FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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for

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Community Connection Project
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

## PART I: THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL MILIEU OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I:</th>
<th>The Felt Needs of Young African American Males</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section II:</td>
<td>Points of Contact for Accessing Young African American Males</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section III:</td>
<td>Role Models for Young African American Males</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART II: BEST PRACTICES IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section I:</th>
<th>Youth Development Programs: Best Practices</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section II:</td>
<td>Approach to Youth Development</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section III:</td>
<td>General Focus Youth Service Programs</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section IV:</td>
<td>Employment Opportunity Creation Programs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section V:</td>
<td>Mentoring Strategies</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section VI:</td>
<td>Strategies for the Prevention of Crime and Violence</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section VII:</td>
<td>Faith Based Initiatives</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section VIII:</td>
<td>The Nation of Islam and African Americans</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section IX:</td>
<td>Challenges in the Implementation of Youth Development Programs</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section X:</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## SELECTED INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENTING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

|                                                      | 53 |
INTRODUCTION

Today's youth live in a society that offers tremendous choices and challenges during the formative period of adolescence. The adolescent's environment is shaped profoundly by the presence or absence of many different factors, including family resources, community services, and educational and employment opportunities. In the past few decades, a body of social and behavioral research has emerged that seeks to explain why some adolescents successfully navigate their social settings, while others who are similarly situated adopt "risky" lifestyles characterized by drug use, unprotected sexual behavior, dropping out of school, delinquency, gang membership, and violence. During the same period, community leaders have experimented with a wide variety of approaches designed to improve the quality of life for all community residents, including the creation of social settings that are supportive of youth — school, recreation centers, job training programs, and others. An emphasis on social settings compels service providers to move beyond a perspective that focuses on the deficits of today's youth (such as delinquency, drug use, teenage pregnancy, and violence) and to examine the density and quality of social interactions as well as demographic features and economic measures in assessing a community's resources. The emphasis on social context has stimulated a new agenda for program development and evaluation, one that stresses the importance of knowing how, when, and where adolescents interact with their families, peers, and unrelated adults in settings such as home, employment, recreation and education . . . . Finally, the research on social settings has highlighted the need to integrate the youth development research literature with other research on community development and community organization (in the fields of economics, urban studies, anthropology, and sociology, for example) so that knowledge can inform efforts to build communities that are supportive and protective of their youth and families.

--The National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, 1996

African American male youth in many beleaguered urban communities face enormous external and internal risk factors. External risk factors include violence associated with the drug trade and other crimes that are a response to the poverty and unemployment experienced by a number of male youth. Internally, African American male youth suffer from extensive frustration, depression, low self-esteem, and chronic anxiety, which often manifest in disproportionate degrees of mental illness (Hill, 1993). Despite social interventions at many levels to combat these risks in the past two decades, there is a pressing need for more work in this area. The African American youth, their families, and communities have a wide range of assets to build on, such as black churches, black educational institutions and many other long-standing historical community institutions. These institutions may well serve as points of access for organizations seeking to have a positive effect in working with this population.

Many community-based organizations, including faith-based institutions, have come together to ameliorate the conditions faced by these youth by following a strategy of building on the existing social and community assets and aiming for positive outcomes.
rather than simply avoiding negative outcomes. Helping the African American youth overcome alienation within the community is the primary objective of urban institutions attempting to bridge the divides between African American youth and mainstream pathways. The Lutheran Church has recently decided to join this endeavor. It is with the intent of facilitating and optimizing this process that the present literature review and identifying best practices have been undertaken.

This review is an attempt to help look at the current literature on African American young men, their trials and tribulations and the challenges faced by them in overcoming these, and the efforts undertaken by the governments, education institutions and community organizations in assisting the youth join the mainstream.

The objective of this study is to properly understand the lives, times, mores and contemporary attitudes of African American young men so that local and community organizations may design programs tailored to the needs of these young men and help them become responsible and productive adults. With this objective in view, this study is divided into two parts. Part I examines the economic, social, and cultural milieu in which the African American youth function; their felt needs as they relate to the socio-developmental problems within the urban areas; the points of contact or institutions which these young African American men identify with and tend to frequent; and, their role models. Part II, identifies and discusses some existing youth development programs which address the issues raised in the first part, and which may be considered the best practices in this field.

This study has been prepared by Dr. Padma Venkatachalam, Director of Research, Howard University Center for Urban Progress, Washington, D.C. and Mr. Lawrence McNeil and his colleagues at The Elimisha Institute, Washington, D.C. under the overall supervision of Dr. Rodney D. Green, Executive Director, Center for Urban Progress.
PART I

THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL MILIEU OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH
SECTION I
THE FELT NEEDS OF YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Introduction

In this section, the challenges and opportunities facing young African American male, ages 15 to 25, are considered in the areas of literacy and education, poverty and unemployment, incarceration and recidivism, mentorship and cultural enrichment activities, health care and HIV awareness, and mental health and counseling.

Literacy and Educational Attainment

Young African American males had the lowest literacy scores of any native English-speaking population in the United States in 2000. The statistics relating to literacy levels for all Americans, whites and blacks is presented in Table 1.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Americans</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Asians</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or more</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate or more</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
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In areas of both prose and quantitative literacy, African Americans also fall to very low tested literacy levels (Austin, 2000). Low literacy levels are an important explanation for African American youths’ limited economic success in America. The mean earnings in the United States of those who are high school graduates is $24,572 while that of non high school graduates is only $16,121 (US Census). Illiteracy is the single largest predictor of crime, poverty, and school drop out levels, all categories for which African American young men are at higher risk than any other demographic group.

The U.S. Department of Education's National Reading Report Card (2001) has reported the widening literacy gap between blacks and the rest of society. Such data can be better interpreted by research which searches for the causes—including inadequately trained teachers, negative black male perceptions, and the lack of relevant content (Kunjufu, 1986). Many scholars emphasize that if individuals are interested in helping African American young males acquire literacy, they need to apprise themselves of the historical development of literacy and educational attainment among African Americans.
Asante (1989) and Madhubuti (1989) both suggest that a new sense of urgency has established a cadre of researchers and teachers who urge innovative, culturally relevant ideas of education for African American males. These include attention to Afrocentric literacy, the establishment of Afrocentric schools, and requirements in these schools to read books which convey positive self-images. Assibey-Mensah (1997) adds that African American males encountering challenges to their educational development due to stifling of achievement, aspiration and pride in school systems throughout the country can benefit from educational initiatives that adopt comprehensive approaches for facilitating their academic, career, and personal-social development. Increased literacy will increase African American young males’ access to better schools, increase performance on standardized tests, improve self-esteem, decrease the school drop out rate, and help deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment. Many urban institutions have undertaken literacy programs as part of a holistic youth development process. This is an area in which faith-based institutions have a particular advantage given substantial levels of education in congregations.

**Poverty and Unemployment**

African Americans, as a group, have a higher poverty rate than the average for all Americans. According to census 2000, while the poverty level for the total population in the United States is 12.7 percent, it is 26.1 percent for the blacks. The position gets worse when we look at the poverty levels of blacks under age 18. The poverty level for all Americans under the age 18 is 18.9 percent whereas black children below 18 have a poverty rate of 36.7 percent. Similar rates apply to African American males.

Such high poverty rates are a direct result of low educational attainments and low employment rates. A number of studies address the employment needs of young African American males by evaluating the effect of declining jobs and reduced compensation on their employment outlook. Timothy Bates (1995) cites increased international competition and shifting wage norms of corporate America targeting blue-collar workers as a causal factor in the limitation of employment alternatives for black job seekers. Similarly, Laseter (1997) identifies a shrinking job pool as a significant factor in the increase in unemployment rates among young black men. Laseter examines black male joblessness with a qualitative study of eighteen black men, aged 16 to 30. The study presents the subjects’ own perspectives on their employment problems, from both the supply and demand side of the labor market. Most had experienced employment instability as a result of jobs shifting to the suburbs from the inner city.

Sampson (1987) and Staples (1987) both present studies on the economic deprivation that result from unemployment and the lack of marketable skills among African American men. It is but one of the factors noted by each author as contributing to the alienation of individuals, families, and communities from the broader society. The common recommendation is for social service providers to develop program strategies that strengthen social support networks and resources in the community. Otherwise, as mentioned in the introduction, the associated violence associated with drugs, poverty, and
unemployment will contribute to the disproportionate levels of young black men facing incarceration.

**Incarceration and Recidivism**

Black youths are over-represented at every level of the justice system. Nationally, black youths represent 15 percent of the juvenile population but make 26 percent of juvenile arrests, 31 percent of referrals to juvenile court, 44 percent of the detained population, 34 percent of youth formally processed by the juvenile court, 46 percent of youth sent to adult court, 32 percent of youth adjudicated delinquent, 40 percent of youth in residential placement, and 58 percent of youth in adult prisons.¹

Researchers have attempted to answer the difficult question of the factors of incarceration and recidivism among young African American men. Coleman, Finney, Harvey, and Wilson (1999) emphasize the importance of “addressing the psycho-social-cultural needs of African American youths, particularly males, in the juvenile justice system.” The authors base their recommendation of employing the services of African American professionals and non-professionals (as role models) upon their work in juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare. The article suggests dealing with the incarceration and recidivism effects of such experiential factors as poverty, parental abandonment, family dysfunction, and violence by implementing an “Afrocentric” approach that promotes dignity and self-respect.

Janice Joseph (1995) uses both official data and self-report studies as references in a study of the causes of delinquency among African American males. Joseph examines the explanatory value of variables draws from different theories of delinquency, finding that the social control theory and differential association theory are the best explanation of delinquent behavior among African American youth. Therefore, conventional (e.g. parental or community mentor) attachments inhibit involvement in criminal and delinquent behaviors and meet the needs of young African American males for role models of positive behavior.

**Mentorship and Cultural Enrichment Activities**

Mentoring programs have proven to be a valuable experience for both mentor and mentee. Jones (1994) illustrates such programs as conducted nationally by private, non-profit, fraternal, civic, and religious organizations, many of which originated in response to the poor economic conditions which had led to inadequate education, unemployment, family and social distress, and delinquencies among African American male youth. Taylor (1989) reveals that the historical practice of mentoring has been a key mechanism by which at-risk African American male youth have been able to identify with a positive individual which ultimately can lead them to incorporate some of the mentor's positive attributes into their own identity. Moreover, churches that have maintained successful

mentor outreach programs have provided African American male youth with an opportunity to appreciate their inspiring history and culture.

Although studies on mentoring programs show that young people with mentors were more likely to stay in school, attend classes, aspire to better grades, and go to college, Malin (1994) is concerned that mentorship alone cannot always compensate for or overcome all of the negative forces of African American young men’s immediate surroundings. Assibey-Mensay (1997) proposes that in order for mentoring programs to clearly have a powerful effect on combating the negative social environment for many African American young men, mentors must act as role models and find pragmatic ways to inculcate educational persistence as well as preventative mental and physical health practices into their mentee’s behavioral development. Overall, he concludes, mentoring is one major component of a multi-faceted mental and physical approach designed to enhance the chances African American male youth have in life.

Health Care and HIV Awareness
Recent research has addressed the health care needs of young African American men in the context of broader social conditions, specifically those of the inner city. A common theme has been educational improvements as a way to overcome the subjects’ disproportionately high rates of preventable illness from violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV infection. Rich (2001) notes that lack of health insurance, poverty and unemployment, lack of access to health care, and engagement in risky behavior are the leading factors in the burden of preventable illness that young black men bear. Rich’s article is based on the author’s interaction with young African American male patients at The Young Men's Health Clinic at Boston Medical Center, where he served as a physician. The young African American male patients received only episodic or emergency care, even for preventable diseases, leading the author to conclude that incorporating (culturally appropriate) men's health education into primary care clinics that serve young men is an important step toward improving their overall health.

Lemelle and Smith (2001) express a concern with educating African American males about HIV/AIDS. The study focuses on the method of information dissemination as a way to affect risky behavior. Lemelle and Smith base their findings and conclusions on a national study of sexual behaviors managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that reports black adolescent males are a significantly different subgroup in terms of the most important measures of HIV/AIDS risk behavior. The authors suggest that faith-based institutions play an immediate greater role in pedagogical strategies as a significant part of a comprehensive inter-institutional approach.

Pearson (1994) and Williams and Collins (1995) deal with the internal and external factors that must be addressed to better provide for the apparent needs of young black males. Pearson’s study discusses particular health problems individually (in particular, HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia, and cancer) and notes that blacks are more likely than whites to have inadequate health care coverage for the prevention or treatment of diseases. Such inadequate coverage also extends to mental health treatment of African American young men.
Mental Health and Counseling

According to the Center for Disease Control the number of years of potential life lost (YPLL) for African Americans is 2,642,916 years for the year 2000-2001. YPLL data measures the sum of years lost before 65 years of age by persons who die before that age due to various causes – homicide, suicide, HIV/AIDS, and other illnesses. Homicide and HIV/AIDS alone account for nearly 25 percent of these years. There is no need to add what a colossal loss of human capital this is!

By and large, African American males are underserved by the mental health system. The National Institute of Mental Health (2000) revealed that while treatments and services have been tested empirically for some disorders, many have not been evaluated for their effects on African-Americans. Data by Isaacs (1992) confirm that when African-Americans with mental health problems receive services, they tend to be diagnosed with more severe disorders, including disorders considered less amenable to treatment. This is extremely problematic because the Department of Health and Human Services (2001) reports African-Americans are over-represented in high-need populations that are particularly at risk for mental illnesses. These specific populations include the homeless, incarcerated, children in foster care and the child welfare system.

As a result of their exposure to violence, young African American men are more likely to be the victims of serious violent crime than are their white counterparts (Myers, 1990). Subsequent research reported that over 25% of African American youth exposed to such violence met diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. Cross (1989) and Marsteller (1997) demonstrate African American young males are more likely to be referred to the juvenile justice system rather than the treatment system and young black offenders are less likely than whites to have previously received mental health services. Therefore the public mental health safety net of hospitals, community health centers, and local health departments are increasingly vital to many African American young men.

The Center for Disease Control (1998) reported startling facts regarding increases in the African American male suicide rate. They reported that during the period 1980-1995, among blacks aged 15-19 years, the suicide rate increased 126%, compared with 19% for whites. Among black males aged 15-19 years, the suicide rate increased 146%, compared with 22% for white males. Snowden (2001) argues that the increase may result from African American men being less likely than whites to seek counseling and psychotherapy. The lack of mental health education for young African American men contributes to this differential by making it difficult for them to identify their own depression as a condition requiring therapy. Other scholars, such as Kunjufu (1990), attribute increased rates of suicide to the fact that young black men clearly have a need to further establish their relationship with God. In fact, Kunjufu claims the reason for black males having a much higher suicide rate may be their lack of willingness to submit and share their problems with God.
Improved mental health services for African American young men would improve factors such as economic status, education, racism, and other ecological factors which affect the functioning of the males as well as their families and social networks. Spencer (2002) suggests that professionals must address problems posed by systems external to the family as well. Also, professionals must utilize interventions that employ primary prevention techniques such as addressing self-concept, positive aspects of ethnic identity, family assets and needs. The mental health system would benefit from assessing these techniques and strategies as implemented by mentors vis-à-vis cultural enrichment activities within the African-American community. Faith-based organizations often have congregations with a mix of professionals and committed lay persons willing to engage in this arena.

Conclusion

Overall, this felt needs assessment of African American young males is very broad in scope, yet all of the needs are inextricably linked to complex underlying social realities. From the viewpoint of Hill (1971), a major reason for focusing on black male youth is to identify coping behaviors, assets, support networks, and critical self-help strategies that have been successful in uplifting disadvantaged young men (and their families). The felt needs identified in this section, and the research findings associated with each, hopefully laid the foundation for a holistic framework to produce solutions to and cures for the problems confronting African American young men in today’s society. The Lutheran Church has an excellent opportunity to participate in this endeavor, especially through adding their congregations' resources to both new and continuing efforts to address these issues.
SECTION II
POINTS OF CONTACT FOR ACCESSING
YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Introduction
There are a number of points of contact for African American young males in cities such as Baltimore, Atlanta and Detroit. Among the institutions that serve as important gateways to the African American male community are churches, neighborhood recreational centers, high schools, colleges, sporting events, barber shops, fraternities, clubs, and music/entertainment venues. Efforts that focus on this group must understand the formal and informal institutions present in the African American community. One specific strategy involves co-venturing with established businesses that serve young African American men. This literature review attempts to devise an effective method of tapping these venues in reaching the youth.

The Church
For centuries, the church has served both as a place of worship as well as a sanctuary for black men who sought refuge from the day to day pressures of life. Billingsley (1999) reported that, from their earliest days in the 1790s, black churches have been and still continues to be the focal point of virtually every movement for change that affects their communities. Billingsley's research demonstrates that the church is widespread and effective in its community activity and, in fact, "activist" churches confront problems such as family instability, youth development, AIDS and other health issues. There is a natural prospective alliance between the Lutheran Church and African American Churches in all of the cities of interest based on certain common elements of faith as well as a shared commitment to serve others in the tradition of Jesus Christ.

Today, the church continues to play its traditional role of welcoming well-adjusted as well as troubled youth. Herbert (1995) reveals the reason why many young African American males turn to the church for answers to many of the problems faced by themselves and their peers. In many of America’s inner cities, many young males turn to the churches in search of help. One such place is Baltimore’s African Methodist Episcopal Church. Rare among traditional black churches, economic classes mix at this church. It is located in the Druid Hill section of Baltimore—a historically working-class neighborhood now infested with drugs and dilapidated public-housing projects. But, interestingly, it draws its membership from middle-class suburbs as well as the surrounding neighborhood. At services, blue-jean clad youths pray while holding hands with middle-aged professionals and families dressed in their Sunday’s best.

Similarly, Christian Century (1994) reported that Atlanta’s Antioch Baptist Church attracts a great number of young African American males to its new structure in one of
Atlanta’s poorest neighborhoods. In fact, during Sunday prayers, the place is reported to be so packed that its pastor, Cameron Alexander, invites the young men in the pews to give up their seats to the standees and take a place on the steps of the sanctuary. The gathering of young men has become a part of the Sunday ritual at Antioch Baptist where the congregation’s 5500 mostly middle class black members have deliberately embraced the young men in the inner city.

These existing faith-based initiatives are excellent models, and even potential partners, for the Lutheran Church as it develops its urban mission and determines its best points of access to the young African American male population.

High Schools and Colleges
In a report on *Strategies for Effective Health Outreach to African American Communities*, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Minority Health lists faith-based institutions and educational institutions as two of the top access points for young African American males. An effective point of access to young African American males is through high schools and colleges. Sanders (1996) demonstrated that these are places where a large number of young males from different socio-economic backgrounds could be found in one place. As such, reaching them for services and other related activities is more possible than any other location. Sanders’ study found that many families, for instance, with the general support of the community, were able to forge successful partnerships with the local school system in order to address the issue of violence that was hemorrhaging the city.

In 1994, at the tenth Annual Rosalyn Carter Symposium on Mental Health Policy, participants addressed the issue of substance abuse among the Atlanta youth under the theme “Children and Families at Risk: Collaborating with our schools.” Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Weekly (1994) pointed to the fact that the symposium highlighted important close working relationships between policy-makers and the school system. These relationships are imperative since youth indulgence in alcohol and problems of mental health start when they are of high school age.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are also important access points for inner city initiatives. In Baltimore, Morgan State and Coppin State each has extensive outreach programs. Coppin, in particular, has defined the borders of its campus to be the borders of Baltimore. In Atlanta, four HBCUs (Morehouse, Spelman, Morris Brown, and Clark College, all part of the Atlanta University Center) similarly pursue a multitude of community-based outreach programs to distressed inner city neighborhoods. Howard University in Washington D.C. has a number of community outreach programs serving disadvantaged youth and children living in distressed neighborhoods.

Recreation and Youth Centers
According to Wig (1991) recreation centers can also be a good point of access for young black males. There, they can play arcade games and sports while interacting with their peers. A youth recreation center maintained and run by four volunteer officers of the Baltimore Police Department offers such activities. Located on Bayard Street, this
recreation center also doubles as a police youth club. One requisite for their volunteers is to have an avid interest in working with low-income kids. Another requisite is an eagerness to provide a wholesome and positive atmosphere in which the young men can develop. In addition to organizing activities, refereeing games, and cooking, the officers help the children learn respect, social skills, and discipline. The officers' interest in looking after the well being of the young men does not end at 10 P.M. when the doors close.

Burkeen and Alston (2001) researched the role of recreation centers in preventing what they call youth “negative leisure activities” in Detroit’s inner city neighborhoods. Their study focused on the youth recreation programs and its usefulness in averting violence and drug abuse. They point out the significance of recreation in helping facilitate personality development among youth. Recreation centers in cities like Detroit are very cost-effective programs and offer a wide range of activities that inform youth about the dangers of substance abuse.

Barbershops
Rivaling the familiar and relaxed atmosphere found in recreation centers, inner city barbershops are among the venues that bring together African American males. Most dramatically shown in the recent movie Barbershop, these casual gathering points are cultural centers. As Harris-Lacewell (2003) notes, the barbershops and beauty parlors, more than the churches, the schools, or the radio, exist as spaces where black people engage each other as peers, and where nothing is out of bounds for conversation.

Young men from all walks of life come to these places once or twice a month and often leave having learned about an issue that concern them and their communities. The barbershop highlights the panorama of psychological, cultural, political, spiritual, and socio-economic dimensions of black lives in the area. The reason is simple: barbershops offer a kind of open-ended, uncensored forum unavailable anywhere else. It allows young African American males to express their opinions and concerns while exchanging views. Barbershops could be viewed as effective centers for disseminating information in the community.

One could easily imagine the potential role barbershops could play in provoking debates on issues that greatly affect the life of young African American men. Issues such as the proliferation of HIV/AIDS, alcohol and substance abuse, awareness and prevention as well as the attendant social and cost implications of the above problems could be entertained without adherence to the particular norm of established forums. These qualities lead Braxton’s (1998) study to conclude that barbershops offer a glimpse of part of the African-American experience. The neighborhood barbershop is often the center of life in poor communities.

Sporting Events
In the one-man show The Gathering, hip-hop actor, playwright and rapper Will Power refers not only to the barber shop as a setting where black men gather but clubs and basketball courts as well. Both recreational and organized sporting events can be
excellent venues to access African American males. Sports play a very significant role in
the African-American community and because of that a considerable number of young
men are connected one way or another to sports either as active participants or as fans.
This fact explains why so many of the youth role models come from a pool of
exceptionally talented athletes. One specific event that brings together many African
American males are football games that take place during homecoming week between
Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the nations’ many big cities such as
Baltimore and Atlanta. In Baltimore, football rivalries, such as that between Morgan
State University and Howard University, are known to draw thousands of black youth
from nearby communities. High school basketball games are also known to attract many
youth to sport arenas. Recent high school games in Ohio are reported to have gathered as
many as twenty thousand young people, an unprecedented number for a game at
secondary level.

**Musical Events and Clubs**

Music is an important component of African American family life. Many young people
attend concerts and other musically oriented events. Although attraction to a given
musical genre varies among individuals, Hip-hop and Rhythm and Blues (R & B) are
most popular among the male youth. In fact, Bakari Kitwana, a well-known writer on
African American issues and a former editor at *The Source*, a magazine of black youth
culture, refers to the contemporary African American youth as “The Hip-Hop
Generation.” It is not unusual for Hip-Hop artists to command the attendance of
thousands of young men in one concert. Evidently, one has a fairly good chance of
meeting many African American males at the above mentioned venues.

Dance clubs, too, are excellent access points for African American males, particularly in
the 21-24 age groups. Clubs are especially effective in reaching the lower end of this age
group in that their attainment of majority allows them into these places and so they are
more likely to frequent them than their older counterparts.

**Conclusion**

This section identifies what may be considered to be some key points of access to African
American males. These institutions are valuable infra structural assets to anyone
interested in effectively working with African American youth. However, identifying key
access points could result in nominal success if one does not devise a careful approach to
communicating with black youth. Generally, any organization or individual aspiring to
communicate or interact with a given group must first understand the socio-cultural
sensibilities as well as sensitivities of that community. African American youth are no
different in that context and any attempt to reach them must incorporate these key
parameters. Moreover, it is also important to identify the types of role models who
emerge from the aforementioned points of contact and institutions. The importance of
role models in the lives of the young and impressionable is discussed in the following
section.
SECTION III

ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Introduction
This section analyses the current role models for African American youths and how they can play a useful role in their lives. Knowledge of these opportunities can help inform the Lutheran Church as it engages this community, since role models play a very influential role in any community. With the advent of new media technology, the popularity of some individuals, especially in sports, music television and film, transcends national boundaries. They not only command the admiration of their fellow citizens but they also attract the attention of many people around the world. According to Webster, a role model is, "a person whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others." If you ask a student who their role model is today, often times you will hear sports heroes or movie stars. Role models--particularly those who are influential African-Americans--can have a powerful influence over the youth. Many young people consider successful people as role models not only because they did well in their chosen field but also because they made it out of a difficult situation to establish themselves.

According to Lee (1991), today’s young African American men have a strong need to develop attitudes, behaviors, and values necessary to function at optimal levels in school and in the world. Role models help to play an important part in that development. The following is a diverse list of the types of role models selected by today’s African American male youth, including sports stars, entertainers, religious leaders, political figures, and family role models. We include a section on mentors, who are simply individuals or organizations that, among other development activities, target black male youth and positively serve in the capacity of role models. The following list purposely corresponds with the points of contact identified in section two.

Sports Heroes
Assibey-Mensah produced a nationwide survey outlining that within the age group of 10-18, a vast majority of African Americans identified sports figures and athletes as role models, of whom basketball players were the overwhelming athletes of choice. The second largest category of role models was movie and television stars. The article

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2 It is also instructive to understand the importance of the young African American male’s immediate social environment, as this greatly affects their choice of role model. To that end, Assibey–Mensah (1997) established categories that highlight African American youths’ socio-developmental interactions: the primary family—the mother and father; co-equals—siblings and playmates of the youth; socio others— aunts and uncles; media others—individuals who enter a youth’s life via television or movies.
reveals that none of the black male youth in that age group indicated an educator as a role model.

The reason for young black men’s overwhelming choice of sport and entertainment superstars as role models lies in society’s peculiar notion of success and its underlying path to achieving it. Youth are often led to believe success is measured by how much financial and material wealth one is capable of accumulating. As such, financially successful people are often equated with good role models. Black youth are often bombarded with glimpses of flamboyant entertainers and mega-rich sports figures. Their multi-million dollar homes are discussed on television almost on a daily basis. In the African American community, a great many of the people who can afford this kind of lifestyle are entertainers and superstar athletes. Through media manipulation, the inner city black youth believe sports and entertainment are the gateways to the world of fame and riches and embrace these megastars as their role models.

The underlining issue in the role model decision-making process is the male youth’s connection to the individual. Many young African American males would categorize Michael Jordan or David Winfield as role models, but Winfield certainly recognizes that “athletes are a key role model for many people and they can and should be, but in an ideal situation, they should not be the primary role model” (Benham 1994). Other athletes such as Charles Barkley and Jeff Simeon of the Minnesota Vikings do not support the idea of being a role model for youth and publicly prefer not to be considered as such (Pro-Family News 1997). The underlying consideration many black male youth have in selecting sports athletes as role models is the love of the sport itself and the success that is associated with sports superstardom.

Entertainers
Rappers have been identified by black youth as role models as well. While many black male youth feel the Hip Hop industry and rappers are their only voice within the American society, an additional reason for rappers being selected as role models is that Hip Hop is viewed not only as a genre of music but as a complete lifestyle. Rapper/activist KRS-ONE once stated that “rap is something you do and Hip-Hop is something you live”. He believes Hip-Hop culture should be viewed as an inner city movement that seeks victory over the oppressive routine of inner city life (2001). This is the reason why rappers such as Nas are adopted as role models; the substance of his lyrics, promotes Hip-Hop culture. Other popular rappers today, such as Jay-Z, have been labeled “money hungry” and willing to “sell out” Hip-Hop culture for the right price.

“Gangsta” rappers also tend to emerge as role models for young African American males. Abu-Jamal (2001) states that this rap form, which has strong connections and ties to the 1970s era flick “The Mack,” arises from commercial exploitation of black popular culture and from the political repression visited upon black America by the national government. Abu-Jamal argues that gangsta rappers follow a commercial media myth of the 1970s pimps as role models much the same way black male youth today follow the gangsta rappers. Abu-Jamal concludes that the source of the role model emulation of the gangsta rapper is a false image of black males as glorified pimps and “the lesson here is that toxic
cultural productions further produces toxic cultural products, and while one is lauded as powerful art, the other is damned as dangerous doggerel.”

**Religious Leaders**

Religious organizations, churches, and mosques all play central roles in serving black males through mentorship and development programs. From the religious leaders (the ministers, imams, and other members of the clergy) to the members of the congregations, religious organizations positively affect the social, political, and economic concerns of America American male youth, particularly in regards to the edification of the youths' spiritual lives.

Detroit's Christian Youth Challenge is an outreach organization that supports youth during their junior and senior year of high school through personal and professional development activities. Also, the Young Urban Black Males speak at various venues and host mentorship programs that connect Hip-Hop culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the Indianapolis Violence-Free Zone Initiative sponsors a weekly event at a facility called, "Hip-Hop Heaven", which features original youth-developed rap and other entertainment embracing an alcohol-free and a faith-based, morally rich environment.

**Political Leaders**

Though sports and entertainment figures were highest among the selection of a role model for African American male youths, Benham (1994) argues that through proper knowledge and exposure, political leaders can possibly become role models. In fact, many African American youth have traditionally lent their ears to those who raise social and political issues in order to initiate community changes. We have seen the kind of influence many of the political leaders and social activists have over black youth.

Since the 1960s, black politicians have come to positions of authority in many of the cities that have distressed inner city communities. Atlanta, Detroit, and Baltimore have all had successful black mayors, and a growing black political establishment in these cities offers many entry points for a faith-based initiative to grapple with inner city challenges.

**Family and Community**

The first thing that everybody should understand is that the most important mentoring role is as a parent, possibly followed by siblings and extended family members. Assibey-Mensah stresses the enormous stake that parents have in ensuring the positive outcome of their day-to-day interactions with their children. Research also suggests that a large influence on young black males tends to come from older siblings whom the youth tend to emulate through activities and goals.

Educators also play a big role in shaping the minds and thinking of the young. Many researchers, such as Holland (1987), Lee (1991), and Quinn (2002) highlight the role parents and educators play as role models to black male youth. Also, as illustrated by the remarkable story of Jenkins, Hunt and Davis (2002), local role models are not always immediate family members. Some role models are simply the concerned, and oftentimes
successful, local professionals. Jenkins, Hunt, and Davis, three black doctors from Newark, are now currently involved in extensive community development programs in Newark and have established a yearly scholarship to promising Newark students entering a four-year college. So is Dr. Ben Carson, the famous pediatric neurosurgeon, who has been mentoring black youth and children in Baltimore and, along with his wife, has established a foundation to promote excellence in African American students.

At a young age, there is the irrepressible desire among the young to identify themselves with persons who they love and respect. Benham (2003) states that youth will find a role model, whoever is available, irrespective of whether person is a positive or negative influence. It is the duty of parents, educators, community, and local organizations to guide the youth so that the persons they consider their role models are worthy of emulation.

**Mentors**

Lee (1991) stresses the importance of black mentors and teachers in the lives of black male youth. Fraternal organizations such as Omega Psi Phi, Alpha Phi Alpha, Iota Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Phi Beta Sigma all have branches within the Atlanta, Baltimore and Detroit area. These organizations pride themselves on community service and mentorship programs. Moreover, Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Morgan State in Baltimore, MD, Howard in Washington, D.C. and Morehouse in Atlanta, GA are all involved in programs focused on today’s youth, right from mentoring to college readiness programs. The Asante program at Morgan State University provides high school students with the opportunity to earn their community service credit by working with faculty and staff mentors throughout the University.

Local chapters of the 100 Black Men Coalition, the Urban League, and the Boys and Girls Club of America have chapters in major cities that are involved in youth mentorship activities. The Open Society Youth Institute has a variety of community programs for Baltimore area youth. Detroit has a Youth Sports and Recreation Center in which they connect youth with non-profits that specialize in work alternatives for youth as well as provide community service activities. Non-profits also play an important role in the development of youth mentors in Washington, DC. One recently established non-profit, The Elimisha Institute, has developed a unique Youth Development and Mentorship Program which prepares young adults for college and the workforce.

**Conclusion**

Role models have a tremendous influence on black youth. They do this by being visible and active in their communities while maintaining some level of consciousness. Unfortunately, some role models who are loved and admired by the youth do not recognize the importance of their role in the youths’ lives. Role models can help black male youth develop attitudes and skills necessary for academic achievement and responsible behavior. Role models should act in a way, and many of them do, that positively affect the self-image of black youth, while at the same time fostering a sense of cultural and historical pride.
Certain role models in all of the areas discussed above -- sports, entertainment, politics, religion, family, and mentoring organizations -- can provide points of contact for the Lutheran Church as it embraces its urban mission.
PART 2
BEST PRACTICES IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS
SECTION I

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS:  BEST PRACTICES

Introduction
According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics\(^3\), about 6,430 youth development organizations were active in the United States in 1999. There is no standard definition of a youth development program, as a variety of school and out-of-school activities, programs and organizations (largely private) come together to form the youth development sector. Some programs are sponsored by public institutions and agencies, some by private organizations with broad mandates such as civic organizations and religious groups, while some are run by grass roots community-based organizations.

This Part of the review discusses strategies adopted by different agencies for dealing with issues relating to young people. These strategies are intended to be best practices – the elements and activities of intervention design, planning, and implementation that are recommended on the basis of the best knowledge currently available – in the area of youth development. The best practices discussed here are intended to guide community and other agencies dealing with youth issues in developing programs that best meet the needs of the community and the participants as well as meeting the goals and objectives of the implementing organization.

The different strategies and programs discussed in this part are grouped on the basis of their contents (academic enrichment, vocational and career training, mentoring) as well as the type of organizations (religious, community-based).

Part II is divided into ten sections. After the introduction in the first section, section two discusses the national youth development strategy developed by the US Department of Health and Human Services. This strategy is a holistic approach to youth development and sets down the norms and parameters for good, practical, and successful interventions. Some states that have developed youth programs on the lines of the DHHS strategy are also outlined in this part. The third section discusses some programs that focus on providing services to youth that supplement and complement the school and other systems they are already in. These are general-purpose programs intended to assist youth to become responsible family members and citizens. Section four discusses programs that are offered with the specific purpose of improving the chances of young people to find employment by providing them vocational skills and on-the-job training. Section five discusses mentoring strategies followed by organizations engaged in youth development. Section six focuses on programs designed to help youth who are involved in crime and violence. Section seven discusses some faith-based programs, and section

eight focuses on the Nation of Islam and its roles in the lives of a large section of African American youth. Section nine reviews the challenges experienced in faith-based youth development program, and section ten draws some conclusions.
SECTION II

APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Family and Youth Services Bureau brought out a report in 1996 that redefined approaches to youth development through reconnecting communities and youth. The new approach was based on the premise that the old strategies for helping youth in at-risk circumstances were no longer sufficient, and that there was a need for a paradigm shift in terms of approach and strategy and a rethinking on youth services. It emphasized that focusing on academic failures or drugs or teen pregnancy detracts from the ability to view young people in a holistic fashion as individuals with problems, strengths, hopes, and dreams.

The primary focus of youth development model is not simply on providing services. It emphasizes offering young people a complement of services and opportunities. It provides chances for youth to become involved in their communities in ways that build on young people’s strengths and gives them hope for the future. The four ingredients necessary for youth to develop in a positive way are:

- a sense of competence
- a sense of usefulness
- a sense of belonging
- a sense of power

Young people need positive outlets for growth. When they do not have these positive outlets, they may find potentially damaging outlets. Gang membership may address their needs for membership in a group, development of close friendships, recognition, opportunities for exercising decision-making skills, and responsibility. Positive developmental opportunities meet adolescent needs while decreasing their exposure to destructive influences and reducing their involvement in risky behaviors.

The Youth Development Approach – A Definition

"The Youth Development Approach (YDA) is designed to focus on the positive outcomes we desire for the young people, not the negative outcomes we hope to prevent. It shifts the dialogue from one that focuses on youth with problems to one in which communities can begin defining what youth need to grow into healthy adults.” (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996)

To successfully implement the youth development approach, communities and organizations committed to working with youth must rethink youth policy. This process requires broad community leadership. The community leaders need to provide a long term vision/mission and goal for the young people. Once a long term mission and specific goals have been set, a framework for translating the vision into practice at the
local level needs to be developed based on their own capacity as well as that of the community.

Youth Development at the Local Level: Collaborating for Change

The YDA offers a strategy for creating communities in which young people are active and valued contributors. There are three key components of YDA:

- Viewing young people and families as partners rather than as clients, and involving them in designing and delivering programs and services.
- Giving all youth access to both prevention and intervention services and programs that meet their development needs.
- Offering youth opportunities to develop relationships with caring, supportive adults.

Prior to developing a program for youth development all stakeholders should be cognizant of the following facts:

- Youth service providers and their collaborative partners, youth, parents and community members should have clear definitions of adolescent ages and developmental ages.
- No single community organization can provide the range of developmental, preventive and intervention programs and services required. Creation of such programs requires collaborative planning by a community youth service providers (including faith-based organizations), other social services and educational institutions, community leaders, the young people, and local policy makers.
- Developing a media campaign to create positive images of young people can profoundly affect both the resources that are dedicated to young people and the way the services and programs are designed.
- Youth service providers, policymakers, families and communities need to be educated in the philosophy of YDA. These stakeholders have focused in the past on young people’s problems rather than their strengths. One of the greatest challenges in implementing youth development programs is changing the perspectives of all the program participants including the youth themselves.
- Agencies need to define the goals of the programs and the measurable outcomes linked to these programs. The programs must be evaluated periodically to see if the outcomes and objectives of the program are being achieved.

Before embarking on a Youth Development Approach, the involved agencies should answer these questions:

1. How do we define youth development, generically, and as applied to this community?
2. What are our goals and objectives in implementing a youth development program in this community?
3. What are the benefits in implementing the program? What are the possible negative consequences, if any?
4. Is there a support for the approach within the community? If yes, how can we effectively leverage the existing support? If no, how can we begin to build that support?

**Developing a Framework**
The DHHS concedes that there is no correct youth development model that works for all communities. The strengths, weaknesses, and resources of each community should be assessed before a framework is developed. It requires recreating existing community systems to ensure that reflect a fundamental philosophy of valuing and supporting young people.

Youth development approach must establish measurable developmental outcomes for all young people. Young people’s development is determined by a number of factors. These include individual personality, familial ties and supports, access to education opportunities, socio-economic status, gender, racial or ethnic background, and physical capacity. These factors must be considered in establishing development outcomes. Outcomes, it was reiterated, should be considered contextual.

Following the above framework, many states have come up with their models of youth development programs. The Arizona youth development strategy involved:

- Identifying the gaps and needs in current youth service delivery systems;
- Initiating youth development opportunities at the community level; and
- Building coalitions to increase grass roots awareness and support for youth development programs.
- Conducting a needs assessment survey to collect data/information on youth attitudes, existing community services and opportunities for young people, and resources available to address gaps in services.

The Colorado program is essentially an assets-based model of youth development. Its strategy was to provide support services to families and young people through:

- Parenting skill development;
- Counseling;
- Linkages to community resources; and
- Sponsoring community forums for young people to present ideas and opinions.

Community collaborations developed through the project were expected to have the following outcomes:

- Health awareness and sports activity;
- Personal and social skills;
- Knowledge, reasoning and creativity;
- Vocational interests and cultural awareness; and
- Citizenship.

The Connecticut model of youth development focuses on capacity building, sharing information among organizations involved in youth development, and providing on-site technical assistance to interested local youth service providers.
The **Iowa** model objective is to replace fragmented youth programs at local levels with a coordinated youth development approach and build capacity of local communities to use this approach in providing youth services. The program plans to achieve these objectives through:

- Developing a consensus on key youth development goals, outcomes, and benchmarks;
- Reviewing policies, standards and practices of youth programs and initiate changes wherever necessary;
- Identifying opportunities for meaningful involvement of youth in local community activities; and
- Supporting service providers through training and technical assistance.

Both the **Maryland** and **Massachusetts** models emphasize conducting needs assessment survey and providing comprehensive training to service providers. Both models also stress the need for building local partnerships.

The **Nebraska** model emphasizes a paradigm shift. The strategy focuses on shifting the perceptions and attitudes of community leaders and members from a problem-focused approach to serving young people through a community-youth involvement model. The plan of action for this strategy is seen as:

- involving young people in increasing awareness of the youth development approach and importance of youth development; and
- identifying young people’s assets, including youth both inside and outside of youth prevention and intervention programs.

The **New York** model of youth development focuses on the following activities:

- Building collaborations between Youth Bureaus and libraries, museums and religious organizations;
- Expanding opportunities for youth leadership and opportunities for youth to serve as problem solvers; and
- Supporting service providers through collaborations and training.

The **Oregon** model focuses on strengthening local capacity to implement youth development programs and encouraging youth involvement in community decision-making structures.

Now that a general strategy for youth development programs has been discussed, we go on to discuss some specific programs that have withstood the test of time and have been successful in terms of meeting their goals and objectives.
SECTION III

GENERAL FOCUS YOUTH SERVICE PROGRAMS

The Beacons Model
The New York City Beacons Initiative has successfully challenged and engaged adolescents for the last several years. The model is built on the following themes:

- **Partnerships**: that young people want to feel that they are partners in the process of building and shaping their programs and environments.
- **Caring relationships with adults and peers**: these engage young people, help them develop skills in language and hands-on work, and feel part of the larger world.
- **Real-world tasks**: programs that give them opportunities to give public performances, doing service, creating concrete products.
- **Continuity**: young people need to be able to work with the same adults and youth over long periods of times. They also need consistency with respect to rules and regulations.

Beacons are tied closely to their communities. Often, those who work in the Beacon also live in the community. This helps build trust with young people as well as parents and other caregivers.

The booklet *Ten Programs for Teens: New York City Beacons* describes ten programs implemented by the New York Beacons in different parts of the city. All these programs have demonstrated effective practices. A full version of the booklet may be obtained from Marsha Milan at the Youth Development Institute, 212 925 6675.

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School
YouthBuild Philadelphia’s primary focus is on enabling economically disadvantaged youth to obtain the skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency and provide leadership to their community by completing their high school education and learning job skills through the rehabilitation of low-income housing.

YouthBuild Philadelphia serves young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 who have dropped out of school, and are either low- or very low-income. There are several components to the program design:

- Educational component
- On-the-job-training
- Service learning
- Leadership development, and
- Career counseling and placement

The participants are offered an extensive Supportive Services program. The program counselors provide workshops and one-on-one counseling to assist students in managing
the many issues they face, from family conflict, to abusive relationships, to substance abuse, to parenting problems. They also assist them with issues related to job readiness’ strengthening life skills, and developing a personalized ‘life management plan’ for the year. Counseling staff also develop an extensive referral network with community-based agencies to provide health and other supportive services as needed.

**The Work Group’s Youth Corps Program**
The Work Group’s Youth Corps program was started in 1984 to serve the youth of Camden County, New Jersey. Camden is ranked among the poorest cities of its size in the country. Its schools lose over three-quarters of its students and the county has one of the highest youth murder rates in the nation.

The mission of the Youth Corps program is “to prepare at-risk, high school dropouts of Camden County to take their next step on a lifetime of career achievement by adequately attending to their personal, social, civic, academic, and vocational needs.” The initiative serves unemployed high school dropouts between the ages of 16 and 25.

The Youth Corps is a full-time education and training program. Corps members are enrolled full-time for approximately eight months. A typical week includes 15 hours of basic skills instruction, 14 hours of paid community service and four (4) hours of career development instruction and counseling. At the end of the eight months, youth are transitioned to placement in colleges, training or employed accompanied by two years of structured retention and support services.

The initiative attempts to establish and maintain a relationship with all those involved in the students’ lives. It lays stress on developing positive group support to encourage and accelerate individual growth.

**Other Approaches to Youth Development**
The Observational or Social Learning or Social-Cognitive Model is based on the work of Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1977, 1986). The model is based on the following principles:

- The highest level of observational learning is achieved by first organizing and rehearsing modeled behavior symbolically and then acting it overtly. Coding modeled behaviors into words, labels or images results in better retention than simply observing.
- Individuals are more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if it results in outcomes they value.
- Individuals are more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if the model is similar to the observer and has admired status and the behavior has functional value.

The Resiliency Model deals with the capability of individuals and systems to cope successfully in the face of significant adversity or risk (Bagley and Carrol, 1998). This model postulates that programs aimed at developing ‘protective mechanisms’ in African-American families and individuals through reducing risk impact, reducing negative chain reactions, establishing and maintaining self-esteem and self-efficacy, and opening up of
opportunities will result in engendering long-term resiliency and ability to cope with life. The authors suggest that church will need to develop a collaborative relationship with the community in order to promote resiliency amongst African-Americans.

The Developmental Assets Model is an effort to identify the elements of a strength-based approach to healthy development. Search Institute developed the framework of developmental assets model. This framework identifies 40 critical factors for young people's growth and development. When drawn together, the assets offer a set of benchmarks for positive child and adolescent development. The assets clearly identify important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and others in communities play in shaping young people's lives (Search Institute, 1996).

The School to Career Model stresses the need for schools to prepare students who plan a career immediately after school. Arguing that the modern workplace demands new kinds of skills, the Center for Economic Development propose work-related learning in high schools, concentrating on the development of soft skills such as communication and problem solving. This model proposes an active role for community organizations providing services to adolescent youth by bringing together small and medium-sized firms in the community that commit to providing local youth and schools that develop work related skills in the young people.
SECTION IV

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY CREATION PROGRAMS

Career Exploration Project (CExP)
The project is implemented by The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES). The mission of the CASES youth programs is to help young offenders gain skills and self-confidence they need to exit the justice system as responsible, productive members of their communities.

The participants in the CExP are first-time felony offenders aged 15-19, who reside in low-income neighborhoods in New York City. A typical participant lives in a low-income household headed by a single mother or grandparent, who receives support from public assistance. Sixty percent of participants are African-Americans. CExP staff concentrates on cultural awareness at two key levels: (1) helping young people to learn how to work with diverse individuals, and (2) appreciating their own background as part on their personal development. Training components are designed to help participants address these issues, through discussions, role-playing, and developing communication skills. The program believes that seeing people of color in positions of leadership and success has a positive impact on participants. Hence internship sites are arranged for the participants in accordance with their interests and cultural backgrounds to afford them positive role models with similar cultural orientation. Staff also develop culturally-targeted events such as tours of businesses owned or staffed primarily by people of color and tours of historically black colleges and universities.

All CExP graduates pursued educational goals by enrolling (or remaining) in GED programs, high school or college, or passing the GED exam. Nearly two-thirds have gone on to jobs or internships, and almost half were working six months after program completion. Additionally, employers have expressed satisfaction with the performance of the interns.

YouthBuild McLean County
The YouthBuild McLean County is a job-training program that focuses on leadership development. Its mission is to offer young people an opportunity to build their futures and their communities through education, leadership development, job training, and the rehabilitation and production of affordable housing.

The initiative stresses on service learning. Young people, through the youth caucus, are encouraged to conduct extensive research around social issues and decide on a course of action. Activities include participating weekly in America Reads Program at a local low-income daycare center, serving the elderly and disabled, and providing environmental services including recycling and water quality monitoring.
The program enrolls youth aged 16 to 24. 75% of the participants have dropped out of school and have very low incomes. The other 25% include high school graduates who still have educational needs.

The program emphasizes building partnership with youth and leadership development. All decisions in the program are made through a democratic process directly involving the Youth Policy Committee, comprising seven youth elected by their peers, and the program director.

The program uses a proactive approach to prevent problems and to develop the strengths of the youth based on an ‘asset building’ design. It uses case management to help youth receive assistance in such areas as health issues, parenting classes, probation and court related issues, housing concerns, and TANF.

**ARBOR Career Center**

The ARBOR career center in Rochester/Monroe County, New York has been in existence since 1984. ARBOR’s mission is “to provide for every person we serve the opportunity to contribute to society through meaningful, gainful employment.” The career center targets hard-to-serve groups among youth ages 14-21. Seventy four percent are high school dropouts, and the rest are economically disadvantaged in-school youth. 53% receive welfare, 17% are offenders and 77% have basic skills below the 9th grade level. 87% are racial/ethnic minorities.

The initiative provides a year-round program for out-of-school youth, referred to as ‘associates’. The participants follow one of the two main tracks: GED Prep (for those reading at or above 6th grade level); or an Adult Basic Education (ABE) track (for those reading from 4th to 6th grade level), with several elements such as job readiness, computer literacy, life skills and work experience, common to both tracks.

The career center has developed linkages with community mental health providers, community-based organizations, schools and universities, and local businesses to expand its resources for its associates. In order to serve and keep homeless youth in the program, the center works closely with three other community agencies to insure that shelter and other services are provided. To serve non-custodial fathers, the initiative is involved with special fathers’ program that addresses issues of parenting, visitation and child support. The center staff frequently accompanies associates at court proceedings.

The program has been successful gauging from the fact that between 2000 and 2002, of the 191 youth receiving services, 81 were placed in jobs, 49 returned to school, and 22 received their GED.

**Project CRAFT**

Project CRAFT (Community Restitution Apprenticeship-Focused Training) is a program model of the Home Builders Institute. It was started in 1994. It serves court-involved youth who are over 16 years of age. It is a collaborative effort involving several partners at each site.
Project CRAFT is a construction industry sponsored program that integrates youth development strategies into hands-on vocational training, employability skills development, job placement assistance, and follow-up. The initiative is an open entry/open exit program with youth spending 25% of their time in classroom-related instruction and 75% in community service/work based environment.

**Cassadaga Job Corps Center**
The mission of the program administered by the Cassadaga Job Corps Center is to maximize the employability of its student employees through preparing them for further education or high skill jobs.

The Center enrolls young people between the ages of 16 and 24, who are economically disadvantaged and in need of additional social, educational, and vocational training. They must be living in an environment so disruptive that it impairs their prospects of participating in a non-residential program.

The program is residential. The program sites are Zero Tolerance Drug/Alcohol/Violence zones. Students study for GED, and learn occupational skills (options include culinary skills, health occupations, painting, plumbing, apartment building maintenance, and carpentry). Students also receive the ‘soft skills’ they need to succeed in and keep a job.

**Ohio Civilian Conservation Corps**
The Ohio Civilian Conservation Corps (OCCC) is a state agency created in 1977 to make conservation/service a means to youth employment and development. Its mission is “advancing young adults toward productive careers while providing quality conservation services for Ohio.”

OCCC enrolls unemployed state residents between the ages of 18 and 24. It concentrates on serving those most interested in gaining employability skills through conservation-based work and gives preference to young adults most in need based on income, job history, education, and dependence of government services.

The youth in OCCC participate in conservation projects while engaging in education, career, and personal development activities. The emphasis, however, is on youth employment and development. Partnering agencies provide specific services and support to address individual and group needs.
MENTORING STRATEGIES

Mentoring is considered an excellent means of providing an adolescent with a positive influence when such an influence otherwise does not exist. There is a number of mentoring projects being implemented in the U.S.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters
One of the best known mentoring programs in the country is run by the Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization started in 1904. Its mission is to provide young people with one-on-one relationships that help them become confident, competent and caring adults. There are more than 500 local BB/BS agencies in all 50 states serving more than 100,000 youth. The core strategy in Big Brothers/Big Sisters is to have youth use the program structure and resources to establish a mentoring relationship with pro-social adults. The minimum time commitment required of mentors is several hours, two to four times a month for at least a year. The one-to-one mentoring is based on careful matching of adult mentors and children on backgrounds, preferences, and geographic proximity.

Project RAISE
Project RAISE (Raising Ambition and Increasing Self-Esteem) is one of the components of the Baltimore Mentoring Partnership (BMP). BMP was established in July 1997. BMP was created to increase the number of caring and reliable relationships between adults and youth. In January 2002, the organization changed its name to The Maryland Mentoring Partnership. Their core programs include: Maryland State Mentoring Resource Center, Community-wide Mentor Recruitment Campaign, Project RAISE Scholarships, Mentoring Minutes sponsored by Cingular Wireless, and other special initiatives which serve over 32,000 young people. MMP's priorities include: mentor recruitment and referral, training and technical assistance, collaborating with existing programs, public awareness and advocacy. MMP works to ensure that every child in need has the opportunity to fulfill his dreams and goals through mentoring.

In May 2001, MMP commemorated the graduation of 40 outstanding students from the Project RAISE II program that was originally sponsored in 1990 by Union Baptist Church. The long-term academic and mentoring support received by these Baltimore City Public School students from the second grade through high school has propelled them to lead their peers both academically and personally. Project RAISE II students graduating in June 2001 have been accepted to various institutions of higher learning such as Penn State, Coppin State College, University of Maryland Baltimore County, Bowie State, and University of Maryland Eastern Shore. As Raise II sunsets, the results of successful mentoring continue to radiate:

Of the original 60 students that began the program in 1990, 67% have remained active. 79% of the active students graduated July 2001 and are currently attending college or a
career/trade school. In a system where the average student cannot meet competency standards, misses one of every five days of school and has only a 50% chance of graduating, Project RAISE II students, through mentoring, have beaten the odds.

RAISE is a good example of a program whose foundation rests on community support. Organizations such as churches, universities, businesses, and fraternities are recruited to sponsor RAISE interventions for seven years. The goal is to decrease the drop out rate and improve the life chances of students in inner city public schools by increasing their self-esteem, reducing high-risk behavior, increasing graduation rates, and encouraging the pursuit of further education and/or training. For more details see www.marylandmentors.org

Project SAGE

Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment (SAGE) is a community-based program that combines several components designed to prevent violence and other high-risk behavior among young African-American males. SAGE included an eight-month African-American Rites of Passage (ROP) program developed by Durham Business and Professional chain and the Durham County Health Department; a six-week summer employment experience, sponsored by the City of Durham Employment and Training Office; and a 12 week Junior achievement style entrepreneurial experience, led by 16 Durham businessmen. Mentoring by successful African-American business and civic professionals was a key element of the ROP program, which also included lessons in African-American culture and history, and training in manhood and conflict resolutions (Ringwalt et al., 1996). SAGE is a good example of getting local businesses involved in mentoring programs.

Across Ages

Services Across Ages is a program funded by the Center for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration and managed by Temple University’s Center for Intergenerational Learning. The program is based on the principle that intergenerational programs can produce positive satisfying relationships that benefit both the youths and the elders. Programs that provide for classroom instruction and parent workshops were found to be more effective when combined with intergenerational mentoring than when implemented alone (Taylor, et al., 1999). Across Ages participants also had a greater sense of self-worth and well-being and had fewer feelings of sadness and loneliness.
SECTION VI

STRATEGIES FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE

A number of programs offered to the youth by community-based organizations and religious organizations focus address the African-American youth who are in one way or the other involved in crime and violence or stand the risk of getting involved sooner or later.

The Violence-Free Zone Initiative

The Violence-Free Zone Initiative has its roots in work done by Robert L. Woodson, Sr., in the early 1970s and 1980s as he assisted and chronicled gang intervention strategies of grassroots leaders across the country. In Philadelphia, once called the “youth gang capital” of the nation, the city’s youth gang deaths were reduced from more than 40 annually to less than two as a result of the wisdom of Sister Falaka Fattah and her husband, David, founders of the House of Umoja. The principles established in this landmark effort were outlined in Woodson’s *A Summons to Life*, and later in his *Youth Crime and Violence Prevention*, for which he convened successful grassroots intervenors and the former youth gang members they had transformed. Woodson’s direct involvement and background made it possible to take and apply the principles developed in these experiences to specific neighborhoods in other cities such as Washington, DC.

In January, 1997, Washington DC was shocked by the murder of a 12-year old boy involved with warring youth factions in the Benning Terrace public housing development, considered one of DC’s most violent neighborhoods. After the killing of 12-year old Darryl Hall, Benning Terrace was in a virtual state of siege, paralyzed by the threat of an impending retaliatory strike. A single committed grassroots group called the Alliance of Concerned Men felt personally compelled to act to stop the murderous violence. For six years, the Alliance had been going into DC's troubled neighborhoods, seeking out youths, and counseling them not to make the same mistakes they had made. The Alliance was one of eight groups participating in the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise's Hands Across DC program, and for six months, NCNE had been preparing ACM to focus on one neighborhood where it could demonstrate the effectiveness of its efforts.

To buttress the Alliance's knowledge of how to conduct a peace negotiation, NCNE linked the members to counterparts who had worked with gangs in other parts of the country. The members of the Alliance then went into the Benning Terrace neighborhood and sought out the members of the disputing groups. Separately they talked to each side, winning their trust and confidence. Finally, they asked them to come to the negotiating
table at NCNE’s headquarters. From the first, each session began and ended with a prayer, and a hug within a circle of the participants. After a series of meetings, the youths pledged peace. The truce received coverage on television, radio, and in the District's leading newspapers. The news prompted a call to NCNE by DC Housing Receiver David Gilmore, who asked how he could help. After meetings with him, NCNE, the Alliance, and the youths, a plan was created to provide jobs for the youths cleaning up graffiti and landscaping the neighborhood. Youths formerly in a murderous war with one another now worked side by side in teams that, at their own insistence, had members from both the Circle and the Avenue factions working together. The Alliance continued to provide character training for the youths, who decided to merge into one unified organization called the Concerned Brothers and Sisters of Benning Terrace.

Members of the Alliance and NCNE also acted as fathers, spending leisure time with them and showing them, by example, a new way of life. After more than four years, the peace has proved to be sustainable and the community has been transformed.

The intervention of the Alliance of Concerned Men, the Concerned Brothers & Sisters of Benning Terrace, the DC Housing Authority and the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise has yielded the following results:

- At least twenty-eight young men are alive and living productive lives today who might have been dead had not the intervention been accomplished. Furthermore, those who might have been responsible for further bloodshed did not waste their lives in violence and imprisonment.

- Over a hundred young men have rejected a lifestyle that had caused destruction to their neighborhood and have become productive, contributing members of their community.

- A cycle of despair and violence has been stopped and reversed as young fathers take responsibility for their children and older youths function as positive role models for youngsters in the neighborhood.

- A community once considered off-limits for business ventures or services is now "open for business."

- The District of Columbia has saved more than $13 million as a project of effective community revitalization has replaced plans for the demolition of the development and dispersal of its residents.

The model established by the partnership of the Alliance of Concerned Men, the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, and the DC Housing Authority is being exported to other urban centers where youth violence is a major problem. For more information see www.violencefreezones.com
SECTION VII

FAITH BASED INITIATIVES

Introduction
In recent years, both federal government and the community-based institutions have become interested in collaborating with faith-based institutions for serving low-income communities in which they reside. The important role that churches could play in addressing youth related issues stems from the fact (Branch, 2002) that in most distressed low-income communities, churches remain a significant presence, one with assets that may include buildings that can be used for a variety of initiatives, volunteers, and a tradition of outreach and service. According to Rev. Eugene Rivers III, the organizer of the Boston Ten Point Coalition, “It is an area that will be increasingly important as faith-based institutions serve and function as the premier institutions of civil society in very poor neighborhoods.” He also adds “The difference between faith-based initiatives and other programs is that you focus on doing street level outreach, targeting the hot spot areas and violent youth. Most other programs don't target violent high-risk youth. It's a difficult population and this is not work that everyone is cut out for. Clergy, police and probation need to be aware of this.”

Youth programs operated by faith-based institutions are likely to be different from programs operated by secular organizations in many ways (Branch, 2000: 56). In case of the former, faith is an integral part of those who work with the participants. Further, funding for these programs come from religious and secular sources and partners may include the public school system. Balancing these circumstances is crucial to the success of the program.

The occurrence of faith-based practices may vary as a function of the setting in which the program is offered. Program operators need to be aware of the thin line they must walk regarding the separation of church and state. As a result, they much less likely to engage in faith-based practices when program activities take place in public-setting. As a result, faith-based practices seem to occur more frequently in those programs in which participant activities actually take place in churches rather than in other sites.

Boston Ten Point Coalition
The highly successful Boston Ten Point Coalition program for youth was promoted and managed by Reverends Eugene Rivers, Raymond Hammond and Jeffrey Brown, all African-Americans. The program is a collaboration of law enforcement, church leaders, clergy, law enforcement, federal, state and municipal officials, the U.S. Attorneys Office, State Attorney's Office, the District Attorney's Office as well as the Department of Probation. The substantial fall in the rates of violent youth crime in Boston, which had risen dramatically in the late eighties and early nineties, was attributed to the success of this program. By mid-nineties, juvenile violence had been radically reduced (Berrier and Winship, 1999).
The Ten Point Plan to mobilize the churches includes the following:

- Establishing 4-5 church cluster-collaborations
- Commissioning missionaries to serve as advocates in the courts.
- Commissioning youth evangelists to do street level one-on-one evangelism with youth.
- Establishing accountable, community-based economic development projects.
- Establishing links between suburban and downtown churches and front-line ministries to provide spiritual, human resource, and material support.
- Initiating and supporting neighborhood crime-watch programs within local church neighborhoods.
- Establishing relationships between local churches and community-based health centers.
- Convening a working summit meeting in order to develop the Christian brotherhoods and sisterhoods.
- Establishing counseling programs for abusive men.
- Developing an aggressive curriculum to be taught in churches.

For further details of Ten Point Plan please visit: www.ntlf.org

National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth
The Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a non-profit community-based organization, initiated a demonstration project in 1998 to garner comprehensive information on the potential of faith-based organizations as a means of working with high-risk youth. The guidelines developed by the P/PV included:

- A focus on high-risk youth.
- Appropriate programming, programs that include one or more of these areas: mentoring, education and employment readiness.
- Partnerships among congregations from different faiths and denominations.
- Partnership with justice community, social service agencies, schools and other community-based institutions.

The demonstration project includes 15 sites: Bronx, Cleveland, Denver, Oakland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Brooklyn, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Baton Rouge, Detroit, Fresno, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C. A faith-based lead agency, responsible for planning and managing the initiative, was identified for each of these sites. About 500 participants took part in the program. The majority of the participants were young African-American males (88%).

The primary services provided at these sites include: mentoring (8 sites); GED referrals (6 sites); tutoring/homework assistance (8 sites); employment related services (8 sites); life skills (10 sites); and recreation and cultural enrichment (7 sites). One distinguishing feature of this program is that faith-based practices play an integral part. At most sites prayer was a regular part of the meetings. A number of sites found ways of introducing an element of spirituality through religious music, and encouraging church attendance. The participants’ response to such faith-based practices was mixed. While some agreed
the program had affected their religious behaviors, others felt they had not been affected by it.

The program evaluation showed that participating faith-based institutions were successful in creating partnerships. They were also successful in offering a broad array of services and supports appropriate for high-risk youth. However, they faced significant difficulties in implementing their mentoring programs. It was found that the implementation challenges that the sites faced seemed at least partly caused by their relative inexperience in operating social programs and some of the organizational and staffing issues associated with it.

**Youth Excellence Services**

Youth Excellence Services (YES) is a program of Fort King Presbyterian Church. The program provides opportunities for middle school aged African-American children from Fort King Middle School and surrounding neighborhoods after school two days each week. The Program provides tutoring, mentoring, recreation, arts/humanities activities, and snacks. The objective of the program is to decrease the number of children spending unsupervised time after instruction hours; improve grade averages; improve school attendance; improve attitudes toward school; decrease school disciplinary reports; inhibit high-risk behaviors (smoking, drugs, sex, and crime) during afternoons when children are involved in the Program.
SECTION VIII

THE NATION OF ISLAM AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

According to Dr. Jerry Buckner, a black Christian pastor and an authority on the Nation of Islam (the Nation, or NOI), several factors attract young black men to this movement. To begin with, the Nation offers positive social programs to the community. Its members are active in jails and prisons, recruiting men behind bars and dissuading them from a life of crime. They have a strong emphasis against drugs, against prostitution and pimping, and against violence and gang involvement. They urge blacks to set up black-owned and black-operated businesses, thus working to raise the standard of living in poor neighborhoods. They also look with disfavor on black reliance on the government welfare system, which they perceive as often perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

The Nation looks to restaurants and food service industry as one focus for economic growth. The Nation owns thousands of acres of Georgia farmland, and has operated countless restaurants, bakeries, clothing stores, bookstores, hair care shops, and other enterprises. In 1995, the NOI opened the Salaam Restaurant and Bakery on the south side of Chicago, at a cost of five million dollars. Their fundamental ideology is to avoid reliance on government subsidies or white business partnerships and to "Do For Self."

Perhaps their most successful venture has been in providing building security at apartments and housing projects across the nation. Since 1991, the federal government has paid over twenty million dollars to NOI security teams in cities such as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The U.S. News & World Report acknowledges that in some places, such as Baltimore and Washington, D.C., hiring of the NOI Security Agency by the Department of Housing and Urban Development was an unqualified success for the tenants. However, there were drawbacks: when paychecks were late one week, some NOI leaders blamed "the Jews" for putting a virus into the computer. NOI security guards also have sold their newspapers and proselytized for Farrakhan while on duty. Peter King, a congressman from NY, worked to prohibit HUD from awarding NOI security contracts for such reasons, contrary to the wishes of the housing residents. NOI security teams, which do not carry guns, are looked on with favor by residents and have been generally effective at reducing crime and increasing tenant safety. In order to maintain a sharp appearance, a fine of ten dollars is levied against NOI security guards whose hair is too long.

Dr. Buckner notes that the Nation of Islam also emphasizes mentoring, taking a younger person under one's wing to model moral principles. Its members do not (or are not supposed to) use drugs, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or eat pork. Their use of profanity is supposed to be limited, but this guideline is bent fairly often. They emphasize
fidelity to one's spouse, and have built self-esteem and self-confidence among people badly in need both.

Furthermore, as C. Eric Lincoln observed in 1961, black men are attracted to the Nation of Islam over against the black church because of the preponderance of black men in the movement. In the average black church, over 60 percent of the congregation is female. Those percentages are fine if one is looking for a wife or a girlfriend, but for young black men looking for strong male leadership, the Nation of Islam is more attractive, with about 80 percent of its constituency being male.

Two other things make the Nation of Islam attractive: the discipline, and the power they have to externally "clean up" a neighborhood. In an NOI mosque, members are told very strongly that they have to abide by the rules of the mosque. Infractions could be dealt with by public tongue-lashing before the Muslim congregation. A Muslim man who has sex out of wedlock may find himself and his girlfriend hauled before the congregation and publicly rebuked for disgracing Islam before the world. In a white, Christian setting, much lighter "church discipline" has been instant grounds for a lawsuit against the church and its pastor; whereas in a black Muslim setting, severe public corrections are looked on with favor as positive discipline.

Along similar lines, a Detroit pastor told this reporter how the NOI "cleaned up" a neighborhood: he alleged that they physically beat up the pimps and drug pushers in a two-block region, forcing gang activity and prostitution to entirely leave (although the NOI denies using violence except in self-defense). Area residents were thrilled with the results, which the Christian churches had not able to accomplish in years of prayer and low-key "witness." The Nation of Islam had a much more aggressive approach, and was under no obligation to turn the other cheek if attacked for their deeds. They got credit for the results.

This illustrates the difference between Christian and Muslim practice. From the New Testament framework, Christians are morally forbidden from using violence or force to accomplish such goals. Christians are told to "turn the other cheek" when smitten (Matt. 5:39). Externally, our society expects that Christians ought to behave in such a manner. The NOI also turns the other cheek in most circumstances, but will respond to physical attacks on them in kind. This, the NOI feels, along with mental fortitude to do the right thing in the proper manner, gives them street credibility with young black males. This is, in the view of the NOI, simply conducting business as a man. The NOI rejects what it terms the Christian Church's perennial solution to every problem: praying and singing. The NOI views this approach as what the slave master taught the slaves in order to encourage passivity despite their enslavement. The NOI believes that this passivity has contributed to the continuing impoverishment of African Americans.

Finally, many blacks can relate to the Nation of Islam. Many blacks feel targeted by white society or by law enforcement. Current U.S. statistics say that by the age of twenty-nine, 30 percent of American black men will either have been under court supervision or been sentenced in a criminal case: drugs, theft, rape, violent crime. This percentage is far higher than that of white men under twenty-nine, so many blacks are more receptive to Farrakhan's rhetoric of a white conspiracy against them.
Today as well as thirty years ago, blacks in prison are more likely to convert to the Nation of Islam, and fully one-third of all federal prisoners today are Muslim of one variety or another. Thus, the Nation of Islam seems geared to reach the underclass, and its message emphasizes and capitalizes on the racial inequities and disparities between black and white people in America.

While the NOI undoubtedly draws a higher percentage of people on the margins of society, an underclass who has felt anger toward the legal system, it is also true that its rhetoric tends to inflame that anger. Farrakhan's speeches often paint American society in terms of oppressed and oppressor, of slaves and slave masters. This has a strong appeal to people facing barriers to their progress, including many black youth.

What separates Minister Farrakhan from black Christian pastors is partly his plain manner of speaking or addressing a problem, but also the Islamic sense of how problems should be "addressed". Minister Farrakhan and other NOI speakers frequently argue that the most common interpretations of the New Testament are tricks of the "slave masters" to lull the black community into blind submission and further bondage. The NOI instead believes that Jesus was a revolutionary who fought for the oppressed.
SECTION IX

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Youth development programs have become a popular strategy employed by both policy makers and community development practitioners in their pursuit of education and employment improvements among persons aged 15 to 24. The success of these programs has, in recent history, depended on the ability of implementing organizations to respond to the felt needs of youth in measurable outcomes. By that criterion, successful programs may ultimately be those well-managed projects that have better human and financial resources and an ability to gather and interpret data about program effectiveness. Those programs that engaged in the following actions have been the most effective:

- Formed healthy relationships with caring peers and adults;
- Participated in community-based activities;
- Assisted youth in developing relevant life skills;
- Participated in youth-centered activities in youth-accessible facilities; and
- Participated in culturally relevant programs.

In contrast, some youth programs that did not pay sufficient attention to the above actions and have not successfully acted on the needs expressed by the youth themselves or not focused outreach efforts on the particular demographic targeted have faced challenges in implementation of successful programs. A report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1994) concluded that some youth programs fail to attract young adolescents after the age of about 12-13 and are not reaching out to young people in low-income environments to solicit their views, listen to them, and act on their suggestions. The Carnegie report showed that almost 30 percent of young adolescents are not reached by youth programs at all.

When a youth development program faces chronic under-financing and limited personnel resources, the result is usually poor program implementation, a lack of long-term services (supports and follow-up), and low parent participation rates. Failures are evident in educational and social development programs alike. The American Youth Policy Forum (1994) reported that the 1982-enacted Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs have had little effect on assisting the youth. A 1994 long-term study of JTPA done by Abt Associates reported that there were no significant positive effects for out-of-school youth from their classroom training, job search assistance, or other services. Responding to this study, Congress cut the federal appropriation for Out-of-School Youth Programs (Title II-C) of JTPA by 80 percent in 1995.

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4 Taken from a cross section of all sources listed
Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds constructed the Extended-Service Schools (ESS) Adaptation Initiative program in 1997. The program was composed of four school/community collaborative models—The Beacon Model (New York City), Community Schools (New York City), Bridges to Success (Indianapolis), and the West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation (Philadelphia). Their goal was to improve the quality of educational and developmental services available to children living in poor communities. A Public/Private Ventures (2001) study on after-school programs concluded that targeted efforts by the ESS program were needed to attract the most disadvantaged students though the program itself reached thousands of children who live in disadvantaged circumstances. Less needy children and their families have been the ones who first learn about it and enroll. While 75 percent of the ESS school populations qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch, only 66 percent of the ESS program enrollees qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch. Moreover, the programs seem less able to draw children from single-parent homes. Grossman (2001) revealed that while 37 percent of the students in these schools live with only one parent, 26 percent of the enrollees are from single-parent families.

Similarly, programs aimed at improving adolescents' academic achievement have shown mixed effectiveness. For example, grades of program participants in Children at Risk, the Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP), and the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP) were not found to be significantly higher than those of a control group youth (Harrell, 1999). Children at Risk was targeted toward middle school students living in disadvantaged neighborhoods and the program used a whole-community approach involving school services, community and social services, and out-of-school activities. Children at Risk provided community-enhanced policing, intensive case management, juvenile justice intervention, after-school and summer program activities, tutoring, mentoring, and monetary incentives, but program participants did not have higher grades than control group youth.

A second program, STEP, provided summer jobs and education remediation activities to disadvantaged high school students during the summer and offered some services during the school year. Although the STEP program was effective in increasing test scores of adolescents who participated in the program in the short-term evaluation, these results were not sustained in the long-term (Grossman and Sipe, 1999). The third program, QOP, was targeted towards disadvantaged high school students. QOP offered a variety of activities, including tutoring, computer assisted instruction, homework assistance, life/family skills training, college preparation activities, community service participation, and financial incentives. Redd (2001) researched that, again, program participants’ grades were not significantly different from those of youth in the control group.

A 1998 University of Illinois study found that kids enrolled in the D.A.R.E (Drug Awareness and Resistance Education) program used the same amount of drugs as non-D.A.R.E students. According to the study, levels of drug use did not differ as a function of whether students participated in D.A.R.E. Researchers also found that D.A.R.E actually had an adverse effect on drug activity in suburban communities. Suburban students who were exposed to D.A.R.E had significantly higher levels of drug use than
the suburban students who did not participate in the D.A.R.E program. Rosenbaum (1998) calculated that every additional 36 hours of cumulative drug education was associated with significantly more negative attitudes towards police and more positive attitudes towards drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and delinquency. He found that D.A.R.E. and other conventional drug education programs focus predominantly on abstinence-only messages and are shaped by the following myths that may render their messages ineffective:

- Experimentation with drugs is not a common part of teenage culture;
- Drug use is the same as drug abuse;
- Marijuana is the gateway to drugs such as heroin and cocaine; and
- Exaggerating risks will deter young people from experimentation.

Some institutions implementing youth development programs have faced a variety of challenges in implementing programs. Most often, institutions implementing mentoring programs experienced challenges in recruiting sufficient number of volunteers. Relatively few members of the congregation were prepared to mentor young persons who had committed juvenile offenses or make long-term commitments that mentoring requires. In addition to the recruitment challenges, participating sites faced difficulties putting in place the necessary procedures – voluntary screening, training, matching, and supervision.

Apart from mentoring component, many program implementing organizations faced difficulties in putting together a strong educational and employment component. Participants come to programs with significant academic deficiencies, including histories of poor grades, truancy, suspensions, and expulsions – problems if not addressed properly could lead to deeper involvement in criminal activities. While several sites developed structured tutoring programs, after-school homework assistance and computer access opportunities were not intensive enough. Similarly, few organizations offered intensive employment related activities or instruction to their participants.

The major challenge to faith-based youth development initiatives was the relative inexperience of these organizations in operating social and community programs and staffing issues associated with it. Akin to this issue was the ineffective differentiation between program staff and organizational staff in many of these organizations. Thus the same few individuals were expected to meet many conflicting demands – working on both programmatic and organizational tasks, developing and implementing different program components, providing services for enrolled participants as well as outreach services to the larger community, and focusing on the existing initiative while also planning for replication or expansion.

The organizations implementing community programs had to strike a careful balance between avoiding some faith-based practices that could jeopardize their ability to receive public and private funding to serve high-risk youth and creating programs that are rich in faith content. However, faith practices were evident in varying degrees in most institutions. Programs in which secular partners played an active role in the actual delivery of services generally exhibit fewer faith practices. The same was true of programs in which participant activities took place in a neutral setting rather than in a
house of worship. Faith-based practices occurred with greater frequency when program activities took place at a church or other house of worship, and when program leadership attempted to create an alternative community or safe haven where congregation adults and youth came together to support a new lifestyle for participants.

In conclusion, failed youth development programs result from a lack of vision to affect change in the lives of youth and a lack of planning. Many of these programs are marked by activities that end after two or three meetings and accomplish little more than raising the expectations of young people. They neglect to continually monitor performance, assess programs against plans, evaluate results, and retool their programs based on feedback from the youth themselves. Well-managed projects that address the developmental needs of adolescents, increase opportunities for autonomy, and maintain adult caring and appropriate supervision will avoid failure.
SECTION X

CONCLUSION

The African American youth constitute a small percentage of national youth and yet account for a disproportionate percentage of troubled youth. There are about 6400 not-for-profit institutions nationally providing social and community services to this section of the population. These institutions provide a variety of educational, vocational, and cultural services to the young people. Many of the institutions that provide services to young people are faith-based. They are uniquely equipped to provide the services as they touch the lives of large sections of community in which they are located.

In order to provide effective services to the troubled African American youth, it is important to understand the factors that shape their attitudes, behaviors, and responses. It is with this in mind that this literature review has attempted to identify the social, economic and cultural setting in which the African American youth have grown up, their strengths and weaknesses, the challenges faced by them, and the opportunities available for the young African American males to grow into responsible men and productive citizens.

In order to implement youth development programs, it is necessary to have a good conceptual understanding of what youth development is all about and what the various issues relating to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of such programs are. Young people’s development is determined by a number of factors. These include individual personality, familial ties and supports, access to education opportunities, socio-economic status, gender, racial or ethnic background, and physical capacity. All these factors should be analyzed before a target-group appropriate program is formulated and implemented.

A large number of organizations have had years of experience implementing youth development programs. Any institution planning to enter this field should first gather information on the types of services being provided by the existing organization in this field, how these organizations are monitoring and evaluating the programs, what are the factors that have contributed to their success and failures. This review has identified a number of youth development programs that have stood the test of time and excelled in the field of their activities. They constitute the best practices in the field of youth development and provide invaluable insight into the functioning of this sector.

The focus of the youth development programs discussed in this report varies depending upon the needs of the community in which these programs are operating and the felt needs of the local youth. Some are designed to enhance educational and employment opportunities, some are designed to help youth develop interpersonal skills, and some are designed to provide social support through developing a mentor-mentee relationship. The experience of faith-based institutions in implementing programs for African American youth shows that they have enormous potential to help the youth in their troubled times and turn them into responsible adults.
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Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at the University of California San Francisco. “What Are African-Americans' HIV Prevention Needs?” Fact Sheet #15ER, September 1999.


SELECTED INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENTING
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

1. Career Exploration Project
   Center for Alternative
   Sentencing and Employment
   Services
   346 Broadway, 6th Floor
   New York, NY 10013
   Contact: Paige Panzner, Project
   Coordinator
   Telephone: 212 553 6607

2. ARBOR, Inc.
   One West Third Street
   Media, PA 19063
   Contact: Dr. Gabriel Ross,
   President, Education and
   Training Division
   Telephone: 610 566 8700

3. The Work Group’s Youth Corps
   Program
   3720 Marlton Pike
   Pennsauken, NJ 08110
   Contact: Ellen Quindlen,
   Program Director
   Telephone: 856 486 7390

4. Home Builders Institute
   1202 15th Street, NW, Sixth
   Floor
   Washington, DC 20005
   Contact: John Hattery, Program
   Manager
   Telephone: 1 800 795 7955

5. YouthBuild McLean County
   1111 West Market Street
   Bloomington, IL 61701
   Contact: Suzanne Fitzgerald,
   Executive Director
   Telephone: 309 827 7507

6. Cassadaga Job Corps Center
   8115 Glasgow Road
   Cassadaga, NY 14718
   Contact: Andrew Carpenter,
   Center Director
   Telephone: 716 595 8760

7. Ohio Civilian Conservation
   Corps
   Ohio Department of Natural
   Resources
   4383 Fountain Square Court,
   B-1
   Columbus, OH 43224-1362
   Telephone: 614 265 6423

8. Public/Private Ventures
   2000 Market Street
   Suite 600
   Philadelphia, PA 19103
   Telephone: 215 557 4400