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GOOD KIDS, BAD CITY:  
THE EXAMINATION OF CRIME RESISTANCE IN LOW INCOME, HIGH CRIME,  
COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

by

TROY WILLIAMS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Leadership Studies  
University of San Diego

April 23, 2015

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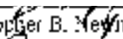
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UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO  
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION SCIENCES

CANDIDATE'S NAME: Troy Williams

TITLE OF THESIS: GOOD KIDS, BAD CITY: THE EXAMINATION OF CRIME  
RESISTANCE IN LOW INCOME, HIGH CRIME,  
COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

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## Dedication

To the man upstairs who has ordered my steps throughout this entire process

To the best parents in the world Janice and Troy Williams

To College Park, Georgia for making me the man I am today

Last but not least to the young men who inspired this research Kevin Scott and Jarryd

Bibbs rest peacefully.

“I pray that this word that God has given you be so powerful and personal so intimate and applicable, that it leaves behind a barren mind made pregnant. This seed of greatness will explode in your life and harvest in your children, feeding the generation to come and changing the winds of destiny.” By T.D. Jakes

## Acknowledgements

First giving honor to God who is the head of my life. If it was not for your words, scriptures, and my continuous prayer I would not have been able to make it through this process. I must start by acknowledging my family. My father, who was born on a farm as a sharecropper in Troy, Alabama you have always exemplified what it means to be a leader and a man. My mother who has continuously showed me unconditional love and has always encouraged me throughout my life and told me that I can achieve anything that I put my mind to. To my grandparents who attended segregated high schools your sacrifices and bravery will always remain in my heart. I would also like to thank my older sister Marcie who taught me to never be afraid of anything and even when you may encounter adversity keep your goal in mind. Also my older brother Ricky whose professional achievements have superseded anyone from our neighborhood, your faith and hard work have encouraged me in ways that I will never be able to express. And finally to my oldest sister Connie may you rest peacefully you will always have a piece of my heart.

I have to acknowledge my neighborhood College Park, Georgia thank you for everything that you showed me if it was not for you this thesis would not be possible. The Good Kid Crew, who allowed me into their lives to share their story with the world. Your stories have the power to change the trajectory of an entire group and I am thankful for you all allowing me to be a part of that. I also have to acknowledge the sociology department at Clayton State University in Atlanta, Georgia Dr. Davis, Dr. Holland-Davis, Dr. Mohamed, Dr. Tosouni, and Dr. Young. Your belief in me inspired me more than you would ever know. Thank you all for never allowing me to give subpar work and making sure that I was very well prepared for graduate school. Finally, I would like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Newman and Dr. Green. You both have been very supportive of my decision to complete a thesis. Thank you for your dedication to my project, guidance, and optimism that constantly challenged my academic ability and allowed me to push through mental unconscious barriers since the day I decided to attend our university.

## Abstract

A number of criminological theories assert that individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities are more likely to participate in criminal activities. Given the confluence of race and class in this country Black and Latino men are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. However, less is known about men of color who grow up in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods, but do not commit crimes. In this study, the researcher examines a group of Black men who exhibited leadership to resist assimilated criminological behavior, which is the process of participating in crime in order to be revered by peers, family, or community members. This study focuses on understanding the groups' resilience and ability to maintain personal values in environments that encourage criminal behaviors. This study defines a leader as someone who is admired, well liked, and thought of as a prominent figure in their respective community while thriving, adapting, and empowering others.

Using qualitative methods, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 Black men, between the ages of 20-30. Face to face interviews were conducted in Atlanta, GA, Duncans, Jamaica, and San Diego, CA. Data analyses revealed that participants in the study, who were more comfortable with their identity, were less likely to participate in criminal activities. So the participants in this research believed the reason they were accepted by people who committed crimes in their community was because they were confident in who they were. Additionally, study participants unknowingly used an identity development technique called self-authorship, which posits that a person can become the coordinator of their beliefs, identities, and social relationships. The more the participants interrogated their worldview, their identity, and their social relationships, the more they developed their identity and the less likely they were to commit crimes.



## Chapter One - Introduction

In 2012, American hip hop artist Kendrick Lamar released his critically acclaimed major-label debut album entitled *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*. The platinum album stood out from other recent releases for its autobiographical account of growing up in Compton, California. Lamar's songs address typical adolescent issues such as dating, while also giving personal accounts of his unique experiences such as being pressured by his peers to commit crimes and loot stores during the 1992 Rodney King uprising. Lamar examines how the chaotic environment of South Central Los Angeles, California robbed him of his innocence and negatively influenced him and his peers to commit crimes. Upon first hearing the album, I was immediately struck by how closely it paralleled my own experiences growing up in College Park, Georgia. My research explored a group of men who resisted a condition that I have named assimilated criminological behavior, which I define as the process of participating in crime in order to be accepted and well-liked by peers, family, or community members.

Kendrick Lamar's album exhibits the kinds of pressured experiences that take place not only in Compton but also in my own home town and in low-income high crime communities across the world. My research is focused on these experiences in these environments. Through my master's research at the University of San Diego, I have found that my experiences and those described by Lamar can be explained by Merton's Strain Theory (1938), Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory (1942), and Sampson and Bean's revision of Community-Level Racial Inequality Theory. These theories state that individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities are more likely to participate in criminal activities because of economic strain and limited access to educational resources (Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay,

1942; Sampson & Bean, 2006). My master's thesis was inspired by events that transpired during my junior year of college coupled with songs featured on the album *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* by Kendrick Lamar. Having been born in the 1980's, hip hop culture was highly influential for my generation. The music became a soundtrack of my youth; it has also created values and ideas that have shaped a very large part of my identity and those of my peers.

Growing up in College Park, GA, I was often told that I only have two options: I could either be a criminal or a sellout. My peers presented me with opportunities to commit crimes and I declined. They gloated about the benefits they received from partaking in criminal activities, they boasted about having large amounts of money, popularity, and access to the most attractive women in the neighborhood. The adults in my community exerted developmental pressure on me to grow up as a strong, mature, socially sophisticated, and educated man. But in order for me to become this sophisticated Black "aristocrat" in the way that adults expected, I was led to believe that I would have to disassociate myself from my peers, hip hop culture, and crime.

On career day in grade school, lawyers, doctors, and politicians would come to our school and tell us that the reason they were successful was because they did not interact with people who participated in crimes. These professionals said they were from my community but they did not speak, dress, or act like anyone from my neighborhood. This led me to believe that the only way for a person from a community similar to mine to become successful was to be unlike the people in my community. Taking the advice these professionals offered—however well-intentioned—was improbable for me. Although I had never committed crimes and had a desire to be successful, I was resistant to following the advice of the professionals since I still had friends and family members who would commit crimes. These were people that I did not want to disassociate myself from. I occasionally socialized with criminals, dressed like them, and

spoke like them. The only thing that differentiated us was the fact that I did not participate in illegal activities. W.E.B. Du Bois' double consciousness theory, describes the experience of African Americans who are forced to define themselves through the standards of White society in addition to their own Black culture this duality causes an angst within the African American psyche (Du Bois, 1906). It seemed to me that the advice given by those professionals placed more value on gaining access to white standards of success than remaining conscious of one's Blackness and community. That was a compromise I was uninterested in making.

After connecting what Lamar and DuBois describe, and identifying how my own life relates, I now find myself examining an internal conflict that many African Americans are faced with when operating in a professional mainstream culture. The concept of double consciousness made me question how a person was able to thrive in both societies; to be accepted by criminals and professionals without being asked, by either group, to alter their identity. This is the guiding question of my master's work.

During my junior year of college, I was asked to assist one of my professors with a follow up study to a book that he had written; Dorm Room Dealers: Drugs and the Privileges of Race and Class by Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010). The book is based on an ethnographic study of drug dealing on private Southern California college campuses. The two researchers spent six years interviewing and investigating the experiences of fifty upper-middle class college drug dealers. Their goal was to discover the motives of these privileged youth for dealing drugs and to find out why they were risking their freedom, college education, and so much more for such a small reward. Mohamed and Fritsvold explored the dealers' markets, reasons for entering into the drug market, and how the dealers justified what they were doing. The research shows that many of the administrators, faculty, and even campus police were highly aware of the dealers'

foul play but in order to protect the reputation and prestige of the Southern California schools that the dealers attended, most of their deviant acts went uninterrupted (Mohamed, 2010). These types of inaccuracies in our drug policies cause unequal disparities in our criminal justice system and higher incarceration rates in the Black community.

My task for this research project was to examine if these same drug practices were present in private Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the south eastern region of the United States. I was able to interview four African American men who were drug dealers at the colleges they attended. During the interviews, I discovered that all but one of the dealers had advanced from lower level college drug dealer to full time drug dealer in the wider community. I found the results very interesting especially because Dr. Mohamed and Dr. Fritzvold (2010) had discovered that after the California dealers graduated from their private universities they all began careers in non-criminal fields. During my research I focused on college drug dealers in the southeastern United States, I found the young men to be extremely intelligent and charismatic. This made me wonder how these young men ended up in these criminal circumstances. I would sometimes leave the interviews in tears and with a heavy heart as I thought about the unfortunate circumstances of these otherwise good young men. By the conclusion of the research, I had discovered that many of the dealers in the study began selling drugs because of the strain on their lives that stemmed from their financial situations, which they claimed forced them to react with drastic and illegal measures.

During an early November 2011 meeting, the head researcher on the project mentioned that I needed to find more people to interview. That week, I scheduled two additional interviews. The first was with a man who goes by the name "Smokey." Smokey was well-known in Atlanta. He stood almost 6'2 and weighed 400 pounds. Despite his large physique and low income

background, Smokey was exceptionally stylish. In high school, he was a star student athlete and homecoming king. His superb grades and athletic ability earned him a full athletic scholarship to a historically black college in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. After being in college for a couple semesters, he became the primary marijuana distributor on campus. During his junior year, he dropped out of school, moved back to Atlanta, and was dealing drugs full-time. On November 12, 2011, Smokey was murdered following an argument that took place on a popular social media website. Because of his untimely death I was not able to interview him.

I was, however, able to interview the second person that I scheduled a meeting with; he selected the pseudonym “Freaky J” during our interview. Freaky J, was from southwest Atlanta, and claimed to be one of the largest marijuana distributors not only at his college but in the entire Atlanta metropolitan area. He claimed that he had grossed over four million dollars and sold over 10 tons of marijuana between 2003 and 2007. So confident in his distribution success, he smirked and said during one of our interviews, “If you smoked weed in Atlanta between 2003 and 2007 you probably bought it from me.” I knew Freaky J in high school. He was a star baseball player and had a reputation for being a “pretty boy” because of his athletic physique, wavy hair, dark skin, and preppy dressing style. Like Smokey, he also attended a historically Black college, in Atlanta. Also like Smokey, he dropped out in his junior year. January 18, 2012, Freaky J was murdered in Detroit. The motive for his murder is still unknown and the case is still unsolved.

Following these tragic events, the interviews for my research were stopped, but I felt uneasy about not following up on the experiences and circumstances of Smokey, Freaky J, and other inner city youth. I was able to get to know these young men through our interviews and became interested in understanding why they and others like them became involved in

distributing drugs especially in light of the illegality, violence, and death associated with drug dealing. During the interviews, I discovered that most of their reasoning was circumstantial. Despite possessing many of the personality characteristics typically associated with success in mainstream careers, these individuals succumbed to influential factors that were out of their control like the environments that they were raised in. As a result, they believed that the best solution to achieving their financial dreams was selling drugs. The day that I left my first interview I said to myself, “If only they had been raised in different environments and were influenced by different people, maybe they wouldn’t be in this situation.” I realized that the individuals committing crimes were not necessarily bad people. On the contrary, in the cases of Freaky J and Smokey, they were actually good kids whose upbringing in a bad city negatively impacted their choices.

During my research, I have read many academic works that focus on the negative phenomena taking place in high crime communities. Many scholars make suggestions for improving the current status of high crime communities. Instead of focusing on the promising qualities of the communities, scholars often make recommendations from a deficit perspective which assumes that these communities are lacking essential qualities. I believe that it is unlikely to inspire meaningful change from a deficit perspective. Many programs that were created from this deficit perspective focus on improving superficial factors in marginalized communities such as replacing baggy clothing and correcting improper language use. For example, programs like “Pants Up, Guns Down” are created suggesting that if young men would only wear a belt, speak proper English, and not join gangs, their lives would improve dramatically. While these factors might hold weight in some circumstances, the insight I’ve gained from the lives of Smokey and Freaky J inform my critique of such theories and programs. I’m doubtful that had Smokey and

Freaky J followed those prescriptions that they would have changed the direction of their lives and led them to a safe and law abiding life.

Returning to Merton's Strain Theory (1938), Shaw and McKay's (1942) Social Disorganization Theory, and Sampson and Bean's (2006) revision of Community-Level Racial Inequality Theory helps me interpret what happened to Smokey and Freaky J. Their unfortunate deaths made it impossible for me to ask what these men thought about legal possibilities for employment in their communities. What stood out to me about the research with which I assisted Dr. Mohamed and Dr. Fritsvold, is that the study approached the activities of young men from high crime communities by acknowledging and valuing their lived experiences. Instead of approaching the issue from a deficit perspective as many scholars have, this research team wanted to focus on a strengths based perspective and attempted to understand the choices made from the point of view of the young men. The researchers sought the input of real people in real crime-laden communities which were known for "producing" criminals.

Merton's theory explains that capitalist values produce extraordinary strain on the lower class. Merton suggests that such pressure forces individuals who do not have equal access to education and jobs to create alternative opportunities and adjust their decision making processes in order to transcend such pressure. In other words, the strain that Merton describes makes socioeconomic advancement not only very difficult, but also unlikely for individuals from low income communities. Crime, according to Merton, is a viable response to economic strain since criminal activity often results in the goods valued by the capitalist macro culture. It is important to note that Merton states that the a major reason for a person from the lower class to commit crimes is because they have been obstructed from equal opportunities in areas such as the work

force and education. I believe that there are other factors that are related to why a person commits crime but equal access to education and employment would assist the community.

Along similar lines, Social Disorganization theory states that high-crime, low-income, communities of color encourage the development of delinquent subcultures (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Shaw and McKay believed that a person who is raised in these types of environments is more likely to participate in criminal behavior in order to be accepted into these delinquent subcultures. The theory posits that a person's residential location is a major contributing factor that leads to them becoming involved in illegal activities. However, I believe that the community may be correlated to crime but does not cause crime.

Building on Strain Theory and Social Disorganization Theory, the revision of Community Level Racial Inequality Theory (2006) agrees that the socioeconomic status of a person's community is the largest and most consistent predictor of violence. Sampson and Wilson attribute other factors to the patterns of crime in communities of color like hyper racial segregation, negative economic transformation in the Black community, Black male joblessness, the relocation of other social classes out of the inner city, and housing discrimination (Sampson & Bean, 2006). The authors of this theory posit that the isolation of materials and unequal access to opportunity's are major contributing factors that influence the culture of neighborhoods and contribute to the depletion of these inner-city communities (Sampson & Bean, 2006).

While reading different leadership theories, I have worked to understand how law abiding youth from inner city communities have resisted crime under the same crime-filled and low-income circumstances that many of their peers are influenced by. I am interested in exploring identity development by referencing various disciplines and theorists. I've found psychosocial theories useful for informing my research as well as the theory of how social experiences affect a



person throughout their life (Erikson, 1980). Through the course of my research, I am constantly reminded of how strain theory, social disorganization theory, and the revision of community level racial inequality (Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay 1942; Sampson & Bean, 2006) may have impacted the personalities and social experiences of Black men from low-income, high crime, communities of color. As previously noted, a great deal of criminological research suggests that in order for a person in a low class, high crime, community of color to be socially accepted by members of delinquent groups, they have to partake in criminal activities (Shaw & McKay, 1942). In a departure from theories such as these, I turn instead toward Baxter Magolda's leadership concept of self-authorship (2008). The concept recognizes the agency of individuals leaving in these high crime areas by positing that a person can, "become the coordinator of their beliefs, identities, and social relationships" (p. 270). In order to better understand how someone from a community that seems to encourage delinquent behavior has used their informal authority, leadership, and self-control to overcome obstacles despite their circumstances.

In order to provide some context for the status of Black men and the type's of communities I have researched, I will give an example of the neighborhoods in which many of the young men from this study were raised. I will share the negative factors that the young men in this study did not allow to interfere with their success. This will be demonstrated by presenting economic and criminal statistics from College Park, Georgia, the city where I was raised and one of the cities in which four (50%) of the men from this study were raised. In order to contextualize the criminal statistics and the city, I will compare statistics in College Park to national crime and economic statistics. In College Park, the median income is \$30,387 the national median income is \$53,046. The population of those living below poverty level is 36.5% in College Park of the population in comparison to a national average of 14.9%. In College Park

17% of the population is unemployed as opposed to a national average of 5.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

African American men are monitored closely by the police, arrested, and sentenced more than any other race in the United States (Brown, 2003 p.135) and 28% of Black men in the United States will spend some time in their lifetime in some type of correctional facility (Brown, 2003 p.137). In the year 2000, seven states reported that between 80-90% African Americans who were arrested on a drug offense were sent to prison; this is fifty seven times greater than their white counterpart (Alexander, 2012 p. 98). And by the age of 23, 49% of Black males have been arrested as opposed to 38% of white males (Brame, 2014).

According to a uniform crime report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (UCR), it was discovered that breaking and entering, grand larceny, motor vehicle theft, drug sales, robbery, identity theft, and murder are among the most committed crimes in the United States. While using the FBI's list of crimes to compare College Park's crime rate to the rest of the United States' crime rate, the uniform crime report found that College Park's crime rate is 917.9 (per 100,000) in comparison to a national crime rate of 298.9. It is important to note that these are statistics are based on crimes that were reported not on the total number of crimes committed.

These economic and crime figures are important for two reasons. First, they give an example of Merton's (1938) strain theory that states that individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities are more likely to participate in criminal activities to gain access to the capitalistic benefits that they otherwise have limited access to. Secondly, these statistics demonstrate how much more likely it is for an African American male from a low income community to be arrested in comparison to his white counterpart. Once again, it is not my intention to refute these criminological theories that state that this group is more likely to commit

crime. Instead, I am interested in researching leadership components that contributed to some inner city youths' ability to resist crime yet remain socially accepted in an environment that seems to promote deviant behavior.

According to these three criminological theories, the Black young men from low-income high-crime communities of color from my research were susceptible to criminal behavior. Assuming these theories to be true, the question for me became; how could young men like Smokey and Freaky J have exercised leadership to resist participating in the illegal activities that ultimately led their demise? I am motivated to perform my research by stories like my own and other individuals who come from communities that may be labeled as deviant by society but have never participated in criminal activities. After completing this research, I hope to develop a recommendation for how to create positive environments for those who are interested in developing and using their own leadership to resist crime and still remain socially accepted.

#### Research Question

The purpose of this study is not to negate theories developed by Merton, Shaw and McKay, and Sampson and Bean but to examine the crime resistance strategies. The research question guiding this study is:

- What are the leadership patterns of Black men who are accepted, well liked, and thought of as prominent figures in communities where criminal behavior is present?

These young men come from high crime communities yet are able to resist the temptation to commit crimes. They are respected, well liked, accepted, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles that may be labeled as deviant by broader society. Throughout my research, I aimed to identify which leadership philosophies these young men employ as they overcome circumstances that could have otherwise led them to a crime-filled lifestyle.

During the course of the study my research question evolved. The research question started out as; What are the experiences of Black men from high crime communities who were accepted even though they did not participate in criminal activities? After further thought I began to notice that having a research question structured this way was doing exactly what I was trying to avoid. This question was privileging criminal behavior and making it seem that the majority of Black men commit crimes when in fact the opposite is true. Because I wanted my research to focus on the strengths of Black men I used Harpers' (2010) article Creating an Anti-Deficit Framework for Research to restructure my research question to focus more on the strengths of the participants in my study. This change was very difficult to notice and even more difficult to adjust but after about three tries I was able to finally adjust the question and focus on the strengths of the men in this study.

### Significance

This research is significant because it observes how young Black men from low-income, high-crime, communities of color might not be enticed to commit crimes in environments that encourage delinquent behavior. I will highlight how these young men managed to become active and well liked participants in their communities without having to participate in criminal activity. In this research, I focus on key identity development techniques that the men in this study informally used to resist crime. It is my hope that this research will focus on the intersection of sociology and leadership and will add to crime resistance efforts available in the high crime areas of Atlanta, Georgia; Duncans, Jamaica; and San Diego, California.

## Chapter Two - Literature Review

In this chapter, I will first discuss the strengths of Black men and then give a historical overview of the development of deficit literature. Then I will explore the human desire to be accepted by groups and how this desire may lead to some young men from high crime communities getting involved in criminal behavior. I follow this discussion with a review of successful Black men from high crime communities who became involved in crime as adolescents but later changed the direction of their life. These examples demonstrate how common it is for someone in these communities to become active participants in criminal behavior. Next, I will then begin exploring recent events taking place in Ferguson, Missouri; Sanford, Florida; Oakland, California; and Staten Island, New York and how these events make this research so significant. Having devoted attention to those events, I will then begin examining criminological theories. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of leadership and identity development theories. These theories maintain that if a person is more confident in their identity, then they are less likely to be interested in doing things to satisfy a group for social acceptance.

### Strengths and History

A great deal of literature on the plight of Black males usually focuses on the negative issues in the Black community. Authors such as Shaun Harper and Tyrone Howard have spent a great deal of their academic career focusing on anti-deficit literature that focuses on the positive achievements of Black men.

In Harper's (2014) research he focuses on how society characterizes African American and Latino men. Harper reveals that previous research has been very negative and viewed minority men through a deficit model that focuses on the damaging aspects of these communities. Harper suggests that if scholars begin to produce research from an anti-deficit

perspective, then focus on the positive, successful, minorities that overcome tough circumstances and succeed will begin to discredit the biased narrative that have stereotyped Black and Latino men. So instead of focusing on what caused these young men to drop out of school, Harper was interested in what were the motivating factors that contributed to these young men's success in academia. The primary focus of Harper's, study was a discussion of success stories of African American and Latino high school students. These students succeeded in and out of school, developed college aspirations, became college-ready, and navigated their ways to postsecondary education (p. 9). Harper concluded that with the support of family, school, and policy makers, African American and Latino men can improve their success in academia. Harper's study is important to this research because it displays successful African American men from low income high crime areas that have overcome the negative connotation associated with these areas and excelled in the classroom.

The motivation of Harper's research was to display how society's view of a group of people can be detrimental to the motivation of the group. Harper is interested in motivating marginalized groups through anti-deficit methods. His article discusses Black men and how society's opinions and views of them have affected perceptions of those men from lower socioeconomic statuses thus clouding their aspirations. The goal of Howard's work was to develop new ideas, a different conceptual framework, and innovative methods of inquiry that can be useful in dismantling negative imagery of Black men (p. 86). These negative images of Black males have caused African Americans to internalize self-doubt and have influenced their behavior in many different settings. This article expresses how the positive development of social imagery can begin to revolutionize how African American men view themselves. It is my

belief that this development of social imagery could also transform ideas of crime resistance in low income, high crime, communities of color.

In another article by Harper he gives a framework on how researchers should focus more on the positive attributes of men of color from communities where crime is present rather than how they are failing to satisfy the requirements of the academy (Harper, 2010). This type of academic work is limited and few and further reveals that a need for anti-deficit literature is needed for Black men to further research efforts in high crime communities of color. Before we continue to examine the experiences of Black men from communities where criminal behavior is present it is important to give a more historical context of literature written about the Black community.

In 1965 the Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Moynihan gave a report on the state of African Americans, it was entitled, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. The report was written one year after the Civil Rights Act was signed an act that ended unequal voter registration requirements and eleven years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which ended legal segregation in the United States. Moynihan stated that African Americans were in the worst social and economic position of any other group in the United States. He believed that the only way to eradicate poverty and other social ills that plagued the socioeconomic status of the group was for positive national efforts to be made. Moynihan said that a nationwide effort is needed to “establish a stable Negro family structure.” Moynihan classifies the social status of African Americans in 1965 as the most adamant and dangerous issue plaguing the country and urged President Lyndon B. Johnson to do something immediately or the groups’ economic conditions will remain the same and African Americans will continue to be a liability instead of an asset to the nations’ economy. The purpose of Moynihan report was to inform the United

States that if more opportunities for education and economic rehabilitation for African Americans were created then more people will have jobs and this will be better for the economy. This report co-aligned with Johnson's War on Poverty (Moynihan, 1965).

Two years later in 1967, The Subculture of Violence Theory (1967) was created by Wolfgang and Ferracuti. Wolfgang's (1967) theory of African American subcultures of violence is one of the most recognized explanations of violent behavior in the African American community. The underlying ethnographic study on the subcultures within the African American lower class community in Philadelphia included analysis of national crime statistics which showed that African Americans were 10 times more likely than whites to be involved in a robbery and six times more likely to be involved in a homicide—the leading cause of death among African Americans during the time of the study (p. 152). Wolfgang concluded that violent behavior among African Americans was more likely to happen in their communities. Wolfgang stated that in these African American communities there is “a potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make up the life-style, the socialization process, and the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions (p.140).” Since Wolfgang and Ferracuti's study, other researchers have said that African Americans in lower class, high crime areas, value and encourage violence and “penalize deviation” (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967).

Prior to this study being conducted hardly any other research correlated race and crime. Since then a great deal of research has been a derivation of this research on Black men. This type literature focused on crime laden neighborhoods, economic strain, and depleting education systems in the inner city but very rarely did the studies focus on the strengths of those in the communities who thrived in these environments. There is a need for this type of literature in



research but unfortunately the vast majority of the literature focuses on these communities from a deficit perspective. Therefore because the primary narrative of low-income, communities of color is that they are high in crime a great deal of people have only learned about this rhetoric and also have applied it in policies, laws, and practices.

### Acceptance

I would first like to show the reader how unlikely it is for any person to ignore the request of (informal/formal) authority figures and how common it is for humans to have the desire to be accepted. In the article, “Within Ourselves: Psychological Needs That Make Us Seek Leaders” (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), the author makes several observations of how people are acclimatized to listen to authority figures even if they believe the authority figure’s behaviors were unethical. In the article, Lipman-Blumen identifies three factors that people fear when it comes to interacting with groups in organizations; being ostracized from a group that a person may identify with, becoming isolated from other people, and punishment for not listening to authority figures. Lipman-Blumen argues that people may participate in activities that they do not agree with so that they will receive praise from the leader and acceptance from the group. She goes on to explain how children are conditioned to listen to their parents so that they will not be punished; she posits that this type of upbringing trains individuals to listen to authority figures. According to this theory, people obey group’s expectations in order to avoid punishment and to garner awards. The author then begins to demonstrate how difficult it is not to follow the instruction of an authority figure.

Lipman-Blumen begins the article asking the reader to recall the results of the obedience experiment performed by Stanley Milgram (1975). The experiment demonstrated how common it is for someone to listen to an authority figure even if they believe what they are doing is

unethical. The experiment made the subject send what they believed to be an intense electric shock to someone in the next room because they were told, “the experiment must go on (Milgram, 1975).” Some criminological research argues that men who commit crimes are seen as respected informal authority figures in low income, high crime, communities of color (Anderson, 1999). If an informal authority figure in the community asked a person to commit a crime, according to this study performed by Milgram, the community member would likely participate in the crime so that they will be accepted. Most people have the need to belong to a social group and sometimes are willing to put their morals aside to be part of social groups (p.39). Lipman-Blumen states that it is worth sacrificing almost anything to maintain our membership in certain groups. The article concludes by stating that many people sacrifice freedom, honesty, and independence to guarantee social belonging (p.39). Lipman-Blumen also refers to the term developed by sociologist Judith Lorber “outsiders within” referring to people who may be a part of a population but not accepted by the group (p. 41). This person is visually distinguishable between socially accepted individuals and those who are not socially accepted. I feel that it is important to mention that this is not the group that I planned on researching. I am interested in exploring Black men who are accepted, well-liked, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles considered as deviant by society. Lorber’s work brings more quality to my research by exhibiting how rare it is for anyone to veer away from what may be thought of as the norm in social groups including the communities where my research was conducted.

In the article, “Organizations in Depth: The Psychoanalysis of Organizations,” the author McCollum-Hampton also explores the behavior of individuals in groups. McCollum-Hampton (1999) begins this article by addressing how groups can overpower a persons’ independent thought and force them to conform into the actions and behaviors of the organization that they

are associated with (p.114). McCollom-Hampton believes that when individuals become a part of organizations; they think less independently, their common sense becomes altered, and they are forced to have the same ideas, morals, and opinions as the group. McCollom-Hampton believes the reason for conformity is that individuals fear that they will be isolated from the larger group if they do not agree with their practices (p. 119). In another study conducted by Stapley (2006), he finds that people who belong to organizations and groups, desire to be accepted as much as they fear being disciplined for not conforming to the culture of the group (Stapley, 2006, p. 157). Stapley believes that groups are “the natural psychological habitat of man (p. 158)” he gathers that it is extremely difficult for anyone to reject the ideas of a group with which they identify. The following articles exhibit how difficult it is for anyone to ignore the desires of a group or organizations and still be thought of as a prominent figure in that culture. The reader might come to recognize the significance of the experiences of this group of men as they relate this realm of research. Their self-authoring despite their circumstances might also begin important conversations about crime resistance.

### Black Male Identity

The goal of this research is to examine the experiences of Black men who did not commit crimes but still remained accepted by those who did. Before observing Black men who did not commit crimes, it may be beneficial to research men who did commit crimes and briefly examine what influenced them to participate in criminal activities.

World War I presented African American men an opportunity to fight alongside their White counterparts. Many of the Black soldiers who participated in the war believed that by the time the war ended they would come home to the United States and be viewed as heroes. When they arrived back in the United States and saw that they were possibly going to remain in the

same social status, many of the veterans ended up leaving the South and migrated North in search of creating a thriving Afrocentric society that allowed the group to progress (NAACP, 2014). Part of this African American utopia became Harlem, New York. From 1918 to the mid 1930's Harlem, New York became known across the United States as the country's capital for prominent Black members of society. And in the early twentieth century, Harlem became home to one of the most influential leaders of the civil rights movement. Before he became this powerful, influential, charismatic leader however, Malcolm X was a drug dealer, organizer of a gambling racket, solicitor of prostitution, and eventually was arrested for burglary and sentenced to ten years in the state penitentiary (X & Haley, 1965).

In X's autobiography, he attributes his troubled childhood to many things. First, he attributes his behavior to his family being separated by social services after white supremacists murdered his father who was a local community leader and pastor. He later tells a story of how he runs away from his foster family and moved to live with his sister. He explains that the lack of opportunity and resources in his community and the constant presence of immoral behavior led him into a life of criminal activity (X & Haley, 1965). Malcolm X then begins to speak about how the underworld of Harlem transforms him into a ruthless criminal, where only the least empathetic survive. These conditions made him one of the most notorious criminals in Harlem and eventually led to his arrest. While in prison, X began reflecting on his life and how he ended up in such harsh circumstances. He thinks back to his family being divided by social services, his teachers treating him poorly throughout grade school, and his obstruction from economic resources. Following these experiences, Malcolm X believed that his Blackness pigeonholed him into a life of crime long before he was born.

I believe the story of Malcolm X is a good example of “Good Kid, Bad City” for three reasons. First, Malcolm X gives an example of how social bonds, informal authority, and community influences can impact the direction of a persons’ life. Secondly, His story shows the reader how a person who was involved in crime can transition into one of the most influential leaders of the civil rights movement. Finally, Malcolm X’s story exhibits that it may be common for someone from a high crime community to become an active participant in criminal behavior; however that decision is reversible. There have been many examples of famous Black men who have been participants in deviant activities during their adolescent years. Many of these men, however, say that when better options presented themselves their personal ideas, goals, and practices changed for the better.

Studies have shown that Black men are constantly portrayed in the United States as angry, inarticulate, and malevolent (Howard, 2012). These views of the Black male identity has led to many Black males adopting these negative roles that society tells that group they should be instead of becoming what they want to become (Cose, 2002). In Ellis Cose’ book, *The Envy of the World*, he addresses how stereotypes affected him as a young Black man growing up. Negative racial labels hindered Cose and he felt forced to embrace the labels society had assigned to him (p. 3). In his book, he interviews a young Black man from Los Angeles, California who tells stories of how his community and peers admired, respected, and celebrated deviant acts (p. 9). The interviewee tells stories of how police assumed that every Black male in his neighborhood was a member of a gang. Quite often, the young men were arrested, harassed, interrogated, and otherwise criminalized before they had even become involved in criminal activity. Cose says that this type of interaction with law enforcement leads young Black men to believe that the only glory that someone could receive in this community comes from following

the code of the streets (p. 11). This theme of hopelessness is omnipresent throughout the stories that Cose tells of young Black men. He concludes by telling young Black men to reject the criminal labels that society has assigned to the group and embrace new personal values that they have set for themselves (p.15).

### Perceptions of Black Men

In this study, I acknowledge the influence that other studies attributed to social imagery - how a person perceives a group to act, think, and behave, structures how people perceive certain groups to function - which is a large part of social domination, economic exploitation, and political disenfranchisement (Horsman, 1981; Spring, 2006). These images have the ability to frame people's mental models about entire racial groups and can ultimately affect how the group views themselves. In the summer of 2013 George Zimmerman was acquitted in the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed teenage Black male who Zimmerman believed to be a burglar in Sanford, Florida (Brown, 2013). On New Year's Day 2009, Oscar Grant, an unarmed Black male, was shot and killed by a public transit officer, Johannes Mehserle, the officer was charged with manslaughter, a misdemeanor, and sentenced to two years but was credited for already serving 292 days (Taylor, 2013). A little more than a year after the acquittal of George Zimmerman, Michael Brown, an 18-year old unarmed Black male, was fatally shot by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri after the teen was accused of taking a box of cigars from a convenience store (CNN, 2014). In November 2014, after a grand jury hearing, Officer Wilson was not indicted for the murder of Michael Brown. The same summer that Michael Brown was shot by Ferguson police officers, a 43 year old Eric Garner was put in a choke hold that proved fatal. Garner was accused of selling single cigarettes, and in December 2014 a grand jury decided not to indict the officer who put Garner in the choke hold (CNN, 2014). These events

have led to riots, protests, and the creation of the social media hashtag “Black Lives Matter.” The death of these men has drained me, left me feeling hopeless, and afraid of law enforcement. Because of this, I thought it would be important to understand how these current events relate to my research.

With the recent deaths of Michael Brown, Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner one may ask how can this research be used to prevent these situations from reoccurring in low income, high crime, communities of color. Many scholars have different opinions of why this may be happening to this group. Jack Taylor’s 2013 article references police brutality and why it happens so frequently in communities of color. He begins by speaking about racism and how the United States segregation system has organized a hierarchical racial class that has divided racial groups and encourages violence against Black and Latino men (Taylor, 2013 p. 188). Taylor references a book by Frantz Fanon that says the ideas that others have of Blacks men are overshadowing the true identity of the group (Fanon, 1967).

Mays’ (2013) article examined why police officers may target Black men, he found the cause to be hidden bias. Mays say that the stereotypes of racial groups guide perceptions of the way people respond to certain situations (Mays, 2013 p. 14). For instance if I was to say a little old lady approached me and demanded some candy, her demand would be thought of as non-threatening. However, if I say I was approached by a large young Black man who demanded some candy, the young man would be seen as more threatening (Mays, 2013 p. 14). Mays’ believes that society holds unintentional attitudes and engages in discriminatory behavior against Black men. She says that because of these discriminatory dangerous ideas of Black males, they are viewed as more dangerous than their white counterpart by police officers. Mays’ believes the stereotypes are the cause of higher arrest records of Black males in the United States. He uses

several examples to demonstrate the inequality between Black and Latino men in compare it to their White counterpart. He offers an example of a quote from Geraldo Rivera, a television host, after the death of Trayvon Martin, the host said “I am urging the parents of Black and Latino youngsters particularly to not let their children go out wearing hoodies; I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin’s death as George Zimmerman was (Kung, 2012).” These types of comments suggest that the type of clothing that a person in these marginalized groups may be wearing informs how other racial groups view these individuals as criminals.

Owen Brown’s 2013, article on America’s War Against Black Males. Brown opens the articles with a quote from Bill O’Reilly that says that the treatment of Black men in the United States is justified by current crime rates. Brown then addresses current practices and policies like “stop and frisk” which cause friction between local citizens and police (Brown, 2013 p. 259). He then discloses alarming figures, for example; 87% of the people stopped and frisked in New York City in 2012 were Black and Latino (Brown, 2013 p. 262). Brown also speaks about current race relations in the United States. Cesare Lombroso (1876) was one of the first people to associate race and crime. Brown believes that many White conservative scholars have used Lombroso’s research to confirm that Blacks were prone to crime. These articles written by the scholars are the motivation of racially bias policies (Brown, 2013, p. 262). The deaths of Grant, Martin, Garner and Brown interest me, especially when coupled with these articles. I believe it is important to explore other groups’ opinions and ideas of Black men and crime. The intention for this section is to highlight how this research may be beneficial to law enforcement agents who may be policing unfamiliar communities. I anticipate this research dispelling the ideas that all Black men from these high crime communities of color all participate in crime. I hope to address



unconscious racist practices that block the full integration of Black men into mainstream society (Brown, 2013 p. 267).

### Crime and The Community

The development of social disorganization theory began at the University of Chicago, when sociologist Shaw and McKay found that minors who had been arrested were more likely to have lived in the inner city. They discovered that certain zones have higher crime rates than others. The rates of crimes increased with proximity to the inner city and as the person moved further away from the city, the likelihood of the person participating in crime decreased. The study displayed that criminals fit into systematic patterns (Shaw & McKay, 1942) and crime was concentrated in certain zones regardless of the ethnicity of the residents. Shaw and McKay were finally able to examine and explain crime rates further. The researchers contested that the neighborhood was more of the problem than the people in the community members. They argued that no matter who lived in these communities, they would become susceptible to committing crimes. The researchers measured these neighborhoods' social disorganization by the communities; socioeconomic status, median education level, occupations of residents, crime rates, alcohol and drug abuse, and mental illnesses. Shaw and McKay acknowledged that the people in these communities were not genetically programmed to commit crimes however, because of deviant influences, economic strain, and social conditions, criminal behavior became the reaction to these circumstances. Shaw and McKay posit that in these communities, criminals become role models, crime becomes viewed as acceptable, and residents are socialized to commit crimes (Shaw and McKay, 1942). They also affirmed that this delinquency became somewhat of a cultural tradition in these communities.

There have been many critiques of social disorganization theory since Shaw and McKay originally wrote the theory over 60 years ago. Perhaps the most important observation by scholars is since the inception of the theory the perception of high crime, low income, communities of color had transformed (Akers, 2009 p. 178). The researchers were attempting to discover the cause of crime, increased policing in inner city neighborhoods and the evacuation of business from the community became the unintended outcome. Edwin Sutherland argues that these communities may not be disorganized at all but just have different values than other communities, which is what he defines as differential social organization (Sutherland, 1947).

There have been other critiques of social disorganization theory like; Samson and Groves (1989) who added measurements of social class, residential mobility, and family disruption to the theory to see if they could get different results. Warner and Pierce (1993) examined how often the police were contacted to measure the crime rates in the inner city in comparison to affluent neighborhoods. Warner and Pierce observed; racial heterogeneity, residential instability, and family disruption. Wikstrom and Loeber (2000) also tested social disorganization theory, they found that delinquent behavior is related to the socioeconomic status of the community and the amount of support a teenager may receive. The group who they considered to be at highest risk had; limited parental supervision, delinquent social bonds, bad attitudes, and no self-control over their desires. However, these researchers publicized that juvenile delinquency was not exclusive to inner city neighborhoods.

Strain theory was developed by Robert Merton. Merton uses anomie, a theory created by one of the founders of sociology, Emile Durkheim as the framework for his theory. Anomie, is defined as a lack of social guidelines (Akers & Seller, 2009). Merton declares that the strong emphasis placed on achieving material success in the United States is not matched by an equally

strong emphasis on attaining these possessions by socially approved means (Akers, 2009). Merton affirms that too much importance is placed on a person's social and economic status in the United States. This pursuit of financial success places a strain on individuals who do not have access to the assets that the wealthy citizens in the country may have. Merton suggests that this strain leads to the underprivileged population believing that achieving economic mobility is more important than upholding any ethical standards (Akers, 2009). According to this theory, people without means sometimes break the law to obtain financial goals. Merton posits that everyone in our culture is taught to aspire towards the "American Dream" which presumes that equal opportunity and access are available to all while in reality, marginalized groups do not have access to the same opportunities as wealthy groups in the United States. It is important to remember that Merton emphasizes that the poorer someone is, the less access they will have to quality education, social networks, and career fields. Merton argues that the response from individuals blocked from equal opportunity is crime because they are blocked from financial mobility.

While Merton believed that the reason people committed crimes was economic strain, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) created a criminological theory called social control theory. The theory states that the only reason people commit crimes is because they do not have self-control over their desires (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). The two authors label criminals by their; impulsiveness, insensitivity to others' feelings, shortsightedness, poor judgment, and a prioritizing of immediate satisfaction over delaying pleasure to obtain long term rewards (Goode, 2008 p. 78). Gottfredson and Hirschi theory is important to this research because it brings to light another aspect of why Black men from high crime communities may not have been drawn to commit crimes; self-control. Having devoted attention to this theory, it is my hypothesis that the

self-control that my research participants display in their communities may have allowed them to garner the respect of their peers and avoid pressure to commit crimes.

Keeping in mind that a great deal of their peers may be involved in crime, and that criminological research suggests that criminal behavior is learned through interactions with criminals, I chose to explore Sutherland's (1947) Differential Association Theory. This theory states that people learn how to perform crimes by observing other criminals. His theory recognizes that people mimic what they see others do and become interested in doing the same things. Sutherland says that if a person is exposed to criminal activity more than law abiding, then they are more likely to participate in crime (Sutherland, 1947). So if a person was from a community where crime was high, this theory posits that this person will likely become intrigued to learn criminal behavior through their close intimate interactions with criminals (Akers, 2009). While researching this theory, I began to wonder how one would explain the young men who were close friends with criminals, interacted with them on a daily basis, but still became the coordinators of their beliefs, identities, and social relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008). How did these young men self-author despite their circumstances? Please keep in mind it is not my intent to refute these theories however I am interested in examining, the young men who did not commit crimes but are accepted by criminals.

One consistent factor in all of the criminological research about high crime communities has been the neighborhood's socioeconomic status. Sampson and Bean's (2006) study focuses on the role communities play in crime. They examine violence in African American, White, and Latino communities and discover that neighborhoods where violence is prevalent, exposes youth to the possibility of being unprotected from crime at an early age. These communities had very little preventative methods to protect them from becoming involved in crime. Sampson and Bean

disagree with Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory and claim that there is no distinct evidence that a person's residential location is the reason that they may become involved in crime. As stated earlier, these researchers attribute crime to other factors in communities of color like hyper racial segregation, negative economic transformation in the Black community, Black male joblessness, the relocation of other social classes out of the inner city, and housing discrimination (Sampson & Bean, 2006). The study also said that the lack of diversified interactions amongst social classes encourages criminal behavior in these communities. This specific research is important to my study because it takes note of other contributing factors to a person becoming involved in crime other than their residence in a certain community.

Anderson (1999) also examined the phenomenon of loyalty to subculture violence. Unlike previous researchers who focused primarily on the African American communities, he states that lower class, inner city white communities may also have an allegiance to a culture of violence (Anderson, 1999). Whether African American or White, for people in inner city subcultures, the most important value is respect, and to gain respect one must engage in violent behavior. Perhaps his greatest contribution to this particular research was recognizing that there are people who live in these inner city communities that do not commit crimes or partake in delinquent subcultures (p.159). However, Anderson declares that in mainstream cultures the values are; hard work, education, and good manners where as in communities of color they value violence, insensitivity, and anti-intellectualism (1999). By Anderson noting that despite the prevalence of violent subcultures within communities of color, a subculture is not a representative of the entire culture. If the inner city delinquent subculture is so generally strong that violence is prevalent, but not all members commit crimes (Cao, 1997), one should ask how that subculture of violence is experienced and responded to by members who do not commit

crimes. While Andersons' research suggested that the only way for a person to gain respect within the inner city is by participating in criminal activity, the present study is seeking to discover how one would explain being respected among deviant individuals while avoiding participation in criminal activities.

In a study of gang culture, a researcher by the name of Garot (2010) performed an ethnographic study on inner city gang members and the negative social imagery of these young men and women. What Garot discovered was that the negative images that society has labeled this group with have been incorrect. Garot found that these young men and women committed crimes because they wanted to be accepted by neighborhood peers.

He begins his study by interviewing a young woman who tells a story of how she began to partake in criminal activity and how she left a life of crime as soon as other options were presented to her. What Garot discovered was that teenagers are seeking to develop their identities by finding ways to become accepted in their communities. Neighborhood criminals offer these young people opportunities to become accepted. These teens begin to believe that once they participate in risk taking behaviors they will gain acceptance in their neighborhood which is important to this group of low income marginalized individuals because society makes these groups feel as if they do not belong (Garot, 2010). Garot's research is important to my current study because it confirms that many times, young men and women in marginalized communities participate in criminal activities so that they will not be alienated by their community.

### Identity Development

The relationships that a person establishes with peers as an adolescent are vital to their social development. In his 2009 study, Sumter researches the effect of a person's group of friends. He examines how peer groups are formed as adolescents that create interest, behaviors,

and attitudes in many people. Past research suggest that if a person was raised in a high crime area with criminal peers, then this person will more likely commit crimes (Shaw & McKay, 1942). A study conducted by Walker and Andrade (1996) concluded that the older a person gets the less likely they are to be influenced to participate in peer pressure. Sumter also studied the role of age and gender in differences in resistance to peer influence. The researchers found that the girls in the study reported being able resist peer influence more than boys also finding that mid adolescence boys and girls find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Sumter found that as a person matures, the desire to be socially accepted decreases. The study also revealed that the older a person gets, the more control they gain over their impulses. Sumter also found that age and maturity are not correlated. Maturity is more closely related to the subjects' not being tempted to be influenced by peers than their age. This article is important to my current research because Sumter displays that a person can ignore the temptation of participating in criminal activities if their personal morals are more important than desires to be socially accepted.

When a person is transitioning into their adolescent years, many times they begin to experiment in delinquent behavior to gain social acceptance. Sumter (2009) found that the more comfortable a person is with whom they are, the less likely they are to be persuaded to participate in deviant activities for acceptance. The development of identity has been an important influence of risk behavior (Jones & Hartman, 1988). In Dumas' (2012) research on identity development the researcher discusses the idea that a person with a developed identity may not be interested in committing crimes because the crimes may interfere with personal goals. Dumas' research found that, people who are more comfortable with their personal identity but open to explore new identities are less likely to participate in risk behavior to gain social acceptance (p. 923). This research is vital in the development of understanding crime resistance.

If more research is developed in relation to resisting crime and the development of identity, then it is very likely that an instrument can be constructed to mature adolescent identities and lower the likelihood of the participation in crime.

I think that it is important for me to state my position on the matter because the deficit based literature may leave room for assumptions. I do not believe that persons' neighborhood is an indicator of their willingness to participate in crime. I think that a number of things contribute to persons alacrity to partake in criminal behavior. Similar to Sampson and Wilson I believe that hyper racial segregation, negative economic transformation in the Black community, Black male joblessness, the relocation of other social classes out of the inner city, housing discrimination (Sampson & Bean, 2006), depleting educational system, and access to prenatal care and a long list of other things all contribute to high crime rates.



## Chapter Three - Methodology

In this chapter I will outline the methods that were used to explore how the participants in this study who were from high crime communities were accepted. These participants were not active in criminal activities, even though a great deal of research states that a person has to commit crimes in order to be well liked in high crime communities. It is important to hear directly from the participants in this study and explore what steps they took to avoid participating in criminal behavior but still allowed them to be admired in high crime communities.

### Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight Black men between the ages of 20-30. The interviews lasted 60-90 minutes they were audio recorded and transcribed by me following the interviews. There were three research sites Atlanta, Georgia; Duncans, Jamaica; and San Diego, California. The groups distribution went as followed: four men from Atlanta (50%), two men from Jamaica (25%), and two men from San Diego (25%). All of the participants identified as being raised in a high crime, communities of color. The socioeconomic classification, according to Dennis Gilbert in a study done on the United States economy, identifies the participants in this study as 'lower class' and 'lower middle class,' meaning that they were raised in a family that made under \$50,000 a year (Gilbert, 2002).

Three of the participants attended grade school with me, two of them were undergraduate student-athletes at the university I attended, one attended college in Atlanta and was recommended and then introduced to me by a faculty member, and the two participants from Jamaica are community liaisons for my current university's study abroad program in Jamaica. Emails were sent to each of them separately informing them about the study. The email listed my contact information to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. Because I

did not know many people in southern California the gentlemen from this group were selected after I observed them via social media, in night clubs, on college campuses, and in the community. During this observation stage, the subjects were not aware that they were being monitored so I did not have to account for reactive behavior (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010 p.226). Following observations, I informally spoke with associates of the possible participants and asked their opinion of the interviewees to verify my own observations. Prior to agreeing to join the study, participants were given the opportunity to ask for any points of clarification. I was the principal investigator in the study and traveled to Atlanta, Georgia and Duncans, Jamaica after my participants confirmed that they were interested in contributing to the research. An interview guide was developed by the principal investigator containing 41 questions around the three themes of the research for this project; informal authority, leadership, and agents of self-control. Five of the interviews were conducted in the participants homes, the other three were conducted in classrooms in the participants' schools. Everyone who was interviewed was given a copy of the consent form for their records. No incentives were provided to any of the subjects to participate in the study.

I used intensive interviews to receive an in depth comprehensive analysis of the subjects childhood, adolescent years, and adult life. My questions were intended to give an idea of how the interviewee were able to resist crime and be admired and accepted by someone who engages in criminal activities. I sometimes asked follow up questions if the participant gave a response that needed more explaining so that I could give more insightful information. I also saw that my particular area of research was unstudied and the areas that were related to my topic of interest left several blind spots. For example, Merton (1938) and Shaw and McKay (1942) gave great examples of why they believe a person from these low-income communities partake in crime,

but no one had examined how someone from these communities would remain respected, and well-liked. In Harper's (2014) research he addressed success stories of African Americans from lower income communities but a large percentage of his sample spoke about being isolated in their community and never interacting with delinquent individuals that live in their neighborhood. My research explored a group of men who resisted a condition that I have named assimilated criminological behavior, which I define as the process of participating in crime in order to be accepted and well-liked by peers, family, or community members. I am interested in understanding the groups' resilience and ability to maintain personal values in environments that encourage criminal behaviors.

The interview questions were focused on three themes that I believed were the most important factor to the group being researched ability to resist crime. The first theme was agents of social control, based on Self Control Theory that states that, the only reason people commit crimes is because they do not have control over their desires (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). These interview questions focused on the subjects' impulsiveness, shortsightedness, judgment, and a prioritizing of immediate satisfaction, over delaying pleasure to obtain long term rewards (Goode, 2008 p. 78). This theme also examines social bonds it states that; the relationships, goals, influences, and other commitments (religious or extra-curricular) prevent crimes. The second theme of the interview questions informal authority. Informal authority is defined as personal attributes that contribute to a persons' acceptance in groups (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Informal authority is given by the people that are in the in-group and can be granted for a number of reasons such as trust, expertise, and charisma (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). My questions and observations focused on fashion style, linguistic style, success with the opposite sex, athletic abilities, and willingness to defend themselves. The third and final theme focused on leadership.

I was interested in how the group became successful and overcame adversity despite circumstances (Getz, 1998 p.39). Questions in this section focused on the groups' ability to create their own ideas of "cool" that were separate from other examples or external influences. Other questions in this section focused on the ability to engage in personal relationships with criminals in their communities without becoming influenced to participate in crime (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

Following the interviews I asked each participant to select a pseudonym then I reviewed the notes from each meeting and transcribed and organized the responses into the three different themes of the research. After listening to all of the interviews, reading notes from social interactions, and observations from social media, nightclubs, and classrooms, one new theme emerged from what I originally hypothesized; agents of self-control. After the interviews were concluded I asked each participant to submit a one page biography. Only one of the participants was able to do this, Chuckie. My intentions of doing this was to give my analysis of the data and explore how the subjects viewed themselves. After transcribing all of the interviews I wrote a summary of each participant and their relationship to each theme.

## Chapter Four - Role of the Researcher

After examining identity development, I investigate a possible application of these theories in the recommendations section of this thesis as a practice of crime prevention in low income, high crime, communities' of color. When I entered into the methods section of this project, my goal was to implement these practices into sustainable opportunities that would improve the long-term quality of life for young men in high crime communities by allowing the group to develop more mature identities that would allow them to be able to resist crime and remained respected, well liked, accepted, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles that may be labeled as deviant by broader society.

I think that it is important to understand my personal background and how this might have led to potential biases when the original research question was formed. However, I was extremely meticulous in the process of selecting participants and research questions to address those predispositions.

### Lived Experiences

Born to a mother and father whose combined life experiences include the harsh treatment of the Jim Crow South, the toil of sharecropping in the North, and the false hope of equal opportunities following military service during the Vietnam War, I believe their experiences and my upbringing have informed my research interests and my identity. Determined to give my siblings and I a life unencumbered by the economic uncertainty and social hardships that they both experienced growing up, my parents chose College Park, Georgia, a small working-class community outside of Atlanta, as the place to begin their family. College Park, a city once known as a springboard for the upward mobility of African Americans in the south after the Civil War, later suffered an economic decline over the course of the second half of the 20th century

and now leads metropolitan Atlanta in crime. While I truly value my community and the lessons it taught, I also realize that the increasingly chaotic environment drove me to seek a way out. After I graduated high school, I entered into the workforce securing my first job at Sam's Club. But, after three years of working for the company, I noticed that many of my peers and classmates from high school were being arrested and murdered. The majority of the crimes that these young men were committing were crimes that they believed would change their socioeconomic status. The crimes ranged from robbery to drug distribution. I too had developed a commitment to achieving the goal of upward mobility, but knew that I would never achieve this goal attending carts at Sam's Club and I was not interested in doing anything illegal. Thus I became an entrepreneur, focusing on the business of event coordinating which was especially profitable in the Atlanta area. My experience as a startup business owner taught me valuable lessons. I was often met with adversity and warned about the high failure rates of new businesses, but, in the end, I was able to start a lucrative business that has blossomed into one of the most successful college event planning agencies in the southeast. During this time period many people from my neighborhood told me that they became inspired by my success; they informed me that they had never met someone my age who they would call successful who was not a professional athlete, entertainer, or drug dealer. That was my neighborhood: the home of Cam Newton (Quarterback of the Carolina Panthers), Ludacris (Rapper & Actor), and an endless amount of local criminal celebrities.

Evander Holyfield, who is the former heavy weight champion of the world, has a 105 acre house that was three miles from my neighborhood. Quite often my parents would allow us to escape our banality of our daily habits and make field trips to the city limits to see this great house. They would tell us that if we worked hard enough, one day we could bask in these same

luxuries. Unfortunately, I think that this had the opposite of the intended effect on many guys from my community. Unconsciously when I saw the 105 acres estate it told me that if I wanted to be rich, I would have to excel in sports. Regrettably, I lacked the natural talent to become this stellar athlete so that I could become wealthy. This made me angry. I was fortunate enough to be able to channel that anger into a business. But for many of my peers, they did not have the same opportunities or mindset. Most of the fathers in our community worked in blue collar fields such as mechanics, fork lift drivers, or truck drivers; while these professions are great, we knew that we would never get a 105 acre house of our own if we pursued these type of jobs. So I chose to start my own business with the hopes of one day having a mansion. Coincidentally, the guys from my neighborhood also went into business for themselves. Their organizations focused on home invasions and drug distribution.

Since I have graduated from high school, I have personally known over 50 people to be arrested and murdered in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Some of these guys that were murdered were involved in crime since I had known them. But a great deal of them recently became involved in crime for unknown reasons. Many of the guys came from really nice, upstanding households with two supportive parents, and endless job opportunities. Some of them even had college degrees. Seeing these young men who I considered very close personal friends of mine squander opportunities in the pursuit of financial advancement was extremely disappointing. I have known career criminals my entire life and the guys who I saw getting arrested and being murdered during home invasions were not the career criminals.

As I have previously mentioned my junior year of college, I was asked to assist a professor with a follow up study to a book that he wrote about college drug dealers. During this study, two of my participants were murdered. While I have dealt with friends being murdered

before, I took the death of the two men extremely hard because I saw the potential in both of the young men. When I received the news, I sat with the emotions for a very long time. I cried, screamed, and felt the pain for a quite a while. I am still not over the murder. In fact for a very long time, I was afraid of even going out in my neighborhood. Being fearful of your own community is not a good feeling. I had to learn how to turn the fear that I felt into another emotion, something more constructive. After their deaths, I made my mind up that I would concentrate less on my business and get more serious in school. The murders gave me the motivation to leave Georgia and attend graduate school. These untimely deaths of the young men from the research project took my personal goals in life in a completely different direction. The murders made me want to do something to change my community. My life experiences have taught me many things. However, my educational experiences have been a crucial factor in my maturation. I now find myself in my last year of graduate school, something that only few people from my neighborhood can say that they have accomplished. My grand vision by the conclusion of my program is to remain a scholar and use my research on crime resistance in low income, high crime communities of color to restore confidence in now-impoverished communities similar to mine where the socioeconomic status clouds the aspirations of marginalized youth.

### Limitations

There were a number of limitations that existed in this study. The first limitation that I would like to address was the limited amount of anti-deficit literature on Black men, this limited supply of material made it extremely difficult to frame this research. Also the size of the sample could have been expanded by including interviews from individuals from more high-crime communities such as Chicago, Illinois; New York, New York; and Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. These locations are also known for their high crime in Black communities. As stated previously I was



only able to interview individuals who did not commit crimes and while I did have some informal conversations with criminals about the participants from the study I did not get a chance to formally interview them about why they became involved in crime and why they accepted a person who did not commit crimes. Because of this limitation I cannot make any conclusion or assumption about why these criminals became involved in crimes or why they chose to accept the subjects from this study I can only use the information that was found in this research.

## Chapter Five - Findings

In this chapter the results from the interviews are presented. The interviews reveal three themes amongst all of the participants and I outline all of the questions according to the themes. The goals of the interview questions were to focus on informal authority, leadership, and agents of self-control in each of the participants. Having studied Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) criminological theory called Self Control Theory, the theory states that one of the main reasons that people commit crimes is that do not have much self-control over their desires (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). I have identified self-control as the first themes of the interviews. These agents of self-control assisted in the groups' ability to manage impulsiveness, insensitivity to others feelings, shortsightedness, poor judgment, and a prioritizing of immediate satisfaction, over delaying pleasure to obtain long term rewards (Goode, 2008, p. 78). While some of the participants in this study may have had limited parental supervision, delinquent social bonds, and bad attitudes they managed to utilize self-control to resist criminal behavior.

Having considered how this group was able to utilize self-control to resist criminal activities that were prevalent in their communities, the second theme of the interviews allowed the group to speak to how they thrived in their community. I used a term called informal authority, that is the defined as the type of authority that does not depend on a formal position, can be gained and loss fairly easy, and is given in exchange for meeting the expectations of a certain society (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). These expectations in this study included romantic relationships, fashion, language, athletic abilities, willingness to defend themselves. The participants in this study claimed to have used these tools to gain informal authority amongst groups that may be labeled as deviant by a larger society.

The third and final theme of the interviews was leadership. While the primary theorist that was used in my masters' program defines leadership as; a skill that entails mobilizing people and addressing and identifying adaptive challenges (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). This study defines a leader as someone who is admired, well liked, and thought of prominent figures in their community while thriving, adapting, and empowering others despite various circumstances (Getz, 1998 p.40; Pressler, 2013 p. 12). Aware of the many different definitions of leader and leadership during the interviews I concluded that this definition best describe the type of leadership that these young men were positing throughout their experiences that they shared with me throughout this study.

#### The Participants

##### Chuckie

Chuckie is 24 years old talented craftsman and artist at the Jacob Taylor beach in Duncans Trelawny, Jamaica. He is from a small community called Carey Park in Jamaica not too far from where he is currently working. He enjoys making gifts, wooden sculptures and custom made souvenirs tailored for various customers from all over the world. His unique talent was developed by being exposed to the prestigious works of local carvers at an early age. Consequently, he developed his knowledge through years of practice and determination. His love and passion for the arts granted him an honorable certificate from the Jamaica Tourist Board, Team Jamaica training, where he was recognized for his excellence. Chuckie has been commended for his in-depth responses to questions about his art work and his wide knowledge of the Jamaican culture. He is not just an artist, but his hands on capabilities also afforded him a Diploma in Electrical Installations at the Heart trust NTA, Vocational Training Centre. Chuckie enjoys being both an electrician and an artist, but he exercises his artistic side more often than

the other. He accredits the joy he receives when he is meeting new people from all over the world. He has had the privilege to meet celebrities, intermingle with various cultural phenomena and be exposed to the world from the angle of his valued customers. As a part of the small art district, Chuckie has the advantage to mix 'work and pleasure', as for him, his work is fun, exciting and enjoyable. He enjoys taking his guests on adventure tours, nature walks, and giving historic lessons when people come to visit Jamaica. Chuckie is certainly a man with a passion and undoubtedly his skills cannot be denied.

### The Kid

The Kid is 29 years old was born and raised in College Park, Georgia he is a firefighter and founder of one of the largest event planning agencies in the southeast region of the United States. Nominated as most attractive, most popular, and most conceited in high school you would never guess that this young man came from such humble beginnings. When he was twelve years old his father and host of other family members were arrested and sentenced for conspiracy to distribute narcotics in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area. Because his father was so revered throughout his neighborhood as a community activist, star athlete, and an enterprising person determined to succeed, (because of his many businesses) The Kid always admired his father and when he was arrested he was not aware of his father being involved in any crimes but when his father was sentenced he vowed to never spend a day in prison. His father spent nine years in prison and during my time with The Kid he never spoke negatively of anyone in his family he proclaimed that his family's rehabilitation process and hard-working characteristics taught him to always have multiple incomes and "it is no such thing as easy money." The Kid is a certified heating and air condition technician, bar tender, personal trainer, event coordinator, and firefighter. His many talents have kept him busy throughout the years and away from trouble.

## Boat

Boat is 28 years old and was born in College Park, Georgia and is a banker he also owns a cell phone distribution company that is housed in four retail location throughout Atlanta, Georgia. He received his bachelor's degree in mass communications from a historically Black college in North Carolina where he attended on a full athletic football scholarship. In high school he was named the most humorous person in his senior class and was the star linebacker for his football team. He is the oldest of three siblings and was raised by his mother and father. His mother was a bank teller and his father was a truck driver. While Boat has never been arrested he tells stories of being suspended from school for being disruptive and not knowing when to be quiet in class. Boat was one of the first guys in his neighborhood to go to college and attributes his father who told him in middle school to write on his wall "I will get a full athletic scholarship to college" for his desires for wanting to leave his neighborhood. While in college Boat started an event planning company that was very successful but after he graduated from college he stopped hosting parties concentrate more on chasing his dream of real estate development.

## Biggs

Biggs is 30 years old and was born in College Park, Georgia he is a technician for a cable company. He installs security, cable, internet, and phone service. In high school Biggs was voted most humorous and was on honor roll every year and was named Who's Who, a publication that name students who have excelled in the classroom. He has an associate degree from a community college in Atlanta, Georgia in electronic technology. He also has a car and audio business where he works when he gets off from work and on the weekend. He installs sound systems, high definition lights, rims, radios, and televisions. Biggs has been installing sound systems and car accessories since he was 15 years old. His parents went to a historically Black

college in Atlanta but never graduated his father works for a large airline and mother works for the Department of Transportation. Biggs has always been known throughout the entire city of Atlanta for his custom vehicles that he would enter into car shows and magazines. He says that having parents who worked full time and always had nice things showed him that he could achieve financial success without having to commit crimes. Biggs has been married for five years and has a one year old son who he looks forward to the day when he can customize a car for him.

Spice

Spice is 29 years old and one of the first entrepreneurs that I met that loves working with his hands. He was born in a small community called Spice Hill in Trelawny, Jamaica. Spice is currently a property manager for a multi-million dollar villa at a very popular resort on the North Coast of Jamaica and also an owner of a barber shop in his community that he renovated himself. His handy skills, warm spirit, and loyalty to his community has made him very admirable and revered throughout his neighborhood. He is a father of two small girls and has dreams of creating a better life for them. Spice was raised by his grandparents and says that they constantly taught him the importance of being a good listener. Spice has a real love for others and tells me he is always looking to help his community grow in any way possible. He says the motivation of him building his own barber shop came when he was working for a resort and was not satisfied with the pay or the treatment that he was receiving, so he quit the resort and built his community's first barber shop. His dream is to continue to show other young men throughout Jamaica that they too can bring their visions to reality if they are dedicated to accomplishing their vision through hard-work.

Dee

Dee is a 21 years old college senior from Atlanta, Georgia. He is the star point guard of his college basketball team, and the oldest of seven siblings. Dee is a criminal justice major and has plans of one day working in law enforcement or playing basketball overseas. He was raised by his grandmother in a house with 20 of his cousins, aunts, and uncles. His family was well known throughout the Atlanta area for their athletic abilities and readiness to respond with violence to anyone who disrespected them. Dee is known as the more respectful, laid back member of the family. He played basketball, baseball, and ran cross-country in high school and was named Coca-Cola Scholar Athlete of the year in 2012. He was recruited by several colleges in Georgia but says he would have signed with whoever “put the paper in-front of him first.” He attributes his coaches and best friends’ mother for his success in collegiate basketball because he never had any dreams of going to college on an athletic scholarship. Friends of Dee tell stories of him being in eighth grade and his house being like a sports training camp, they say they never met anyone so dedicated to achieving success in sports. His humble attitude, radiant smile, and charismatic demeanor will uplift any room that he walks into. Being the oldest of seven Dee has always wanted to set an example for his younger sibling and looks forward to being the first college graduate in his family.

T Saw

T Saw is 21 years old college student from Compton, California. He is one of the most physical cornerbacks that I have ever seen play football on a collegiate level. He is the starting corner back for a division one university in California. He is also a very popular disc jockey on his campus and is often seen on the weekends hosting parties on and off campus. Becoming a disc jockey was never in T Saw’s plan and completely coincidental, when he would go to parties his freshman year in college everyone would always ask if they could use his iPod. After this

went on for a couple of months he found a chance to be consulted by another more experienced disc jockey, he convinced T Saw to invest in himself and buy the equipment that he needed.

While music has never been T Saw's passion his skills on the turn table cannot be denied. T Saw has always had ambitions of playing professional football and this dream kept him away from the trouble of his neighborhoods' Cedar Block Piru Blood Gang one of the most feared and well-known gangs in the United States for their relationships with rappers and violent ideas of conflict resolutions. During our time together T Saw informed me that most of his family is gang members. He says that his sense of humor, boxing skills, and passion to one day play professional football kept him away from trouble and people in his neighborhood respected him for not joining the gang.

#### Baby Blue

Baby Blue is 20 years old from Los Angeles, California, 6'3, 315 pounds, and an offensive lineman for a private catholic division one University in California. He says he had his first exposure to gang life when he moved to Inglewood, a city adjacent to Los Angeles that has very high crime and the turf of the notorious Inglewood Family Gangster Blood's. He was raised primarily by his mother but his father and fathers' family was very present in his life. His older brother was a very active member of one of the most dangerous gangs in Los Angeles Neighborhood Rolling 60's Crips. While his mother tried her best to shelter Baby Blue from gangs by putting him into schools in more affluent communities his friends from his neighborhood showed Baby Blue what the daily life of a gang member consisted of without forcing him to join. Because of his brothers violent reputation with the Rolling 60's Baby Blue said that he never had to fight, sell drugs, or participate in any criminal activity. However, many times he did feel pressured to live up to his brother's name. Going to a school outside of his



neighborhood sometimes made some gang members in his community question his commitment to the community. He closes our time together speaking about going to a schools outside of his district and how many times that made him question his identity, because he was growing up in a community where everyone was committing crimes he struggled with thinking that people would think less of him, question his manhood, and not accept him because he did not commit crimes.

#### Socioeconomic status of Participants

The participants from this study all identified their socioeconomic status as lower class when they were growing up. The two gentlemen from Jamaica estimated that their guardians grossed less than \$60 U.S. dollars a month. The outlier in this group was The Kid, his story was much different from the rest of the participants in this study. He and his mother lived in one of highest crime, poorest communities in Atlanta until he was about five years old and his father moved him and his mother to an Atlanta suburb where they stayed until he was twelve, that was when his father was arrested and all of his assets were taken away. The majority of the participants said that their community negatively transforming as they got older. Biggs tells a story of being in sixth grade and his father's car getting stolen and his house getting broken into and how the entire neighborhood was in shock because crime was so rare back then, he goes on to say that crime was happening but it was not rampant. Boat echoes Biggs and tells a story of how his father says that their neighborhood has transformed over the years. "When I was growing up my neighborhood was mostly first time home buyers but around 2005 a great deal of hurricane Katrina evacuees moved into our community, the following year all governmental housing shut down and the residents were given section 8 vouchers and our community began to transitioned from first time home owners to a section 8 neighborhood." With an increase in population, and job opportunities remaining stagnant Boat says that he saw a tremendous

fluctuation crime in his community in a very short amount of time. Dee, Baby Blue, and T Saw said that the communities that they were raised in have always been known for violent crimes, drugs, and home invasions. T Saw tells a story of being raised in section eight housing and food stamps, government funded programs that assist low-income residents with housing and meal vouchers, most of his life. He believes that being raised in his neighborhood taught him the importance of community and how to have fun for free and inspired him to be more creative.

### Criminal Networks

Bearing in mind all of the different definitions of a criminal this study defines a criminal as someone who was involved in petty theft, identity theft, grand theft auto, breaking and entering, shop lifting, and drug sales. While some of the participants were closer with criminals than others. Almost all of them have had some type of a relationship with someone who has been arrested or committed a crime before. Chuckie and Spice reminisce of when they were younger their community did not have any crime and they said that their community was one of the safest communities in Jamaica. However, as time went on more of their peers and guys who they grew up with would become more involved in crime. Spice says that while he may be associates with the criminals he never hung around them late at night or when they were committing crimes this really kept him out of harm's way. The Kid tells a story about his best friend from high school being arrested for stealing a car when they were nineteen he hung him every day but was never invited to do devious things. Biggs also tells a story of his best friend getting lured into the home invasion frenzy when they were much younger and currently about six guys who he hung out with daily are all in prison for identity theft. One of the most shocking stories was from Boat who said that since he had graduated high school in 2004 about 20 guys from his high school are currently in jail and about 45 have been murdered. Dee's best friend, a

neighborhood drug dealer, would always buy him food if they went out to eat. The dealer never asked him to sell drugs because he knew the more people that were involved in the racket the less money he would make. Baby Blue says that his brother was a leader in a gang, sold drugs, and was known throughout their neighborhood for his quick temper and willingness to use violence. Finally T Saw says that most of his family is gangbangers, and not just his cousins and siblings his age, his aunts, uncles, and parents were all gang affiliated.

Spice and Boat both said that when they were younger they would admire the neighborhood bad boys. Their lack of empathy and charismatic persona was something that many of the guys their age aspiring towards. Agreeing with Merton, Boat and Spice now believe that many of the criminals in their neighborhoods were just responding to the lack of resources and opportunities in their community, but as they got older their perspective of people who committed crimes completely changed. As business and home owners they do not like that these people who are committing crimes are hurting other people so that they can possibly economically reposition themselves. Unlike Boat and Spice's responses the other participants offered other ideas about a person who commits crimes. Many of them did not have any bad feelings towards someone who is involved in crime and believes that they were just doing what they saw others doing in their communities. Chuckie hopes that one day his community will have the access to education and opportunities that prevent crime, during our time together he emphasized the less job opportunities that were available the more crime was present. Because so many of the study's participants were peers and family members of criminals they would tell me that they do not have any negative feelings about the people who commit crimes and it is not their place to judge. T Saw said that his family never pressured him to commit crimes and he never tried to pressure them to change he wanted them to know that he loved them no matter

what their decisions were. “You never know a person circumstances. I have not met many criminals that are committing crimes just because.” Biggs told me a story about his cousin was arrested for being at a friends’ house during a drug raid. His cousin was not sentenced to jail but was sentenced to seven years of probation. While he was on probation he has to pay \$150 dollars a month probation fees and \$50 drug treatment classes every week for six months that was a total of \$350 a month in fees, however now that his cousin has a felony drug charge on his record he has not been able to pass the background check for jobs. Biggs cousins, who never committed a crime before was arrested and now sells drugs to pay his probation fees and feed his family. These types of situations led many of the participants to not judge people who decided to commit crimes.

#### Ambitions

A great deal of articles from my research stated that the more a person is committed to achieving their goals the less likely they are to commit crimes (Goode, 2008 p.78). Coincidentally all of the participants said that they were very ambitious teenagers. They always knew what they wanted and as teenagers and they were invested in staying on the path to success so they were not interested in committing crimes. They knew if they committed crimes their dreams, freedom, or life could be taken away. Dee speaks about being on a traveling basketball team as a teenager and having the opportunity to see outside of his neighborhood made him want to see the world. He knew if he would commit crimes or even got into trouble in school he could not travel with his team. Boat says that when he was in the 9th grade his father made him write I will get a full athletic scholarship on his wall, he said seeing this everyday made him know what he was working toward and he knew he could never be a dumb jock or mischievous student. T Saw says that he was also very ambitious growing up and he wanted to play professional football so he

was constantly preparing for that, by watching game film, lifting weights, and reading over his playbook. “My father told me that in order to make it to the league I would have to do well in school, so I never would get in trouble in school because I never wanted to risk my chance of playing professional football.”

### Self-Control

What I found most note-worthy about the participants in the study was that they had managed to resist crime even when the reward seemed so promising at the moment. “When somebody flashes \$5,000 in your face and you don’t have \$20 to your name it’s pretty hard to say no” says The Kid. Their peers who committed crimes would show them money and tell them that there was no way that they could get caught. And while almost all of them say that they would briefly consider partaking in the crime they were able to manage their impulses and not focus on their current situation to make decisions that could affect them tremendously in the future. Most of the participants said that no one cared that they did not want to commit crimes, T Saw tells a story of his peers offering him to join in on a home invasion and he would laugh and tell them that he was not interested and that was not his personality. Boat says that while he was friends with criminals in school and would hang out with them in his neighborhood, when the guys from his neighborhood were actually going to commit crimes he was never around. Chuckie and Biggs told me similar stories about becoming friends with criminals from their neighborhood and never allowing the criminals to buy them things. Most of the time people were always asking these criminals to buy them something. They believed a large number of the criminals committed crimes so that they could provide for family and friends. Biggs and Chuckie both told stories of always having their own money so if they went out with the criminals they would buy them drinks to show them that they were not their friends because of what they had.

Chuckie says “If I was asking them to constantly give me money and drinking from the bottles that they were buying when we went out then they might not be accepting about me not commit. By me having my own money they see me as a leader.”

They all explained to me that they were not criminals so when they told people that they were not interested in committing crimes no one cared because they never tried to pretend like they were tougher than they were. The Kid say “When professional teams are recruiting are they aiming for people who are good at the sport or just anyone? These criminals consider themselves professional and don’t want anyone to be a part of their crime, they want people with potential. I never showed that potential so I was never summoned.” T Saw explains gang culture in Los Angeles as a family, a community, a group so even though he never joined the gang many of the people in his neighborhood knew that he was in the gangs’ extended family. He also said that because he was so talented in sports his neighborhood wanted to brag on his accomplishments so they all made sure that he stayed out of trouble. Baby Blue’s experiences were different than the other participants in the study when he was in high school he participated in a “snatch and grab” at a grocery store with his team mates and said that he did not want to do it but he did not want to be thought of as a coward. His example shows how assimilated criminological behavior can take place in groups. Most of the participants felt that they unintentionally became a beacon of hope for their communities, a representative that everyone in their community was not the same.

I felt that it was very important to understand why these young men decided not to partake in crime. The Kid says that watching family members get arrested and seeing how that affected his family made him never want to go to jail. When his father went to jail he promised himself that he would never do anything that would make him spend a day in prison. T Saw’s says that his commitment to playing professional football and his involvement in his church

deterred him from committing crimes. “I wanted to play professional football and my ambition for football kept me away crime. I never wanted to jeopardize my chances of going to the league for fast money, also the better I became at football the more the gangbangers from my neighborhood would tell me to stay out of trouble.” Biggs said that having a strong relationship with a church taught him right from wrong from a very young age and he never wanted to let God down. Boat believes that his extra-curricular activities kept his mind busy and away from committing crimes. Baby Blue said that he was very tempted to commit crimes because he saw the benefits that his brother was receiving from committing crimes; dating attractive women, making fast money, and being respected throughout their neighborhood. While he was intrigued by these things his brother would never let him partake in any deviant behavior. He says that his older brother told him that he “did enough gang banging for the entire family.”

#### Community Leaders

Keeping in mind that this study defines a leader as someone who is; admired, well liked, and thought of as a prominent figure in their community while thriving, adapting, and empowering others despite various circumstances (Getz, 1998 p.40; Pressler, 2013 p. 12). Every person in the study was regarded as respected in their communities each of the individuals in the study unknowingly used informal authority to gain the respect of delinquent characters in their neighborhoods. The agents of informal authority were; the language they used, the way they dressed, ability to protect themselves during a fight, success with the opposite sex, cars they owned, disposable income, affiliation to violent individuals, and athletic abilities. These abilities allowed these men to navigate through their community unharmed and unbothered by criminals. Bearing in mind that all of the participants did not have all of these agents of informal authority but those that they did possess allowed them thrive in these environments. Biggs tells me about

being the first guy in his neighborhood with a sports utility vehicle (SUV). He had was a Chevy suburban with five televisions including two in the side view mirrors, spinning rims, and a custom paint job when he was 19 years old. The most successful criminals in the neighborhood did not have vehicles that nice at that age so everyone wanted Biggs to customize their cars to look like his. The Kid spoke about how he has always had success with women and the guys who were committing crimes liked that about him. "I would introduce guys to my women friends and they admired me for that. In high school I always dated the girl that everyone liked and they always had attractive friends so I would introduce their friends to the guys from my neighborhood." He also says that he was a good dresser and he would give his old clothes to his friends who were committing crimes. Chuckie and T Saw says' that their street smarts and academic abilities gained them both respect in their neighborhoods because everyone knew how intelligent they were. "I always helped my friends out regardless if they were committing crimes or not I just showed everyone love and they loved me back that's is how I gained respect." Biggs says that his access to disposable income, because of his audio business, allowed him to have his own money and the criminals admired that. Boat and T Saw both accredited their sense of humor and ability to protect themselves for the reasons that they were accepted in their neighborhoods. "I knew how to defend myself and people knew if they disrespected me I was not afraid to fight anyone. One time this gangbanger in my neighborhood was trying to fight me and I beat him up. That fight allowed me to gain the respect from a lot of criminals from my neighborhood because they knew that I was not afraid to fight anyone." All of the participants said that they were just themselves and understood who they were this allowed them to gain respect in their neighborhoods. Baby Blue said that it took a while for him to learn that he did not have to commit crimes to be accepted and even though he was never arrested for committing crimes he



sometimes did things that he now regrets because he did not want to be thought of as a coward. The participants in this study say that they did not want to be a criminal and never claimed to be the toughest person in their neighborhood so the guys who they grew up with respected that, they never saw them as a threat. "I was their friend." Spice says that by just being friends with the criminals he was able to gain their respect.

All of the participants in this study believed that they were the minority in their community, meaning that there were not a lot of people who were accepted by criminals who did not commit crimes. Several of the participants did say that there were a lot of people in their community who did not come outside, commit crimes, or just did not fit in with the rest of the community. These young men were different they were accepted by this group and I was interested in what contributed to them not being interested in committing crimes. Spice says he was told to never commit crimes by a guy who was feared throughout their neighborhood. When he was in elementary school a guy from his neighborhood was a wanted criminal would talk to him for hours about how he wishes that he never got involved in crime. He was known throughout Jamaica for the vicious crimes he committed. He would speak to him every day and tell him never commit crimes and how crime has affected his family life because he was always on the run from either the police or someone he committed a crime against. He told Spice his life story with hopes that he would never get involved in crimes. And Spice says those daily conversations was what taught him that crime was not a path that he wanted to explore. Most of the participants said that religious beliefs taught them right from wrong and steered them away from trouble.

If people in the community did not admire the participants in this study then they would usually admire the community criminals. In the book *envy of the world* the author Cose (2002)

speaks about how he felt pressured to embrace the labels society had assigned to him (p. 3). In his book he interviews a young Black man from Los Angeles, California who tells stories of how his community and peers admired, respected, and celebrated deviant acts (p. 9). I felt that these images of Black men that this group and their community had access to may encumber aspirations for the group. The group affirmed my hypothesis and said that most of the role models from their neighborhood were people who committed crimes. The Kid says that his older cousin was a very rich drug dealer he had nice clothes, flashy cars, and dated attractive women. Everyone in his family admired this cousin and because he “seemed to have it all.” Biggs tells a story about a guy who he went to high school with who recently was arrested for identity theft. He says that the guy became the role model in his neighborhood because of his long list of foreign exotic cars, celebrity friends, and multi-million dollar mansion. “He became a social media super star and every night people would log onto Instagram and see where he was going, whether it was buying 100 bottles of champagne or picking between his Rolls Royce or Lamborghini.” Boat says that in his neighborhood people admired the guys with nice cars, people who were not afraid to use violence, dated attractive women, and was not afraid of consequences. Dee tells a similar story about his cousin who was one of the toughest guys he ever met. He says that his cousin would do a lot of devious things in the community and never have any remorse for his actions he even tells a story about how his cousin is currently in jail because he robbed Dee’s father at gun point.

### Gaining Acceptance

Having received the message of the individuals in this study who affirmed that one could be accepted well-liked, and thought of prominent figures in high crime communities I was curious to know what could one do gain respect if they were not committing crimes. Most of the

group said remain true to your values and never do things to fit in, however the more that I spoke to the participants in the study I found that they may not have committed crimes however they did comply to other unwritten rules in the community to gain the acceptance of stakeholders in their neighborhood, although I could not determine if these actions were performed to fit in or they were just a part of the culture of the community. For instance none of my participants have ever been arrested for petty theft, identity theft, grand theft auto, breaking and entering, shop lifting, and drug sales but two of my participants spoke about using their fighting skills to gain the acceptance of their peers. So being aware of the norms in the community allowed this group to navigate through these societies and be accepted by criminals, so even if they did not commit crimes they were so immersed in the mental models of their community that they did not have to commit crimes to gain respect in their community. Many of the factors that the participants described to gain respect in communities were agents of informal authority that they described earlier in the interview; the way they dressed, ability to protect themselves during a fight, sense of humor, success with the opposite sex, cars they owned, disposable income, families reputation, and athletic abilities would be how someone gained respect in there neighborhood. So while the participants in the study stated that remaining true to their values granted them acceptance amongst criminal networks, other values like fashion, grammar, and finances allowed this group to get respect from this network faster than someone who's values, grammar, and credibility did not co-align with the criminals from their neighborhood.

One of the reasons that the young men from this research was able to navigate successfully in these communities was because they were aware of their community's cultural norms. There has been a great deal of research conducted on how leaders adjust in different cultures. After conducting years of research, Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior

Effectiveness (GLOBE), found what type of leaders are most effective in different cultures.

Having researched leadership cultures, many scholars emphasize that the best way for authority figures to become effective leaders is by understanding the cultures (Hofstede, 2010). To begin learning about new cultures, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, propose five key points of study. They state that while each culture has very detailed and different value systems they all address the following five subjects: time, relationships to nature, social relationships, motivations for behaviors, and human nature (Hills, 2002).

These scholars emphasize the importance of being able to understand the value of other cultures allows a person the ability to navigate more effectively in unfamiliar territory. This is called cultural intelligence, Livermore (2011) separates the capabilities of cultural intelligence into four categories: drive - how much a person wants to understand other cultures, knowledge - how well a person understands similarities and difference in cultures, strategy - how well a person handles culturally diverse environments, and action - the capability to adapt when working in different cultures. So if a person has a higher understanding of cultural intelligence then their level of influence will be more significant in any place where they decide to lead. Hofstede, a major scholar in the field of culture, teaches that when an individual becomes involved in new cultures and is uneasy about interacting with the new culture, they should first acknowledge that they are uncomfortable. Once the person has recognized their discomforts, then they are more likely to succeed because they will take the proper steps to adjust to their anxiety.

So while these young men were very aware of the crimes that was taking place in their community's and spoke of multiple opportunities that they could have partaken in crime, they were able to distance themselves enough that they would not be lured into the criminal lifestyle.

However, even though the group did not participate in this activity their cultural intelligence allowed them to notice the other norms of their community this allowed them to be a part of the culture without being excluded.

#### Advice for Resisting Crimes

Bearing in mind Sumter (2009) study that confirms that the more comfortable a person is with whom they are the less likely they will be persuaded to participate in deviant activities to gain the acceptance of peers. The development of identity has been an important influence of risk behavior (Jones & Hartman, 1988). The subjects all support the hypothesis of this study during their interviews by affirming that the reason that they did not commit crimes was because they were confident in their identity and this allowed them to garner respect amongst their peers. Spice said in his thick Jamaican accent something that really stood out to me when I asked him What would you tell a person so they do not commit crimes?; “whenever you are alone, think what you really want in life, no company, just you, think what you want to do with your life. That is the best time, when you are by yourself just to sit in silence and think, what do you really want to do, what do you want to achieve, and what is my plan.” His quote encompasses Baxter Magolda’s leadership concept of self-authorship (2008), “become the coordinator of your beliefs, identities, and social relationships (p. 270).” T Saw had a similar philosophy and says that when he goes home to Los Angeles to visit “I tell the young guys on my block every time I go home, all this is temporary do let this consume you. Always be yourself and always follow what you believe in and do not let anyone tell you that your dreams are unachievable. Be yourself, you do not have to be like everybody else. Work like you want a better life for your family. The goal is to create a better life for those that come after you.”

#### Summary

This chapter focused on the participants in the study with hopes to address the research question; What are the leadership patterns of Black men who are accepted, well liked, and thought of as prominent figures in communities where criminal behavior is present? The interview questions focused on the three themes of the research; informal authority, leadership, and agents of self-control. During my conversations I learned about the participants' socioeconomic status, criminal networks, ambitions, self-control, community leaders, gaining acceptance, and advice on resisting crime. My time with the participants in the study revealed that their choice to not participate in crime was not effortless but took a great deal of dedication and resilience to resist the lure of financial increase or social acceptance.

## Chapter Six – Discussion and Implications

### Discussion

After having devoted attention to previous research concerning Black men who have not committed crimes and remained respected, well liked, accepted, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles that may be labeled as deviant by broader society. I begin to examine theoretical concepts concerning these men regarding subjects that explored crime resistance and identity development. Paying particular attention to the literature already discussed in this paper. Beginning with the importance of creating an anti-deficit dialogue amongst scholars that will present Black men from low income, high crime, communities of color with the encouragement to improve in educational, professional, and social settings (Harper, 2014). Also understanding the importance of how society views Black men and how they view themselves (Howard, 2012). This alteration in social imagery amongst Black men could possibly begin to change the negative connotation of these men and possibly adjust society's opinions of the marginalized group. Once scholars begin to understand the effects of social imagery one may begin to realize that many times these young men participate in crime so they can gain acceptance from their communities (Garot, 2010). So if society begins to emphasize that the development of mature personality characteristics can assist Black men with gaining acceptance in their community from social circles that may be labeled as deviant by broader society then it may begin the discourse of crime prevention amongst these men who reside in low income, high crime, communities of color (Sumter, 2009). According to the research listed above I recognize if an individual begins to develop a mature identity then they will less likely participate in criminal activities (Dumas, 2012).

Baxter Magolda's (2008) concept of self-authorship purpose was to allow the person to "become the coordinator of their beliefs, identities, and social relationships. (p. 270)" By using this theory the author plans to confront how Americas' views of African American men as; clowns, entertainers, sex-crazed brutes, violent hustlers, and law-breaking thugs (Howard 2012, p. 98) affect how this group view themselves. Prior to beginning the journey of self-authorship and personal development Baxter Magolda found that during the process of self-authorship the person was asking three questions to themselves: a. how do I view the world (epistemology dimensions)? b. How do I view myself (intrapersonal dimension)? And c. How do I view social relations (interpersonal dimensions)? (p. 271). The more that a person begins to analyze these dimensions the more the person can develop their identity through self-authorship.

Having used Kegan's (1994) and Baxter Magolda's (2008) theory I recommend that Black men from high-crime, low-income, communities of color to utilize the self-authorship theory to establish identity development techniques to combat delinquent behaviors that according to criminological theories (Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay, 1942) may be encouraged throughout their communities. This theory that Baxter Magolda used for college students examined how college students were able to develop their own sense of identity separate from others and still be able to foster relationships without losing their own identity.

The first phase of self-authorship is following formulas. This is when a person allows authority figures to plan their desires. An example of this first stage would be all of the theories research that states that people from high crime, low income, communities of color partake in criminal activities to be socially accepted. If a Black male hears these things their entire life then what affect does this have on them? Many of them will begin to believe that the only way to become socially accepted in their community is by partaking in criminal behavior.



The second phase of self-authorship is crossroads. This is when the person questions ideas about identity, knowledge, and relationships and begin to realize that they are not happy (Magolda, 2008). They are no longer willing to accept the philosophies of others but they are afraid to address how they are feeling. The person begins to want to establish their own desires and no longer follow prior expectations. This process commences when the individuals begins to examine current ideas (Magolda, 2008). It is difficult for the person to fully commit to these new opinions because they do not have a great deal of experience in implementing this new way of thinking (Magolda, 2008). Aware that the participants in Baxter Magolda's study interacted with other people from different walks of life in this stage allowing them to question their current life decisions I think that it is important at this phase to introduce the young men to Black men who are accepted, well-liked, and thought of as prominent figures in their communities but do not commit crimes. Those that never leave their first peer groups and stay in communities where they were raised quite often never have an opportunity to allow self-authorship to transpire because they never reach the crossroads phase because they are always surrounded by like-minded individuals that never question their habits, practices, ideas, and perspectives (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). By interacting with groups who have different beliefs it allows insight into different perspectives. Once a person begins to recognize these perspectives and that they have been operating under external influences (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004) they explore ideas that are more advantageous for their future.

Many people are apart of many different social groups' simultaneously; jobs, school, families, and neighborhoods. If all of our social networks share the same ideals then it is likely that our full possible potential may never be reached because we have never interacted with anyone with conflicting perspectives. This encourages our same ideas to circulate between our

social circles and never allow space for our ideas to be challenged. In the development of our social identity complexity, it is important to encourage interactions with other groups', this gives multiple perspectives which is important for developing identity in today's society (Roccas & Brewe, 2002).

The third phase of self-authorship is becoming your own author. This is when a person has decided on their belief system and begins practicing these new ideas. They begin to foster new relationships and meet people who have similar interest as them that can assist in their personal development. In this phase we will connect the young men from these low income communities to groups that support their interest. For instance if a young man realizes that he has an interest in travel it would be helpful to introduce the young man to an organization that focuses on low cost traveling. Or putting him in contact with a career counselor that could suggest a job in the airline industry, transportation, or hospitality services.

The fourth and final phase of self-authorship is internal foundations. This phase grows over time. The person begins to become more confident in their belief system and recognizes who they are and base a great deal of their life decision on their ideas, not the thoughts and opinions of others. They continue acquiring knowledge in their area of interest and develop more mature identity characteristics because they are no longer allowing the influence of others to influence them. And finally as they continue to grow they will develop relationships with others that have the same ideas, beliefs, and practices.

Noting with satisfaction that the group that was researched affirms my hypothesis that the self-control that the young men displayed in their community allowed them to garner respect amongst their peers and allowed them to be in control of their own destiny. Having received this information I would like to recommend that more research is conducted on Black men from low-

income, high crime, communities of color from an anti-deficit lens by leadership schools that will demonstrate how young men can use; informal authority, leadership, and self-control to navigate environments that encourage delinquency.

Having considered further that crime is a universal problem and not just a problem in the Black community, I would like to further this research by exploring criminals from middle class, low crime, communities that do not support delinquent behaviors. Further inviting the exploration of the group who is considered delinquent and discover if they are accepted, well-liked, and thought of prominent figures in their community. Having considered the acceptance of the delinquent group I am also interested in studying the delinquent groups identity because they deviated from the societal norms?

#### Conclusion

This research has become the inspiration of a non-profit organization that I have started, the name of the non-profit is Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute. During all of my research, the only organization that I found that put its primary focus on crime resistance was a program called Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.). The program focuses on building trust between law-enforcement and high crime communities. They seek to assist youth in avoiding delinquent behavior and violence to solve problems. I am an alumnus of the G.R.E.A.T. program. A tall white gentleman by the name of Sergeant Hubert, along with Channel 2 Action News, came to our predominately African American school and told us what we could do to resist gangs. All that I remember from the training is not having class on Wednesdays for about three months and at the end of the training I received a new shirt. Many of my peers still committed crimes after the completion of the program because financial stability was more important to them than obeying the three month workshop presented to our class.

While it is not my intentions to discredit the G.R.E.A.T. program, I am attempting to demonstrate my experiences in addresses crime resistance in low income high crime communities of color. And while I would not consider the G.R.E.A.T. program a competitor (because I am not targeting gang members) both of our organizations have a similar vision to build safer communities. After reading the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum, I think that their program is really an amazing opportunity and a positive step towards change. My observation of G.R.E.A.T. was that the goals of the organization were very objective, meaning that a lot of the training they offer is based on facts about gang resistance. The only problem with G.R.E.A.T.'s goal when it came to my community in particular was that while my neighborhood was high in crime, we did not have any gangs. The lack of gangs made the entire training seemed obsolete to myself and many of my classmates at the time; if the G.R.E.A.T. program really wanted to create change in our community, the goals would have been more subjective. They could have adjusted and offered opportunities for the clients to co-create the objectives with them. For instance, one of the goals of the organization is to get adolescents to feel more comfortable with law enforcement professionals.

If G.R.E.A.T. would have performed an environmental scan prior to arriving in our school and explored the relationship between our community and law enforcement then they would have understood the dynamics of the relationship between the police and our community members. For example, my grandparents would tell us stories about how the police would beat them for sitting in at white only lunch counters; my cousin was detained by the police because when he was reaching for his license they thought that he was attempting to get a weapon; several of my classmates were arrested weekly and told that they were loitering. Bearing in mind that these are not the relationships with the police in all high crime communities however the

examination of the police resident dynamics would have been helpful if the program was really interested preventing us from joining gangs and developing relationships with the police. Noting further that it would take much more than a three week program to begin the restoration process between the two parties.

There are several leadership theories about organizational change the theories state that a person needs more than an effective strategy to transform any organization. A study at the University of Michigan found that 85% of change initiatives does not yield sustainable results (Klein, 2008). The study reveals that when organizations are seeking transformation the easy issues are often resolved and the more difficult, invisible, and powerful problems in organizations remain unacknowledged. I have chosen to acknowledge the community as an organization and will use Eric Klein's prototype for organizational change to begin the template for change in low-income, high-crime, communities of color.

Klein states that the only way for organizational change to take place is to speak to individual and collective issues that are deeply engrained into the culture. He gives a four quadrant method that he believes is the solution to addressing organizational change. I am interested in applying this method to crime resistance through classes, workshops, and conferences by using my organization Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute.

Our organization plans to reduce assimilated criminological behaviors, which I define as the process of participating in crime in order to be accepted and well-liked by peers, family, or community members. The crime resistance institute will apply Klein's four quadrants so that the institute is working on tangible and intangible aspects of change in these communities.



1. Quadrant 1: Personal meaning - getting to know the people in this community and learning what their values, beliefs, and identities are. What are their inner thoughts and feelings? How do they feel about change?
2. Quadrant 2: Skills - pay attention to the client and what they like to do; what are their strengths?; when do they get bored, frustrated, angry, and happy?; By the end of this quadrant our organization should understand what can make the client reach peak performance in classrooms, jobs, or communities.
3. Quadrant 3: Culture – learn the mental models, unwritten rules, assumptions, political and power dynamics that shape the clients story; explore what topics are off limits and why these topics cannot be discussed.
4. Quadrant 4: Systems and Structures – the system design determines performance; examine what socioeconomic factors are affecting change; examine laws, historical events, social standards and anything else that would be creating barrier between the

organization and the client that would be preventing change being that most of our clients will be from low-income communities, we need to make sure that the clients feel supported by the systems that we will be putting into place.

#### Good Kid Bad City Crime Resistance Institute

In this section, I will explain what exactly the Good Kid, Bad City Crime Institute is. Before I began to explore the possibility of a crime resistance institute I thought that it would be very import to first explore another organization that has very similar values to Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute. I chose to use Los Angeles based non-profit Homeboy Industries. Homeboy Industries has been in business for over 25 years and is recognized globally as the largest and most comprehensive gang rehabilitation facility in the United States. The mission of the organization is to provide hope, training, and support to formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated men and women, allowing them to redirect their lives and become contributing members of our community. It was founded by an ordained priest by the name of Father Greg Boyle. His vision began in 1988 he was interested in finding a way to improve the health and safety of our community through jobs and education rather than incarceration. Currently Homeboy Industries assist over 1000 people every month with the services that they offer. A study conducted by UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs found that 70% of the trainees who complete the 18 month program have not reentered into the prison system and found full time employment. In the same study they found that 70% of men and women who were incarcerated and did not complete Homeboy's 18 month training program returned to prison. The 18-month program offers paid on the job training and the participants in the programs has full access to support services. Homeboy Industries spends about \$34,000 on each participant to go through their 18 month program this is \$13,000 less than it cost for an inmate to

spend one year in prison. If interested each program participant is assigned a case manager, a therapist, and an employment counselor. These services are also offered to those in the surrounding community. Homeboy Industries also offers substance abuse rehabilitation, academic classes, support groups, job placement services, tattoo removal, and legal services. The organization also hires former gang members to lead and facilitate classes in something that they like to call, "Hope in the flesh." (Homeboy Industries , 2015)

Social Disorganization Theory states that high-crime low-income communities of color encourage the development of delinquent subcultures (Shaw & McKay, 1942). According to this theory, a person who is raised in these types of environments is more likely to participate in criminal behavior in order to be accepted. The Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute will explore processes of identity development of youth from these communities by referencing psychosocial theories that describe how social experiences affect a person throughout their life (Erikson, 1980) and by utilizing leadership theories that posit that a person can become the coordinator of their beliefs, identities, and social relationships (Dumas, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2012). Our target market for our organization is 12 to 18 years old; these are the ages that according to research a person are more susceptible to participate in risky behavior so that they will gain acceptance from peer groups (Dumas, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2012). Our crime resistance institute will encourage self-authorship, forming social-bonds, developing personal goals, and identifying aptitudes as possible methods to counter the negative circumstances and obstacles that may negatively influence youth to become involved in criminal behavior. The vision of our organization is not to completely eradicate criminal activity but to reduce assimilated criminological behavior among youth raised in high-crime low-income surroundings. In the initial phase of our company, we will seek partnerships with the San Diego Unified School



District, churches that service marginalized communities of color (including New Creation Church of San Diego and Bayview Baptist Church), and community centers like the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA.

There can be several beneficiaries to the proper implementation of this organization, but the primary focus will be youth from low-income high-crime communities of color who, according to social disorganization theory, are most likely to commit crimes. Through much of our own research performed at the University of San Diego on low-income high-crime communities of color in two different U.S. states and Jamaica, our company has found that a great deal of criminal behavior takes place because of peer pressure and circumstantial situations (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Merton, 1938; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson & Bean, 2006). Interestingly, many of the individuals from our study on marginalized youths who have committed crimes possessed qualities typically associated with success in mainstream careers. They, unfortunately, succumbed to influential factors that were out of their control, such as financial strain and the prevalence of crime within the high-crime communities in which they were raised. With hopes of challenging this pattern of criminal behavior, the implementation of the Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute will include trained life counselors who will use leadership theories to encourage these youth to self-author the mission of their lives without feeling pressured to commit crimes in order to gain acceptance in their community.

Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute is a company that works with criminals or people who, according to social disorganization theory, are in danger of committing crimes. Our organization will study individuals from high crime communities who have resisted crime but still remain well-liked, respected, and thought of as prominent figures in their neighborhoods. After this research is complete, we will use the data to inform materials for classes, workshops,

and conferences in San Diego public schools, churches, and community centers. The purpose of our classes will be to relay information to youth and, in turn, reduce assimilated criminological behavior. The task of each session will adjust according to the group that we are working with. This co-initiating model (Wells, 1985) will allow our institute to uniquely co-create the goals of each class according to the group that we are working with. After hearing the goals of the clients, our program design team will create exercises that will merge the objectives of the group while implementing pre-planned activities such as: one on one counseling sessions that focus on identity development; group discussions that focus on the influence of popular culture; and role-playing that portrays how assimilated criminological behavior affects conduct, decision-making, and goals. With the proper implementation of these activities, it is expected that the clients will exceed all expectations.

This institute plans to apply for grants through the office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. department of Justice, and the U.S. department of state. Our non-profit is a research based business whose main objective will be conducting research in San Diego, California; Atlanta, Georgia; and Duncans, Jamaica. Research performed in these locations will focus on crime resistance efforts practiced in low-income communities. While we are conducting research, we will also host workshops, conferences, and classes.

The goals of the Good Kid, Bad City Crime Resistance Institute are to 1) reduce assimilated criminological behavior among youth of color in low-income high-crime communities and 2) encourage these youth to set their own standards for living and only allow self-validation. By the conclusion of our workshops, conferences, and classes, it is our goal that our clients will have the tools to become the coordinator of their own beliefs, habits, and

identities. During events and classes associated with our institute, youth will examine and explore their personal characteristics, habits, and hobbies; complete several confidence building exercises; set long term and short term professional goals; and explore personal influences and social bonds. One indication of the success of the crime resistance institute will be determined by measuring how effective and sustainable our methods are and how long the impacts of our training last after the participants have completed the conference, class, or workshop. This will be determined by emailing the school, church, or community center follow-up questionnaires twice a year to check the progression of the individuals who have participated in our training.

Currently, I am creating a documentary that is based around this research on black men from low-income, high-crime, communities of color that resisted crime but remained respected, well-liked, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles that may be considered as deviant by society. My research was conducted in Atlanta, Georgia; San Diego, California; and Duncans, Jamaica. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, I have scheduled a month long virtual campaign that will include promotional flyers, commercials, academic presentations, and a widely publicized film viewing on May 15, 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia. After the film viewing and virtual campaign, I will begin to submit a proposal to the San Diego Unified School District, Bayview Baptist Church, New Creation Church of San Diego, and The Jackie Robinson Family YMCA. The proposal will include the services that our crime resistance institute offers, how our services will benefit their organization, and the advantages that our clients can expect to enjoy as a result of participating in our programs.

Finally a reoccurring theme throughout this study has been identity development. I have taken the time to write a daily affirmation for everyone who participates in the crime resistance

institute with hopes that this daily affirmation will give the participants courage to say no to crime.

I believe in myself.

I respect myself.

I know who I am.

I can do anything that I put my mind to.

I am committed to achieving my life goals.

By me achieving my goals I will uplift myself and others for they will look at me and say “if he can do it, so can I.”

My passion gives me the power to succeed. I will work hard until my work is successfully complete.

I will remain humble in my success and remember where I began.

I am comfortable with my identity and I understand that it is acceptable to be different.

No one has the power to validate me therefore I set the standards for my existence.

I will continue increasing my wisdom, knowledge, and confidence daily.

And most importantly, I love myself.



## Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** September 26, 2014    *Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

**Type:**  New Full Review  New Expedited Review  Continuation Review  Exempt Review  
 Modification

**Action:**  Approved  Approved Pending Modification  Not Approved

Project Number: 2014-09-018

Researcher(s): Troy Williams Masters SOLES  
Dr. Christopher Newman Fac SOLES

Project Title: Good Kids, Bad City: The examination of criminal resistance in low income, high crime, communities of color

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

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1. How would do you identify racially/ethnically?
2. What is your profession?
3. How long have you been doing it?
4. What was the socioeconomic status of your neighborhood growing up and now?
5. How would you compare your family's socioeconomic status to rest of the community?
6. Would you consider your neighborhood high in crime?
  - a. If yes, what times of crimes where common (e.g., petty theft, identity theft, grand theft auto, breaking and entering, shop lifting, drug sales)?
  - b. Did you ever become involved in any crimes?
  - c. What made you stop?
7. Were your closest friends engaged in any crimes (identity theft, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, drug sales, or robbery) from ages 11-18 and ages and 19- present.
8. Who were you raised by? (single parent, both parents, or grandparents.)
9. How were you disciplined as a young man age 11-18 (time out, beatings, things taken away, punishment)
10. Do you have older or younger male siblings?
11. What role did they play in your socialization?
12. Who do you think had the biggest influence on you in terms of not committing crimes? (Your friends, siblings, teacher, religious leader, or other role models.)
  - a. Why was this person so influential?
13. Were you an active member in a church growing up?
14. Please give me an example of an experience that you had with the police at the ages of 11-18 and 19 to present.
15. What is your feeling towards someone who commits crimes?
  - a. How have these ideas changed from age 11-18 to now?
16. Are you aware of the crimes taking place in your community?
17. What feeling do you have about people in your community that commit crimes?

18. Has someone attempted to pressure you to commit crimes age 11 - 18 and 19 to present.
19. How did the person react when you declined to commit crimes with them?
20. What did you do to gain respect in your community age 11-18 and 19 to present.
21. Did the way you dressed help with your acceptance?
22. Did the your romantic relationships with women help with your acceptance?
23. Did the people who you knew who committed crimes say or do anything to make you want to participate in criminal activities?
24. Describe the guys in your neighborhood who people admired.
25. Did participate in any extra-curricular activities when you were younger?
  - a. Did these extra-curricular activities kept you from participating in criminal activities?
26. Describe your peers family-life.
27. How committed were you to achieving your goals.
28. Were you ever interested in committing crimes?
  - a. Why or why not
29. Were you ever close friends with people who would be considered deviant by society?
30. Did you ever hang out with people who were professional criminals?
31. Tell me about your neighborhood?
32. What was your legal guardian profession?
33. What were peers parents career?
34. Where there any other ethnic groups in your neighborhood?
35. Did the criminals that you know grow up in single parent homes?
36. Tell me about your childhood ambitions.
37. Who were your childhood role models?
38. Did you come in contact with any black men who were not criminals?
39. What did the people in your neighborhood feel about you not committing crimes?

40. How did people in your neighborhood feel about education?
41. How would a person gain respect in your neighborhood?



APPENDIX B  
University of San Diego  
Institutional Review Board

## Research Participant Consent Form

For the research study entitled:  
Good Kid, Bad City

### **I. Purpose of the research study**

Troy Williams is a student in the School of leadership education and science at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study he/she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is: Examine young African American men who are from lower class, high crime, communities of color and did not commit crimes but remained respected, well liked, accepted, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles that may be labeled as deviant by broader society.

### **II. What you will be asked to do**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to:

“Participate in a private interview about your experience of being an African American male from your community. You will be audiotaped during the interview.

Your participation in this study will take a total of \_\_120\_\_ minutes.

### **III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts**

**Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day:**

**San Diego Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-479-3339**

### **IV. Benefits**

While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers better understand what factors contribute to the development of a persons' identity particular attention will be paid to factors that may encouraged them to resist crimes.

### **V. Confidentiality**

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually.

### **VI. Compensation**

**You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.**

### **VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research**

**Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this**, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you're entitled to, like your health care, or your employment or grades.

**You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.**

### **VIII. Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Troy M. Williams

**Email:** [troywilliams@sandiego.edu](mailto:troywilliams@sandiego.edu)

**Phone:** 404-734-6922

2) Christopher Newman

**Email:** [cnewman@sandiego.edu](mailto:cnewman@sandiego.edu)

**Phone:** 619-260-8896

I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

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Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of Participant (**Printed**) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

Dear Sir:

I would like to let you know about a research study that may be of interest to you and ask you would consider possible participation.

The overall purpose of this study is to examine young African American men who are from lower class, high crime, communities of color and did not commit crimes but remained respected, well liked, accepted, and thought of as prominent figures in social circles that may be labeled as deviant by broader society.

We look forward to speaking with you and hope that you are interested in participating in this study. Please feel free to contact me with questions, using the contact information provided below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

***Troy M. Williams***

Social Change Agent

Graduate Assistant, International Center - USD

Resident Minister - USD

*"The real servant of the people must live among them, think with them, feel for them, and die for them." - Carter G. Woodson*

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