kinship ties and to roles for elders, particularly in Africentric programs. Family was in turn linked to community and the larger social system. These linkages are consistent with African cultural perspectives as described by scholars such as Nobles, Karenga, Kunjufu, and Asante (who were often mentioned by name). This world view is also compatible with ecological theory (Trickett, Kelly, & Vincent, 1985) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of nested systems that range from the macrosystem to microsystems.

Culture, Self-Esteem, and Empowerment

Central to cultural socialization programs is the belief that many problems African Americans experience can be relieved through *enculturation* or the inculcation of the history, traditions, values, and greatness of one's people. According to the respondents, cultural grounding enhances self-esteem, improves self-confidence, and ultimately increases performance in settings ranging from school to the work place. There is a growing movement to use *rites of passage* as an organizing framework for the various components of cultural socialization. *Rites* programs draw on ideas from at least three sources: (a) the oral tradition and anthropological writing on traditional African rites of passage practices (Hill, 1992; Warfield-Coppock, 1990; Warfield-Coppock & Coppock, 1992); (b) contemporary African American activist scholarship (e.g., Hare & Hare, 1985; Karenga, 1984; Nobles, 1989; Perkins, 1986); and (c) highly influential work by Asante (1988) and others that vary considerably in perspective, but are collectively known as Africentricity.

Due to the rejection of clinical psychology's intrapsychic focus, self-esteem is rarely the centerpiece of a community psychologist's intervention. Yet as Prilleltensky (1989) noted, psychology is uniquely qualified to develop interventions that transform how people view themselves and their world. Ferguson (1990) also concluded that self-esteem-building is an important function of MDOs. Historically, mass movements such as the Nation of Islam have stressed intrapsychic change as part of social change. According to Muhammad (1970) "we believe that the so-called Negroes are most in need of mental resurrection" (p. 406). Stress and coping interventions in primary prevention programs often include the development of new cognitive coping strategies, but this technology is rarely applied to sociopolitical or cultural cognitive processes. Work by Serrano-Garcia (1984) on interventions to expose and alter oppressive ideology is a notable exception.

Implicitly, respondents linked cultural socialization and self-esteem to empowerment. Although less than a fifth of the respondents uttered the word "empowerment," one person captured the subtext of many responses when he said "Cultural socialization has as its final goals the political and economic empowerment of Black people." Nonetheless, strategies for building specific skills are less developed; respondents rarely discussed how youngsters were to move from cultural awareness to tangible community development and action. Moreover, words commonly associated with sociopolitical analysis, such as *oppression*, never appeared, and *racism* appeared only once in the 80,000-word data base. One could argue that a more semantic analysis of the data (Krippendorff, 1980) that tallied references to ideas, regardless of whether specific key words were used, would have revealed a higher frequency of these ideas. Nonetheless, the findings as they stand suggest, at the very least, that frontline and psychological language differ.

Community psychology could aid the integration of cultural socialization and empowerment, if it makes more of an effort to reconcile academic concepts with related indigenous ones. As noted in the introduction, "Do for Self" or Jesse Jackson's "I am somebody" cannot be reduced to self-help and self-esteem building without undermining the complexity and context of these ideas. Yet scientific notions of generalizability can encourage community psychologists to "ignore" the distinctive aspects of indigenous concepts in the interest of theory-building. Unfortunately, concepts indigenous to communities of color risk being ignored the most because the *experience* of racial oppression does not dominate the world view of most producers and consumers of research. For example, applied work by Chavis and Wandersman (1990) on block organizations shows the value of empowerment technology, and a positive response to it by African Americans, yet it does not address Perkin's (1975) observation that a great deal of community work does not address itself to liberation. Instead, it assumes that black people's problems could be solved with the same strategies that aid impoverished whites. Although the respondents in the present study did not make this assumption, as evident in their emphasis on cultural socialization, they had little to say about oppression and social action directed at powerful institutions. I think many respondents believed that life skills or cultural socialization are enough; they were more concerned with transforming African American communities than they were with changing institutions dominated by European Americans. This contemporary "do for self" perspective is consistent with the African American scholars cited throughout this study who conclude, based on history, that powerful whites will not support an egalitarian world or respect an African world view. Because I did not explore the connection between cultural socialization and social change in depth, I could not confirm these speculations.

If social action directed at powerful institutions is to have any role in these manhood development organizations, it ought to be grounded in the African American experience. Given the accomplishments of the African American-led social change movements of the 1960s, it is time to reconsider freedom and liberation as part of our conceptual territory. One new and promising idea borrows directly from urban "Hip-Hop" culture. Abdul-Adil (1992) explored Radical Rap music as a potential vehicle for culture-specific empowerment. He and I linked progressive Rap's political and cultural messages to Freire's (1990) concept of Critical Consciousness. We are developing a program to help young men increase their awareness of social inequity and direct their outrage at constructive personal development and social action.

"Giving Back":
Empowerment Meets Prevention

"Community" was not, in the mind of this investigator, a central concept for inquiry, but the methodology permitted it to emerge on its own as an elemental, culturally grounded concept. The notions of community described by respondents affirmed the old African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." One of the more distinctive aspects of the community notion was the idea of Giving Back. The young men were told to develop themselves as individuals, but their complete success was contingent on using these new skills to benefit the community and those in it. This view reframes and expands conventional prevention notions of "peer leaders" by making the cycling of personal resources a global community and cultural value. Self is redefined to include the community. To quote another African proverb, "I am because we are, and because we are, I am." Giving Back can marry prevention and empowerment. Having the skills and desire to help prevent problems in others can produce feelings of self-efficacy in the helper.

Why is Giving Back rarely an outcome variable in prevention research? Part of this reflects the problems of showing true community-level effects, but it is also influenced by European American cultural values on individualism (Katz, 1985). Nonetheless, Giving Back is consistent with the notion of "cycling of resources" in ecological psychology. It is also compatible with theories of African American scholars such as Karenga (1984) who speaks of "collective work and responsibility."

Giving Back could be developed into a potent prevention concept. Community psychologists and other social scientists often bring resources into the community via grants and contracts, rather than cycling resources by making Giving Back an essential intervention outcome. Seeds for this approach can be found in peer-based interventions and the notion of radiating effects, but linking these concepts to indigenous cultural notions of Giving Back may strengthen and contextualize their impact. Giving Back combines elements of empowerment, culture, and primary prevention.

The respondents in this study spoke of prevention, but not the type that narrowly targets specific problem behavior. Community psychology, like the Black Consciousness and Social Policy perspectives, targets crime, violence, and health-related behavior. In contrast, practitioners in this study viewed their charges as whole people. Just as a parent would not describe his or her role as one of "preventing adverse outcomes," the respondents discussed development in very general terms. They saw prevention as the development of a strong character and social support structure, one that helps young men avoid the deadly hazards in urban life. These findings corroborate those of Ferguson (1990), who argued that "nurturing" adult–child relationships is an essential part of effective programs. They spoke of global (ill-defined?) notions of development, responsibility, discipline, and role functioning. Concerns about AIDS, health, violence, delinquency, and anti-social behavior appeared in the 80,000 word database only once each.

Although respondent notions of prevention were vague by social science standards, a holistic approach to prevention may be gaining ground in the academy. Research has shown significant correlations between various risk behavior, suggesting that teens who engage in one risk behavior are likely to engage in other risk behaviors (Donovan & Jessor, 1985; Jessor & Jessor, 1977). Jessor and Jessor found that substance abuse, precocious sexual intercourse, minor delinquency, aggressiveness, and a trait they labeled "unconventionality" were consistently intercorrelated. Recent studies have also found significant relationships between sexual activity and the use of alcohol and drugs (Brindis, Seltzer, Martin, Korenbrot, & Erickson, 1988). There has been growing recognition in the literature that teenagers who engage in multiple-risk behavior may experience more serious problems as a consequence of the interaction among these behaviors. Although it is not uncommon for adolescents to experiment with risk behavior, Dryfoos (1987) estimated that one fourth of U.S. teenagers carry multiple risks due to early unprotected sexual intercourse, school failure, delinquency, and substance abuse. As Dembo and Shern (1982) noted, we need a better understanding of the processes that contribute to risk behavior.

Spirituality

Although community psychologists recognize the value of religiosity, the respondents in this study spoke more of spirituality. Spirituality was essential to most programs, but religion was important only to church programs. There is virtually no literature on the cultivation of spirituality as a prevention or empowerment strategy in community psychology. That many respondents spoke of tapping into a power greater than self suggests a "new" resource for culture-based interventions. Power is essential to empowerment, and the impact of spiritual power in the hands of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and their followers proves its value in social change activity. Spirituality is poorly represented in most coping measures and underdeveloped in most theories of psychosocial competence. Work here is urgently needed. As long as spirituality is central to the world view of many blacks, other people of color, and many white ethnic groups yet invisible in the applied psychological literature, the creation of culturally valid interventions will remain problematic.

Conclusions and Future Research

Whose perspective was closer to the respondents' — Madhubuti's (Black Consciousness) or Gibbs's (Social Policy)? Both authors shared the respondents' concern with education and family. But only Madhubuti's emphasis on culture (see Table I) predicted concerns related to culture and race, 3 of which were among the top 10: Black(ness), Africa, and (African) culture. Gibbs put no emphasis on culture, and none of her other priorities predicted any of the top 10 concerns not already predicted by Madhubuti. Thus, Black consciousness ideology seems more comprehensive, and it better accounts for the cultural concerns of respondents in this study.

When designing strategies to benefit African American men, why not ground the strategies in African American culture? Just as the Boy Scouts base their credos on the uniqueness of the European American experience, strategies aimed at young African Americans should do the same. This also applies to community psychology interventions, where concerns about the cultural compatibility of interventions that are transferred from one setting to another get little systematic attention (Marin, 1991). In Africentric programs, culture is explicit and all-encompassing. Translating scholarship into engaging programs is no easy task however. Programs steeped in African American culture as understood by scholars may not match that of average youngsters. Practitioners

face the task of turning these abstract ideas into compelling activities or, in the worst cases, simply indoctrinating young people. Yet even here, what some might condemn as indoctrination others might applaud as inoculation — a vaccine against a society based on European cultural supremacy. Yet, as valuable as cultural socialization is, an inordinate emphasis on *psychic* cultural development may not necessarily promote *social* change and development.

The emphasis on culture is based on a grand hypothesis: Cultural socialization leads to increased self-esteem and self-efficacy and to enhanced performance in a wide range of behavior. For a culture to survive it must transmit its values to succeeding generations, so the value of cultural socialization is not the question. Every intervention should reflect the culture of its participants. The question, from a social science perspective, is the relationship between cultural socialization and desired outcomes in school, home, community, and mental health. If there is a strong positive relationship, a *central* role for culture in interventions may be in order. As yet, we have few data on this grand hypothesis. Cross (1991) argued that feelings about one's self and feelings about one's group (racial identity) are largely unrelated. In contrast, work by Bowman and Howard (1985) hinted that "race-related socialization" enhances school outcomes. No rigorous prospective studies on the question are available yet to clarify these issues.

Because the data show that ideas from the Black Consciousness movement and literature have taken root in manhood development organizations, there is a potential for conflict in collaborations with staunch advocates of conventional social science theory, where culture often remains unacknowledged. Yet there is common ground between African and European Americans' values. Concerns about family, community, school, and parenting also concern European Americans — as was evident in the presidential campaigns by Clinton, Bush, and Perot. Only the manifestation of these values varies, depending on the environmental and cultural circumstances of the people in question.

Caution is advised when considering the findings and conclusions of this study because of limitations in the sampling strategy. With no comprehensive national list of organizations serving young black men, it is impossible to determine if the sample was representative. In addition, the qualitative methods used in this study permitted the participants to alter and expand the objectives of this study in ways the investigator could not anticipate. Open-ended questions about mission, ideology, high points in the programs, and so forth, generated rich, complex data that required the investigator to make many decisions in interpretation and the construction of themes. Although considerable efforts were made to generate a plethora

of key words and check interjudge agreement in the content analysis, most of these strategies spoke more to the reliability of the analysis rather than the degree to which the constructions accurately reflected the participant's world view (a validity issue). Future efforts could further validate their findings by systematically reinterviewing respondents about key interpretations rather than the more limited manuscript review used here. This is part of classic ethnography. Alternatively, themes could be transformed into rating scales for respondents to rate. Such quantitative data would be a powerful multimethod approach for establishing convergent validity.

Despite the limitations of this study, its use of participative methods holds many advantages for community psychology. It muffles the sound of the researcher's a priori ideas to allow the voices of others to be heard. In this research, the voices produced unanticipated insights into prevention, community, spirituality, and Giving Back that the researcher constructed on his own.

In the future, research on manhood development ought to identify exemplary programs, ones that show innovation in addressing key themes. Researchers should consider observations as well as interviews, because Ferguson (personal communication, 1992) suggests that staff often do more or different things than they talk about. A case study approach would be appropriate, with an eye toward the manhood development *process* surrounding important themes. From here, the next logical step is evaluation. An action-research project would be ideal — one that identifies and contributes to any positive outcomes the program produces.

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