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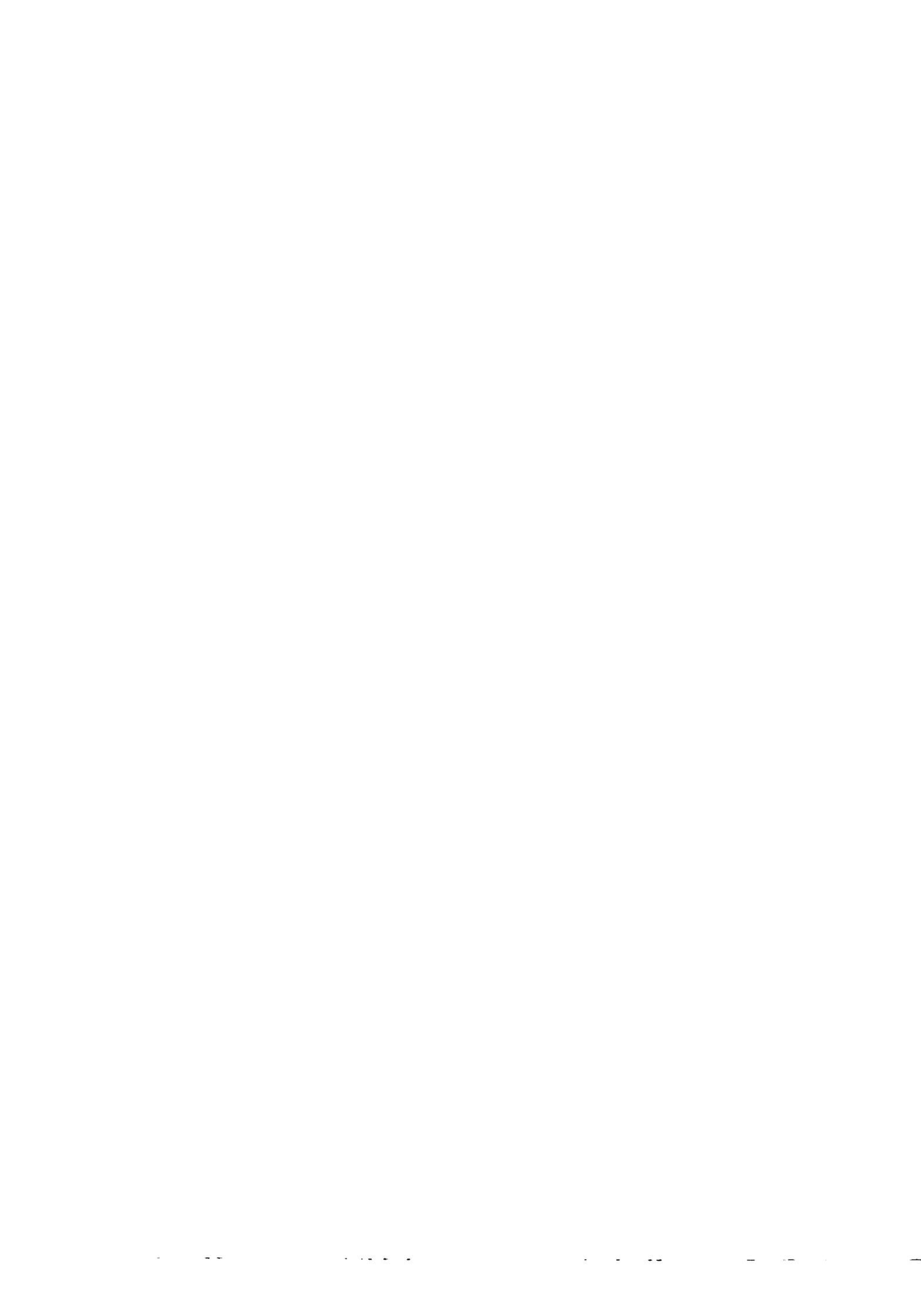
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FUTURE ORIENTATION AMONG 7TH GRADE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTHS

by

Frankie Denise Powell

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro  
1996

Approved by



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POWELL, FRANKIE DENISE, Ph.D. Future Orientation Among 7th Grade African American Youths. (1996)  
Directed by Dr. Dale Farran. 133 pp.

The purpose of this study was to examine the future-focused role image of African American youths and its relevance to their activities and achievements. The study focused on the relationship between personal and family characteristics, academic and social behaviors, and the mediating function of future-focused role image.

This study tested the following hypotheses: (1) there will be a significant relationship between the total set of personal characteristics and each of the four future-focused role image variables; (2) there will be a significant relationship between lunch status and each of the four future-focused role image variables; (3) there will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and in-school behaviors; (4) there will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and academic behaviors (grade point average); (5) there will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and out-of-school activities; (6) the future-focused role image variables will explain significant additional variance in academic and social behaviors when combined with the personal and family predictor variables.

One hundred and ninety-one seventh grade students participated in this study. The Future-Focused Role Image Inventory (FFRII), the Measures of Psychosocial Development (MPD), the About Myself Self-Concept measure, the In-School Activity Checklist (ISAC), and the Out-of-School Activity Checklist (OSAC) were administered to students in their schools. Multiple regressions were employed to test all the hypotheses.

The findings revealed that there were no significant relationships between future-focused role image and personal or family characteristics, grades (academic behaviors) or social behaviors. The findings also revealed that within the model, future-focused role image added to the predictability of personal and family characteristics and specifically significant for in-school activities only.

This study showed the importance of including future-focused role image to the study of academic and social behaviors of African American youths. In addition, the study pointed out the need for further examination with both minority and majority youths as well as refinement of future-focused role image instruments.

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I especially want to thank the members of my committee - my mentors - for their dedication, support, and patience. Dr. Dale Farran, Dr. Peggye Dilworth-Anderson, Dr. Jonathan R. H. Tudge, and Dr. Chris Busch, I really appreciate everything.

I want to dedicate this work to some children that we care most about. To Alice and Brendan, Christie and Roseanne, Amaka, Zek and Adora, Cassie, Caitlin, and Drew, Omar and Remi, Phillip and Ashanti - the future is indeed bright, despite a few cloudy days. And to Mike-Mike, especially, "love never dies."

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The advent of the new millennium will undoubtedly be greeted much as each new year is: there will be reflections of times past, assessments of present circumstances, and possibly trepidation and anxiety about future events in the life course. Few people are immune to these feelings and periods of "taking stock."

According to the recent census reports (1990), by the year 2000, the early adolescent age group is estimated to be about twenty three million. One out of every 4 children in the United States lives in poverty, and one American child dies because of poverty every 53 minutes (Children's Defense Fund, 1992). For those children who survive the future is an unknown quantity - a reality yet to be realized.

African American families are not as well-off as European American families. The number of African Americans living in poverty in 1989 was 9.3 million, or 30.7% of all African Americans. African Americans were three times more likely to be in poverty than were European Americans. According to Swinton (1991), both the relative and absolute status of African Americans is too low. Moreover, no

significant progress has been made to close the increasing gap between the have-not status of African Americans and the have-status of most European Americans. For example, African Americans have high unemployment rates, inferior occupational distributions, low wages and earnings, little wealth and small amounts of business property. In addition, per capita and aggregate income for African Americans is only 50% that of European Americans. In 1989, the income for African Americans was \$8,747.00 and for European Americans it was \$14,896.00. In addition, the median African American family income was \$20,209 while the median European American income was \$35,975 (Swinton, 1991). Particularly, African Americans will be confronted by great negative disparities from the majority in income, net financial worth, housing, education, employment, health care, and quality of life (Henderson, 1994).

Swinton (1991) contends that this unequal and disparate economic status of African Americans is a permanent feature of the American economy. He noted that the degree of racial inequality has not improved in a 20 year period and it seems likely that this consistent inequality will continue indefinitely. Moreover, education is not the answer; African Americans with four years of college have only 77% of the income of European Americans with the same education.

For African American children, these statistics are particularly alarming. In 1984, there were 6.8 million African American families, 96% of whom are descendants of slaves, making them the largest ethnic group in the United States (Harrison et al., 1990). Of these 6.8 million African American families, 3.5 million were married couple families; 64% had working wives. Clearly, there is no economic/academic recipe for success that will leverage African Americans into solid middle class status nor is there a guarantee of the same. Therefore it becomes difficult to forecast the futures of African American children.

What will the future of African American children be? What will they be like in the future? How can they affect the futures of themselves and others? According to the National Urban League the prerequisites for securing a bright future for African Americans are as follows: maintaining high standards and expectations, challenging dysfunctional attitudes and entrenched institutionalized barriers, restoring hope and positive action in neighborhoods, and more child-and-family centered communities that are mobilized around a concept of self-development (Jacobs, 1994). The situation in America for African Americans does not provide all strata of youths with a clear vision for a future in which they have a positive role.

Future orientation has been linked to school performance and career choice. This study seeks to provide information by asking understudied African American pre-adolescents questions about their future focused role images and relating those findings to current academic functioning and career orientation. As youths are transitioning to adolescence and as they become more adult in their cognitive abilities, they will also begin to think of future possibilities for their lives. For example, pre-adolescents may wonder what to do with their new bodies and emotions and wonder when and if they might have intercourse, marry, and produce children. They may also begin to think about careers: whether or not they will go to college, the military, or technical schools. In addition, they are young consumers and are beginning to think about how much money they will need to have the material things they want. The initial resolution of these future possibilities may greatly impact the decisions they make that govern their current behaviors.

The purpose of this study is to examine the future-focused role image of African American youths and its relevance to their activities and achievements. More specifically, this study is focused on the relationship between what African American young adolescents think about their futures; their academic behaviors (grades) and social behaviors in school (department, leadership roles,

activities) and out of school (community activities in clubs, organization, religious circles).

Future orientation, or future-focused role image is a central but largely overlooked construct in explaining social behavior and academic performance. The most popular theoretical explanations of delinquency and academic failure among youths, particularly African-American youths, almost exclusively emphasize socio-economic variables having to do with a family history of poverty and a lack of education. These factors have been shown to account for some of the variance in aberrant social behavior and academic performance, but the lion's share of the variance in social behavior and academic performance remains unexplained. This study posits that among several variables that account for variance in academic and social behaviors, future-focused role image has a strong mediating effect.

#### Research Questions

This study will address four research questions which follow. First, how do African American youths describe their futures? Second, what personal and family factors influence the future-focused role images of African American young adolescents? Third, how do children's dispositions toward the future explain variability in academic achievement and social behaviors in and out of school and their career aspirations? Fourth, what is the relative contribution of future-focused role image to the model?

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Future-Focused Role Image

Future-focused role image or future orientation is a construct. In general, constructs are abstractions that social and behavioral scientists use in their theories for variables that are difficult to measure directly (Kidder & Judd, 1986). These rich theoretical concepts are "unobservable, constructed variables that are used to label a consistent set of behaviors or observable variables" that cannot be measured directly (Jaeger, 1990, p. 368).

Future-focused Role Image as a Construct

Similar to concepts such as achievement, aspiration, and motivation, future-focused role image is a construct because it cannot be seen (is not observable) and cannot be measured directly. As a theoretical variable (Cozby, Worden, & Kee, 1989), the concept of future-focused role image has undergone various formulations. Singer (1974) defined this construct as self-image projected into the future that determines much of what is done in the present. These images are derived from knowledge of the world upon which individuals base their behaviors (Miller, Galanter, & Pribham, 1960). Images include everything the individual has learned, and the values

and facts that have been organized by concepts and relations that he or she has been able to master.

Future-focused means that future points in time have more salience than do past and present points in time. Generally, this means that individuals gravitate toward a future self by utilizing lessons of the past (both personal and group) and present resources and circumstances. An underlying assumption is that the social milieu provides adolescents with expectations and opportunities to construct a self-image, developed, in part, by imitating the roles of others. Thus, youths have a plethora of social opportunities with significant others, particularly adults, from which they can extract useful examples of behavior.

Future-focused role image has two primary characteristics. First, it is a multi-dimensional cognitive-motivational construct (Trommsdorff, 1983). Initially, events seen in one's subjective future can be categorized according to sequences of time. In addition, subjective judgements can be made regarding the underlying causal structures as to whether or not the future events are more or less probable. Likewise, the motivational and affective qualities of the subjective future can be categorized according to optimistic or pessimistic qualities and goal specific content i.e., specified aspirations the individual hopes to achieve.

Second, according to Singer (1974) the three main dimensions or central elements of future-focused role image are self-hood, time and change. By self-hood it is meant the adolescents' view of who they are and what they are capable of, and how they are perceived by others. The second dimension, time, refers to the adolescents' sense of short-range and long-range goals. Change is defined as the sense of their ability to affect their environment which, in turn, affects their attitude.

Another underlying assumption is that the future-focused role image of the adolescents vary among persons, classes, and societies. These adolescent road maps, or visions of the future consists of those things which are possible, probable, and preferable in the future. Indeed, a positive future vision is seen to guide behavior to the actualization of the image (Scott, 1991). Although it is impossible for social scientists to see these visions of the future, it is possible to design studies that can operationalize and measure variables that will make these visions more understandable.

#### Related Interpretations of the Construct

Future-focused role image has several related theoretical and empirical interpretations in the literature that are not applicable for this study. For example, Cottle and Klineberg (1974) have alluded to a tendency in some research to define future-focused role image as the

biological process of remembering and anticipating that is possible when mechanisms in the brain allow the person to imagine objects and events that are not a part of the immediate sensory environment. Similarly, "expectation," that is, processes that actively forecast upcoming events have been called future-focused role image in the literature. This interpretation, however, is more of a prospective memory and has been used in studies of infants' visual expectations for stimulus sequences (Canfield & Haith, 1991). Likewise, expectations of societal changes, and future world community behavior have been described and promoted by some researchers, the most prominent of whom is Toffler (1974).

While these social scientists have contributed empirical works to the study of human development, their formulations of future-focused role image will not be used here for two reasons. First, as stated previously, the construct of future-focused role image is cognitive-motivational (Trommsdorff's description) as opposed to biosocial (Haith and colleagues). Second, the construct as described by Toffler refers to a societal future and societal changes rather than a personal, individually constructed, and developmental future.

#### Theoretical Underpinning to Future-focused Role Image

This section will first discuss general explanations of time perception and its relevance to previous formulations of

future-focused role image. Second, three theory trends will be examined: cognitive, interactionist, and transactional.

#### Time Orientation Perspectives

Orientation toward time, one of the many aspects of the personality of individuals, has had a spotty and uneven history among behavioral scientists. Time perception differs from time perspective in that time perception is concerned with lineal versus cyclical time and time perspective and the study of it, is concerned with the content, duration, and the subjective experience of time: the past, present, and future (Trommsdorff, 1983).

Stewart and Bennett (1991) argue that neither lineal time nor projecting into the future is universal. Their view is that different world cultures have different conceptions of time. For example, Americans are thought of as having lineal time, whereas Chinese and Indian cultures view time as cyclical. According to Stewart and Bennett, Americans, although having the notion of lineal time, do not project into the distant future. Therefore, it may be concluded that culturally different views of time exist and possibly subcultural variant views exist within our American culture.

Future, in both the lineal and cyclical sense, can be defined as the mental space in which human needs are processed cognitively into long-term goals and behavioral projects, and it is the building site of constructive

behavioral and human progress (Battle & Rotter, 1963). Future orientation is seen as a part of time perspective (Trommsdorff, 1983). Future time perspective, or FTP as it is found in the literature, has its roots in motivation theory, possibility theory, and achievement theory. Future time perspective has been termed an essential dimension of a person's behavioral world and his or her purposive actions (Battle & Rotter, 1963). Figure 1 explains the relationship of time perception, time perspective, future time perspective, future orientation and future-focused role image. Time perception is the more general theory and future-focused role image is the more specific.

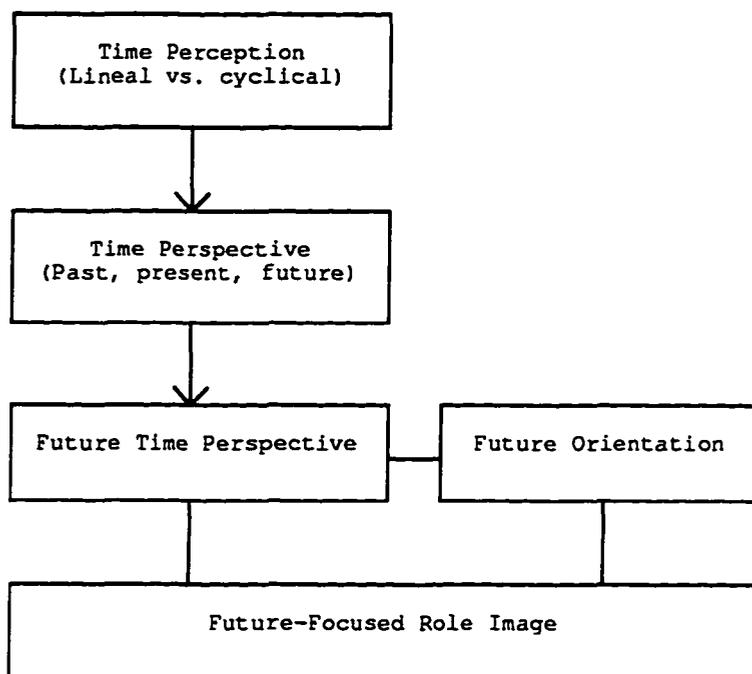


Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Future-Focused Role Image

### Theoretical Perspectives

Three main theoretical perspectives discussed here are the cognitive theories, the interactionist theories, and the social-cognitive-motivational theories. One of the first serious theoretical attention paid to the time orientation was that of Lewin (1935) in his field theory of human learning. Lewin argued that the psychological influence of the environment on the instinctive and voluntary behaviors of children, their play, emotion, speech, and other expressions, was very important and, in fact, was central to his field theory of human learning. Field theory posits that the social and intellectual environment of the individual includes both the momentary situation (the immediate environment in which the individual finds him or herself as in a grocery store, watching television at home, etc.) and the milieu, i.e., the major characteristics of the individual's ongoing social and intellectual surroundings, such as his or her social class, neighborhood, family situation, etc.

Using a systems approach, Lewin developed an overall concept of life space. According to Lewin, the basic unit of interest for the researcher is the person's whole life experience, i.e., the life space, as it moves through time. This life space is made up of the person's physical environment and his or her psychological environment. At any

time, a person's behavior is a function of the person and the environment (Watson, 1991). Lewin's formula for behavior was as follows:

$$B = f(PE)$$

According to his formula, B represents behaviors; f means "is a function of"; P represents the person; and E represents the environment. In addition, Lewin posited that a person views time within five different frames. Therefore, time is seen as distant past, near past, present, near future, and distant future. Also, within each frame or transit of time are the dimensions of reality and unreality. According to Lewin, younger children move mostly (or conceive of time as) in the near past, present, and near future. Older children, and adults, tend to easily transit all five frames.

Lewin (1951) further argued that the current behavior of individuals is affected by both their hopes and wishes for the future and their views of the past. Thus, an individual's time perspective is the totality of their views of their psychological future and past at a given point in time. Throughout the course of development, this time perspective changes and enlarges. For example, young children live in a present that is composed of the immediate past and the immediate future. As they develop, so do the time dimensions of their life space, that is, more distant future and past events affect their present behaviors.

Despite the acknowledgement that time perspective seemed important for many problems facing youths, i.e., level of aspiration, mood, constructiveness, and initiative, Lewin found no experimental means to change the time perspective of individuals other than through normal development. According to Trommsdorff (1983), Lewin's contributions, in particular the discussion of hopes, fears, goals, anticipations, and aspirations in the realm of future time perspective, have influenced theoretical work in the studies of personality, decision making, achievement motivation, and social interaction. She argues that Lewin assumed interdependence between the person and the environment thereby constituting an early interactionist approach.

The second most important theorist to researchers interested in future-focused role image is Erik Erikson. As a psychoanalytic student who had Freud as a mentor, Erikson developed the psychosocial approach to development which included an expanded eight stages each of which is characterized by a challenge, or crisis that should be resolved. The two stages most relevant to the discussion of future orientation are the stage of industry versus inferiority and the stage of identity versus role confusion. According to Berger (1994) the stage of identity versus role confusion is characterized by adolescents asking the question of "Who am I?" and their establishment of sexual, political,

and career identities. If they do not successfully answer these questions and adequately form an identity, then there is a resulting confusion about what roles they are to play in their social environment. Erikson also asserts that the interaction of internal individual characteristics and support in the social environment helps to resolve the developmental challenge, or crisis. In addition, he argues that there are cultural influences, i.e., each culture varies in its definition of challenges and in the methods of developmental preparation for its youths to meet those challenges. Cross-culturally, the ultimate goal for adolescent development is identity achievement within the particular culture.

Following in the tradition of Erikson is a third, more recent theorist, Marcia (1966), who proposed four major identity states of adolescence as achievement, foreclosure, diffusion, and moratorium. Identity achievement is accomplished when adolescents are able to choose from among the values of family and community their own goals and values. Foreclosure occurs when adolescents never choose for themselves their own identity, but rather accept prematurely the identity bequeathed to them. Adolescents may also refuse to accept the role given to them and assume a negative identity which is the negation of whatever role they have been told to assume. When adolescents are reluctant to

choose from their social environment any type of role, identity diffusion results. These adolescents have a lost persona. Moratorium occurs as a societal and culturally sanctioned safe haven period of development during which time the adolescents are given permission to explore and experiment with various roles and identities thereby forestalling identity achievement. It should be noted however, that while Erikson's work spans the life course, Marcia focuses on late adolescence and early adulthood. Erikson's focus is therefore more important to the study of pre-adolescents as they move into the stages Marcia addresses.

Two interactionist theories are relevant to future-focused role image: symbolic interactionism and cultural psychology (as described by Shweder, 1990). Symbolic interactionism focuses on the connection between symbols (human cognition) and interactions -- verbal and nonverbal actions and communication (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). However, symbols and interactions alone are not sufficient to enhance the developmental process. Learning also occurs through the development of self-conceptions and through efforts to protect one's self-esteem.

The three symbols referred to in symbolic interactionism theory are roles, self, and identities. First, the idea of roles refers to shared social meanings that are associated

with a position or status. Second, self refers to those symbols that the individual and others attribute to the person. Third, identities refers to the characteristics attributed to a person in a role.

Further, the themes and assumptions of symbolic interactionism describe a reciprocal connection between the micro and the macro level of the individual. At the micro level, the connections are among the three components of meanings, behaviors, and socialization. LaRossa and Reitzes (1992) suggest that human behavior is influenced by a person's thoughts and by reflective, meaningful, planned behavior. Their suggestion is based on the following assumptions: (1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; (2) meaning arises in the context of interactions between people; and (3) meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process that people use in dealing with things they encounter.

LaRossa and Reitzes also argue that the individual has both a social and an active self. Therefore, behavior is not deterministic. They assume that people are not born with a sense of self but develop concepts of self through social interactions that begin with the family of origin. In addition, they assume that those developed self-concepts provide important motives for behavior. These self-concepts

are thought to be open to the influence of others but resilient enough to resist fluctuations in the perceived responses of others. Furthermore, LaRossa and Rietzes postulate that people are social but not to the extreme. They assume that individuals are influenced by norms and values, and that it is through everyday interactions that people work out the details of the social structure.

At the macro level, two components other than identity and roles are important: interactions and contents. Interactions refers to the processes through which individuals apply broad, shared symbols and how they actively create the specific meanings, both verbally and non-verbally, of self, others, and situations. Context is a central theme that emphasizes the connection between the individual and society, and between individual freedom and social constraints. Indeed, symbolic interactionists such as LaRossa and Rietzes believe that the resolution of this conflictual connection accounts for much of the order and change in the lives of the social milieu.

The strength of symbolic interactionism is its emphasis on the social and cognitive factors that influence behavior and its emphasis on the ability of humans to take on new roles and to consider the meanings of their actions. However, the test of using symbolic interactionism theory is that African American and European American young adolescents

may assign very different meanings to roles that may seem quite similar. For example, school personnel, parents, and community members have noted the different meanings ascribed to academic achievement by voluntary immigrants and involuntary immigrants (Ogbu, 1993). This cultural inversion refers to what attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and behaviors that minorities think appropriate, sometimes defined in opposition to European American attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and behaviors (Ogbu, 1993).

Therefore, the different meanings of symbolic interactionism also have a cultural context, or tradition. Cultural psychology is a term used by Shweder (1990) to refer to a social science that is different from but related to several others: general psychology, cross-cultural psychology, psychological anthropology, and ethnopsychology. According to Shweder (1990), the cultural psychological perspective is "a study of the way cultural tradition and social practices regulate, express, and transform the human psyche that result in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion" (p. 1). Cultural psychology is the study of the ways that subject/object, self/other, psyche/culture, and person/context make each other up.

According to Shweder, the cultural psychology perspective is based on the two premises of human existential uncertainty and intentional worlds. Human existential

uncertainty refers to the thinking that humans are highly motivated to gather meanings and resources from a sociocultural environment that has already been arranged to provide them with these meanings and resources. Intentional worlds means that the different aspects of person/context should not be analytically separated into independent and dependent variables. According to Shweder, the sociocultural environment is an intentional world, a human artifact, that exists only as long as there are people whose beliefs and other mental representations are both directed by it and are influenced by it.

Cultural psychology is, therefore, the study of both intentional worlds and the ways people function and maintain them. Transactions thus occur constantly between the individual and significant others in the social environment. These transactions are particularly important for young adolescents because they have the immediate task of resolving their own human existential uncertainty. To resolve their role confusion and clarify their identity, young adolescents must successfully negotiate all of the shared meanings and symbols that are a part of their intentional worlds and absorb from their worlds the place provided for them in the future. How they negotiate this process is partially explained by the social-cognitive-motivational theorists.

Underlying some of the more recent trends in research regarding future-focused role images is the social-cognitive-motivational theory. Social learning theory, with its major proponent Bandura, will be explored as will a lesser-known cognitive-motivational theorist, Trommsdorff.

Proponents of social learning theory argue that children learn through the identification with and the imitation of persons in their social environment. They have stressed the importance of understanding the entire context of children's learning processes rather than the stringent analyses of patterns of reinforcement (Berger, 1988).

One basic component of social learning theory is the idea of modeling, i.e., the patterning of one's behavior after someone else. Modeling can be accomplished through both observational learning and vicarious learning (Thomas, 1985). Children can also create novel behaviors that they have not observed by combining those which they have observed directly and those which they have read or heard about, i.e., ideas and actions. It is assumed that modeling operates through informative functioning rather than mere stimulus-response association. Instead, the individual acquires a symbolic representation of the modeled event (Bandura, 1986, p. 40). For example, an adolescent upon observing an adult family member smoking may not be stimulated to purchase cigarettes immediately, but may instead, think that when she

becomes of age, she will smoke because she sees it as a sign of sophistication and adulthood.

Thus, this theory is useful in explaining future orientation because social learning theorists argue that the reason children learn from modeled behaviors is because those observed behaviors help the children fulfill needs on some future occasion. A weakness of social learning theory is that it does not explain the meanings the observed behaviors have for the children at the time.

On the other hand, according to Sundberg, Poole, and Tyler (1983) the process of creating cognitive structures relating to future time occurs when there is an internalization of social pressures and common expectations for certain events happening in the lives of adolescents. The seminal explanation of this process has been found in the work of Trommsdorff, 1983. In her study of future orientation (her terminology for future-focused role image) and socialization, Trommsdorff explored the construct of future orientation, paying particular attention to conceptualization, function, and development of the construct. Trommsdorff suggests that the construct has both cognitive aspects and motivational and affective aspects. In her view, cognitive aspects of the construct have, in the past, been restricted to measuring time perspective, measuring coherence (i.e., realism and rationality), density

(i.e., the number of events anticipated), and internal versus external causality. Motivational aspects of the construct describe future orientation as a central part of all motivated activity that is experienced as either optimistic or pessimistic. This aspect also comprises cognitive schemes, goals, hopes, fears, and wishes. Thus, according to Trommsdorff, a situation can be motivating if need satisfaction is expected. Expectations and the value of specific goals are seen as shaping future orientation toward related activities and outcomes. Trommsdorff stresses the multidimensionality of future orientation therefore following Lewin's approach to time perspective.

#### Synthesis and Summary

According to Stewart and Bennett (1991) Americans are oriented to an abstract state of mind lying outside perception, i.e., the future. Using Lewin's life space perspective as a framework, it would appear that Americans are aimed toward the near future, making their orientation more functional for them than people in other societies who orient themselves to a future measured by decades and generations. Thus, the concept of future appears in American thinking in the form of anticipated consequences of actions and projections into the future and it is conveyed more by intentions and actions than by abstract time.

While Lewin's life space perspective does not address developmental stages of children and youths, Erikson clearly does. The particular focus of this study is the stage in which the challenge of constructing a present role image and a concurrent future role image, i.e., identity versus role confusion. It is during this stage that for the first realistic time, young adolescents set trajectories for their futures that they co-create with significant others in their social environment. Also during this stage, young adolescents (P in Lewin's formula) have to draw from their culture (environment-E) any and all symbols that can help them to determine their present behavior (B). Therefore, the co-construction occurs when youths observe and imitate others, when others transmit goals and values to them, and where youths elicit from other persons meaning, interpretations, and explanations for behaviors and interactions.

#### Predictors of Future-Focused Role Image

Throughout the literature on future time perspective/ future orientation, several predictors seem to explain variation in density and extension of this construct: socio-economic status (SES), gender, personality and behavior disorder, ethnicity, and developmental and age.

### Socio-economic Status

Several researchers (Lessing, 1968; Stein, Sarbin, & Kulik, 1968; Seginer, 1991; Trommsdorff, 1979; Trommsdorff & Lamm, 1975) have examined the relationship of SES and future orientation. All the studies, except for that of Lessing found differences in future orientation by class status. For example, Seginer (1991) found that higher levels of future orientation were related to being middle class. In addition, higher SES was related to more hopes and fears for the future (greater density), higher variety, and longer time/life span perspective (more extended) (Trommsdorff & Lamm, 1975). In addition, non-delinquent boys and children of higher SES families were found to have a greater level of future time perspective (Stein, Sarbin, & Kulik, 1968). Only Lessing (1968) found no differences in the future time perspective of youths of different social classes. She noted, however, that two other researchers (Graves, 1962, and Vincent, 1965) used the same measure as she did (the Events Test) with high school students. Graves and Vincent found significant class differences among the students in their samples when parental occupations were either white collar or blue collar: white collar (middle class) subjects had longer future time perspective scores.

### Gender

Studies that have examined gender, or sex, as predictors of future orientation have indicated mixed findings. There were not typically any main effects for gender/sex, but there were differences related to specific domains of future orientation. For example, Morris, 1992, found no significant differences between the future orientation of males and females in his sample, but found the males to indicate more extended futures than the females. Likewise, in two studies females were found to have higher indices of future orientation in the family domain than did males, whereas males had higher indices of future orientation in the vocational domain (Trommsdorff & Lamm, 1975; Trommsdorff, Lamm, & Schmidt, 1979).

### Social Behaviors

Researchers have also examined the relationship between various social behaviors and future orientation. As mentioned previously, early future time perspective/future orientation studies were conducted with psychosocial characteristics such as delinquency, schizophrenia, and underachievement. Higher or denser future orientation was found to be positively related to longer and less variable future extension, and more prosocial behaviors. Similarly, Morris (1992), in a study of adolescent leadership abilities found that students who scored higher on future belief

indices also scored lower on measures of irrational beliefs, higher on measures of leadership, and participated more in school activities.

#### Age and Ethnicity

Generally, as Lewin's theory would predict, in cross-sectional studies of youths, adolescents, and young adults, age has been found to relate to future-focused role image: the older the individual, the more extended the future time perspective (Lessing, 1968; Roberts & Greene, 1971; Seginer, 1992; Toban, 1970; Trommsdorff, Lamm, & Schmidt, 1979). Few studies utilized multiethnic samples. An exception is the work of Stein, Sarbin, and Kulik (1968) who studied ethnic groups within a sample of 605 non-institutionalized and 391 incarcerated high school boys. Subjects were asked to respond to whether or not they thought an event would occur and if so, at what age. Future age scores were determined by the mean of the future ages listed by the subjects. Stein, Sarbin, and Kulik found that non-delinquents had a higher future time perspective than delinquents. In addition, their item analysis indicated that non-delinquents chose more socially desirable global events than did delinquent youths in the sample. The researchers in this study also did an analysis that compared the four ethnic groups within their sample: Caucasians, Negroes, Orientals, and Latins. They correlated each ethnic group with the other three. For

example, Caucasians were correlated with Negroes, Orientals, and Latins; Negroes were correlated with Caucasians, Orientals, and Latins; Orientals were correlated with Negroes, Caucasians, and Latins; and Latins were correlated with Negroes, Caucasians, and Orientals. They reported the following total future age scores correlated with race: Caucasians, .11; Negro, -.14; Oriental, .15; Latin, -.09. These scores indicate that in their sample of non-delinquent and delinquent youths, Caucasians and Latin youths had greater extension of future time perspective than did Negro and Oriental youths.

#### Future-Focused Role Image and Identity Development

As previously mentioned, views and ideas of self are in a developing process that help stabilize the individual. During the developmental period of young adolescence, the views and ideas of youths are unpredictable as they attempt to make sense of themselves and their environments. According to William James (1890), there are many selves: material, social, and spiritual. The quest to have harmony among selves is relevant to one of the central tasks of adolescence, i.e., identity formation. Young adolescents, it seems, are more likely to have multiple selves.

For the purposes of this study the term self-image is more precise than self-concept because it captures the

essence of the preadolescent and adolescent mindset. It conveys a view of self that relates to others and the primacy of others outside the family origin. It is also reminiscent of Cooley's (1902) "looking glass self" and the symbolic interactionist notion of what the reflections mean to the young adolescent. These self-images are particularly important to minorities, including females, because of the possibility of societal influenced reflections that may create negative images. For African American youths especially, the societal/environmental reflected images may be warped. Therefore, their image of self is constructed from both individual differences and cultural commonalities.

According to Offer (1988, p. 19), "anticipating one's social future, assuming new social roles, and becoming part of the dominant culture" are all factors in the emerging young adolescent's self-image that is also determined by reaction to the social actions in which they are engaged in. This is important because the present self-concept of the adolescent affects current behaviors at the same time future ideas are impinging on current behaviors. The analytical concern in measuring this early adolescent self-concept is its fragile and precarious quality.

The construct of identity has been clearly defined by a number of social scientists. For example, identity as described by Berger (1994, p. 412) is "the individual's

attempt to define himself or herself as a unique person; a basic human need that begins in adolescence." Identity is also "a conscious sense of the individual uniqueness with an unconscious striving for a continuity of experience and solidarity with a groups' ideals." According to Erikson (1959, p. 89) identity is "the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others."

Thus, identity differs from self-concept because it does not seek to generalize, or form an amalgamation of the many selves. Instead, identity is

the condition of being one's unique self with the concomitant feeling of recognizing this self. A person with identity feels in close junction with everything of the moment; she has roots; she belongs without being a joiner; she feels that she supplies some meaning to life; she is able to relate to others with a suitable degree of assertiveness; and she is capable of intimacy or closeness. (Stang & Wrightsman, 1981, p. 45)

Adolescence requires children to move toward the mastery of several issues. Of major importance is the formation of a coherent, viable sense of identity (Offer et al., 1988). During this period of development, the numerous changing self-images are amalgamated. According to Erikson (1982), one's identity provides a bridge between the individual and the environment, i.e., society. An amalgamated identity allows the individual to realize hopes, dreams, wishes, and goals in

socially approved ways while also supplying meaning and self-continuity. Young adolescents who are unable to form a coherent and viable identity are in danger of identity confusion: the inability to commit themselves to an occupation and a philosophy of life. They are also in danger of having negative self-images and negative social roles.

Identity formation is closely related to social cognitive conceptions of self. Identity is achieved when the individual is able to match her abilities and interests with one or more of the social roles available in the culture (Steuer, 1994). For young adolescents, identity formation also implies distancing the self from the family of origin, both psychologically and behaviorally. Identity achievement includes the following: historical roots, gender roles, vocational aspirations, religious beliefs, and political values.

Identity achievement relates to future-focused role image in that as youths selectively repudiate and mutually assimilate childhood identifications, they are replacing it with new identifications -- including those of the future. According to Brice-Heath and McLaughlin (1993), the adolescent senses of self and future result from the interaction of experiences in the multiple contexts in which they move - their neighborhoods, their families, their peer group, social institutions, and labels of ethnic membership

defined by the larger society. The young adolescent environment therefore gives multiple dimensions, meanings, and circumstances.

#### Cross-Culture and Ethnic Investigations

Researchers are currently employing cognitive-motivational, multidimensional, cross-cultural investigations of future orientation (Nuttin, 1985; Morris, 1989; Seginer, 1988a, 1988b; Seginer & Halabi, 1991; Trommsdorff, 1986). In addition, they are once again focusing on children and adolescents. The findings of Seginer and Trommsdorff are particularly enlightening, and especially instructive is a study by Moerk (1974) who included African American adolescents in his sample.

#### Israel

Seginer has examined the construct of future-focused role image among mostly Jewish adolescents. Seginer's construct of future-focused role image is a cognitive-motivational one that she utilizes to help discover what she thinks may be universal laws of adolescent behavior. Furthermore, she refers to future-focused role image as images held of the future, i.e., mental representations that are constructed by individuals at certain points in their lives that reflect personal and social contextual influences. Her set of investigations include studies of 226 Jewish kibbutz and urban adolescents (1988a) and sociocultural

variations of gender differences reflected in the future orientation of 228 Israeli Jewish and Arab youths (1988b).

Most recently, Seginer (1991) studied cross-cultural variations in the future-focused role image of males who were either Israeli Druze, Israeli Arabs, or Jewish. She investigated the dimensions of social class, kibbutz vs. family life-style, and ethnicity. Seginer found that higher levels of future-focused role image were related to being middle-class, in transition to modernity, and having a private life-style. Her contributions to the development of a better understanding of this construct are important to this study because she has examined cultural variation that may be helpful in understanding variation in ethnicity within this country.

#### Germany

Trommsdorff, in several empirical studies, has examined various social determinants of future-focused role image, their relevance to development in action, and longitudinal studies of adolescents' future-focused role image. She refers to future-focused role image as a set of objective expectations and beliefs that includes goals and expectations of the actions of others. Experience implies a goal-relocated structuring of time, judgements, and evaluations of future problems and planning for possible future behaviors. Trommsdorff (1975) refers to an examination of cognitive and

evaluative variables as dimensions of a psychological experience. She has also discussed social determinants and has assumed that future-focused role image is determined by social learning experience. In addition, she examined the social variables of status and role. She found that future-focused role images of older adolescents included more events related to personal development and occupational areas than those of younger adolescents. Further, working adolescents evaluated their futures as more internally controlled than did adolescents in school. Trommsdorff criticized other studies of future orientation because of their treatment of future orientation as a unidimensional variable rather than as a potentially multidimensional variable, as she does.

Most recently, Trommsdorff (1986) investigated the construct of future orientation and its relationship to drug use and the study of German adolescent attitudes and juvenile delinquency. She found that imbalanced, pessimistic future orientations became self-fulfilling qualities for wayward German youths. Trommsdorff used her results to illustrate that researchers could broaden knowledge about the function of future-focused role image by doing cross-cultural studies. She suggested that researchers would especially want to study cultures where adolescent development is embedded in a specifically future orientated value system.

### North American Subgroups

Knowledge about future orientation among African American young adolescents has been hampered because of the limited number of researchers who have included these, and other, ethnic youths in their samples. However, in the few studies that compared ethnic youths, the following has been found.

Age and epogenic influences on the aspirations of Anglo, Mexican, and Negro [sic] adolescents were investigated by Moerk (1974). The term epogenic futures refers to how the entire society may experience a rapid transition or change that has an overarching effect regardless of individual projections. Examples of this are the civil rights era, the holocaust, natural cataclysms and world wars. Epogenic influences are those environmental influences which derive from particular historical events of a given life time or epoch. These influences are contrasted to ecogenic environmental influences, which are derived from the normal typical life ecology common across all historical periods, i.e., typical developmental periods or stages.

Moerk studied a group of ethnically diverse youths in 1967 and again in 1970 with the assumption that the social situation was changing rapidly and that epogenic influences would be more evident. He found in his longitudinal study that the Anglo adolescents maintained their expectation

levels with increasing age while the expectations of the Mexican and Negro adolescents declined with increasing age. He concluded that all the youths had adapted to the realities of their lives: Anglo adolescents tended to have more chances or options in reaching high levels of expectation, while the others expected to encounter many obstacles to both educational and occupational advancement. Therefore, the Mexican and Negro adolescents were forced to accept unwanted definitions of themselves and roles for themselves that might produce in them frustrations about their present realities and diminished future-focused role images. All of these different factors therefore describe how the futures of minority children may be wrought with special circumstances, concerns, constraints, and problems.

#### Current Situation for African Americans

What, then, is known about the future-focused role images of African American young adolescents? A few African American scholars have attempted to answer the question. In response to the question "Is it true that black children are less motivated to succeed in jobs than youths from other groups?" Comer and Poussaint (1992) responded in the negative. They argued that the achievement motivation among African American youths ranges from low to high as with all other ethnicities. In addition, they noted that the aspirations of youths are greatly influenced by their social

environment and that understanding of one's chances in life, i.e., the future-focus role image, is modeled in part on the people with whom these youths identify. Thus, their motivation to achieve is related to past encouragement and support they have received for their work efforts, and it is related to their belief that they have opportunities and access to satisfying work experiences.

African American researchers have also noted that lower SES implies less density in future options and that at an early age, African American children prepare themselves for the diminished roles that they are expected to play later on (Ogbu, 1986). It may be that for African American young adolescents, family income, in particular, may be the most relevant aspect of SES. Further, on self-report measures of achievement motivation and desire for schooling, African American young adolescents scored higher than Anglo Americans (Hale-Benson, 1982; Jones, 1989). It may be that while African American youths anticipate a less dense future (i.e., see fewer events happening to them) they also anticipate experiencing a high level of success in whatever they do.

In addition, Boykin (1986) characterizes African Americans as living in three concurrent experiences: a mainstream experience, that of the pervasive majority group; the minority experience, an experience of ethnic, social, political, and economic oppression; and a black cultural

experience that forms the basis of African American values and subsequent behaviors. For African American young adolescents, the problem is in the conflict that arises among the experiences in these three domains. The mainstream experience is one of oppressive domination over the Black experiences in addition to problems that arise from the minority status assigned to being African American. According to both cultural psychology and symbolic interactionism theory, this means that symbols and meanings in the three worlds may be different, thus determining that African American children will construct conflicting future-focused role images. Therefore, the future orientation of African American children may be more complex than that found in previous studies of monoethnic samples.

#### Summary and Conceptual Model

Until quite recently, studies of the interpersonal, social, and academic behavior of young adolescents have largely ignored the construct, future-focused role image. Inasmuch as constructs very similar to future-focused role image have figured prominently in the theoretical perspectives of some of the leading personality and behavioral science theorists of the past, the absence of future-focused role image in the majority of empirical studies is somewhat surprising. The self projected into the future has figured in varying degrees in the theoretical

perspectives of Lewin, Erikson, and Bandura and others. In Lewin, future-focused role image refers to the hopes and wishes of the individual in a time frame different from the distant past, near past, or present. In Erikson, future-focused role image, particularly during pre-adolescence, refers to the developing sense of identity that cannot be clearly separated from conjecture about the future, i.e., who they are and who they will become. Bandura and others refer to future-focused role image as the roles individuals choose for themselves having patterned their behaviors after someone else. The future roles are also related to cognitive schemes, goals, hopes, fears, and wishes as motivational aspects of the construct.

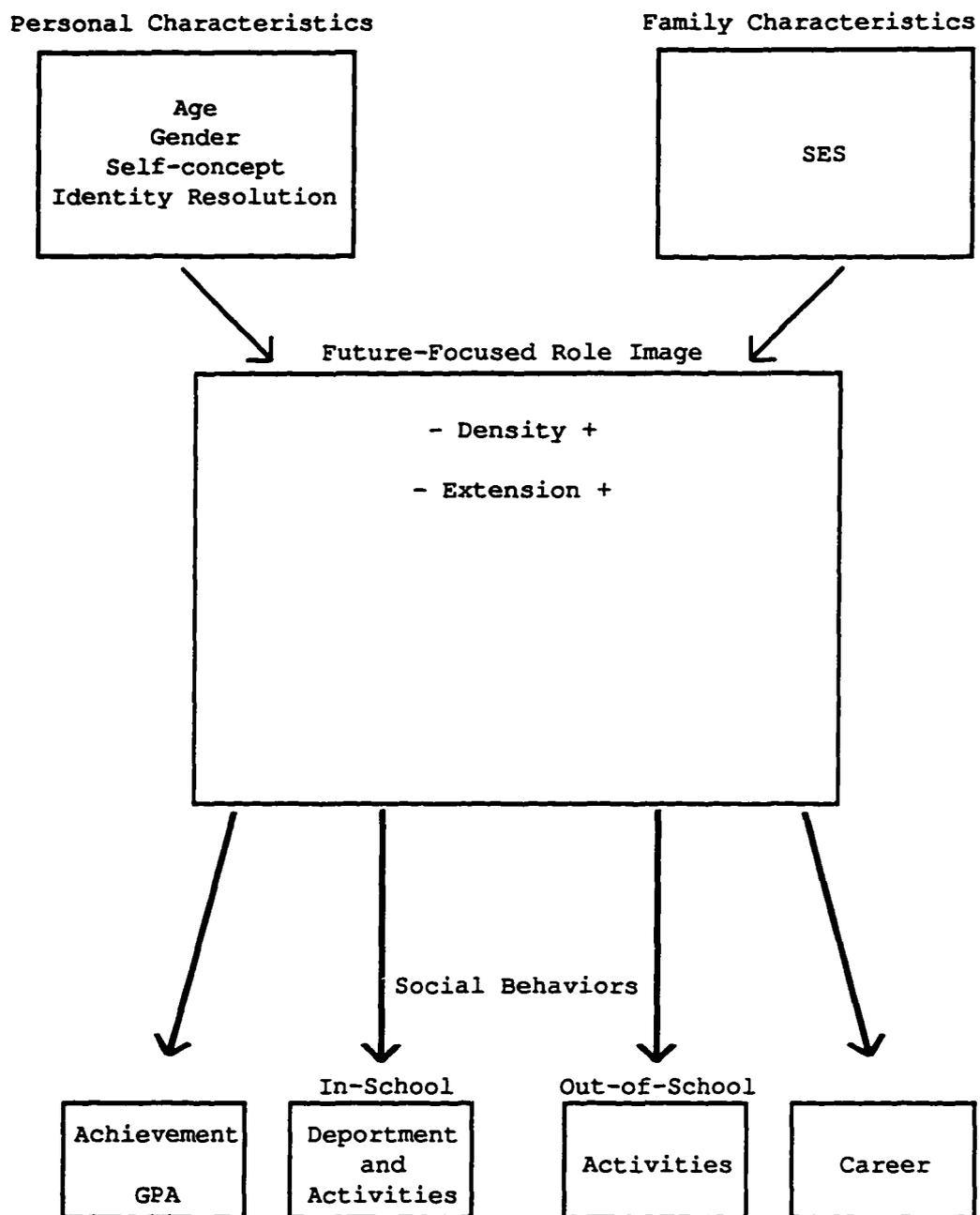
Recent research, notably that of Anderson and Maehr (1994) has indicated motivation problems in the middle grades. One cause they noted is the possible self or the future-focused role image as it is termed in this study. Possible self schemata serves as a link between cognition and motivational behaviors and is related to choices, strategies, school-related failure, life goals, and life tasks.

Clearly, the construct is not absent in theoretical formulations but it has not been subjected to a coherent program of empirical investigations. Therefore, the study of African American young adolescents, particularly those in the middle grades, will contribute greatly to the broad study of

future-focused role image (future orientation) by illuminating its powerful mediating affect on such pre-adolescent behaviors as grades, deportment in school, activities in school, activities out of school, and career aspirations. Future-focused role image and its development in adolescence can be depicted in a conceptual model that raises the issues research should address.

The model in Figure 2 represents a conceptualization of the relationship of future-focused role image and social behaviors, academic behaviors, and career plans of young African Americans. Socioeconomic status (SES) -- as part of social location information -- contributes to this model by providing descriptive data, given that this study is exploratory. Socioeconomic status (SES) is also thought to influence future ideas of young adolescents. Several studies have already indicated variation among students of working (lower) class and middle class backgrounds.

Personal characteristics are gender, self-concept, and identity (formation or confusion). Self-knowledge, (self-concept) continually develops in individuals who have ideas of who and how they have been in the past and likewise in the present. An important component of their self-knowledge is their thinking about their possible selves. It is this notion of the possible self that is most related to their



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Model of African American Adolescent Future-Focused Role Image

ideas of future selves and future roles. As these young people are speculating on what the future may hold for them, they are also co-creating a unique self that is seen as doing these future possible things. This co-creation of the unique self is the Eriksonian concept of identity formation, critical during adolescence.

Future-focused role images are made up of those events young adolescents think likely to occur to them and at what age they may happen. The idea of the number of events is referred to as the density and the age at which these events occur is referred to as extension.

This concept has the adolescent creating a new self with new possibilities/probabilities that influence their present social behaviors in and out of school, their academic behaviors, and their career plans. Social behaviors in school include both deportment (how often and to what degree they break school rules) and activities in which they choose to participate. Social behaviors out of school are those activities they are engaged in after school and on weekends. Academic behaviors are their grades which are an indication of their engagement with the focal point of the school environment. Another indication of the future-focused role images of young adolescents is found in their plans for a career. These tangible, explicitly stated goals are

indicators of high hopes, truncated aspirations, and/or visions of anticipated capabilities.

Future thinking is an influence at every Eriksonian stage. Thus, this conceptual model is applicable throughout the life span. For example, adults typically have greater future extension. In addition, more schooling may influence density, i.e., provide more options. Longitudinal research would greatly inform work in this area, however, such research is beyond the scope of this study.

#### Hypotheses

From the conceptual model, the following hypotheses follow:

- Research Question 1 - How do African American youths describe their futures?
- Research Question #2 - What personal and family characteristics are related to the future-focused role images both positive and negative density and extension of African American young adolescents?

H01 There will be a significant relationship between the set of personal characteristics (including gender) and the positive and negative density and extension of future-focused role image.

- H1-1 Academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-concept are positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and extension.
- H1-2 Identity resolution scores are positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and extension.
- HO2 There will be a significant relationship between lunch status and positive and negative density and extension of future-focused role image.
- H2-1 Non-free or reduced lunch status is positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and extension and free or reduced lunch status is positively related to negative density and negative extension.

Research Question #3 - How does positive and negative density and extension of childrens' future-focused role image explain variability in academic achievement and social behaviors in and out of school?

- H03 There will be a significant relationship between in-school behaviors and positive and negative density and extension of future-focused role image.
- H3-1 Positive density, positive extension, and negative extension of future-focused role image are positively related to in-school inappropriate social behaviors (as evidenced by a fewer number of Discipline Records) and negatively related to negative density.
- H3-2 Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to severe in-school socially inappropriate behaviors and negatively related to negative density and extension.
- H3-3 Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to in-school (but after-school) activities and negatively related to negative density and extension.
- H04 There will be a significant relationship between academic behaviors, and positive and negative density and extension of future-focused image.
- H4-1 Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to grade point averages and negatively related to negative density and negative extension.

H05 There will be a significant relationship between positive and negative density and extension of future-focused role image and out-of-school behaviors.

H5-1 Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image and positively related to out-of-school activities and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Research Question #4 - What is the relative contribution of future-focused role image in the model?

H06 Future-focused role image variables will explain significant additional variance in academic and social behaviors when combined with the personal and family predictor variables.

## CHAPTER III

## METHODOLOGY

## Subjects

Data for the present study were gathered from seventh grade students in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school population included a total of 38,574 students with 60.7% of the students European American and 39.3% minority. The 1993-94 school report indicated that the total seventh grade enrollment was 2,743 students. Of this number, 59.9% were identified as European American and 40.1% were identified as minority. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system has fourteen middle schools; twelve of which were seen as appropriate for sample selection. The two schools that were excluded were an alternative school for seriously delinquent students and a school for exceptionally physically-challenged students. Data were collected the last nine days of the school year and some middle schools were not available because of end-of-the-year make-up testing and field days, parties and programs.

Letters were sent to each of the seventh grade principals in five middle schools describing the study and asking them to allow their classes to participate. Data were

collected from five sites. Six sites had originally been identified by the Office of the Middle Schools as most accessible, however, one principal voided her permission for data collection. The assistant principal (who would oversee the summer school program) later refused to participate in the summer data collection wave. The first four sites were surveyed during the last nine days of the regular academic year after the year-end tests were completed. The last site was surveyed during summer school where students attend when they have failed one or more year-end tests. One survey was completed at the home of the subject because the student volunteered at his church.

Permission to administer the 5 instruments was granted from the local school system with individual teachers being given the opportunity to choose whether or not they would let their classes participate. Access to their rooms for two thirty minute periods was required. Permission for subjects to participate in the study was obtained from parents and guardians. They gave permission for access to information about the students (grades, lunch status, and educational classification, and department).

To be included in the study, the subjects had to complete some portion of each of one or more appropriate instruments chosen to measure the constructs of the conceptual model - personal characteristics, family

characteristics, future-focused role image, social behaviors, and academic behaviors. In all, 393 students, approximately 24 teachers, and two counselors participated in the study.

Of the 393 students surveyed, the total number of subjects identified as African-American by the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system was 191. Data cleaning procedures for each instrument (described under instrumentation) resulted in the loss of more students who had not responded sufficiently (or in some cases validly) to the surveys. After data cleaning, the total number of African American middle school students with clean data was 137; those constitute the subjects for this study.

#### Procedures

A pilot study, done in the spring of 1995 with 20 subjects, indicated that students would need about 15 minutes to complete the Future-focused Role Image Inventory (FRII) and about 5 minutes each to complete the checklists. It was estimated that the students would need about 15 minutes to complete the two subscales of the Measure of Psychosocial Development (MPD). Students also required about 15 minutes to complete the About Myself Self-Concept measure. Dr. Elsa Woods, the former superintendent of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County middle schools, suggested that each classroom be assessed over two days since the Advisor/Advisee (A/A) period is in the morning and the students might be more focused and

fresher if the assessment intervals were spaced apart. Each student in the Advisor/Advisee classroom was assessed.

Surveyors included a retired high school English teacher who is currently a coordinator with the Upward Bound program, a school system music teacher and doctoral candidate, a Presbyterian minister and doctoral student, a pediatric nurse, and a retired school social worker.

At two sites, data were collected on two consecutive days (Monday and Tuesday) and at one site, data were collected on three consecutive days (Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday), and at on site, data were collected on a single day in a morning session and an afternoon session.

#### Instrumentation

The following is a description of each variable in the model, a description of how it was measured, and the decision rules of the data cleaning procedures. Also included are the explanations for the modifications of instruments, all of which are in the appendix.

#### Personal Characteristics

Self concept. Self-concept (SC) was measured with the About Myself Test of Self-Concept (Song & Hattie, 1992). This 35 item instrument assessed seven dimensions of self-concept: Achievement, Ability, Classroom, (Academic); Peer and Family (Social); and Confidence and Physical (Presentation of Self). The 35 items of the instrument are

divided to assess the seven dimensions of self-concept. For the purposes of this study, the three dimensions of Academic, Social, and Presentation of Self were used. The items were administered in a five-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. However, the original format of the scale has a six-point Likert Scale. Permission to revise the scale was granted from the author because of the formatting constrictions of program that created the instruments. Included on the About Myself Scale were such items as "Persons of my age group enjoy my company," "My looks bother me," "I am proud of my school work," and "I feel worthless in class." The test were scored following the directions of the manual. If subjects were missing more than six responses from across the three scales, they were eliminated (N=7). (It should be noted that this decision rule was made in consultation with the author of the scale.) If students were missing one - six responses, the mean for the missing score(s) was imputed (N=63). Of the 63 students in this category, 34 had only one missing response; 20 were missing two responses; 3 were missing three responses; 4 were missing four responses; and 6 were missing six responses.

Identity. The Measures of Psychosocial Development (MPD) (Hawley, 1988) was used to measure the degree of identity formation and personality development in these seventh grade students. This self-report inventory based on

Eriksonian constructs provides measures of the eight stages that were outlined by Erikson; each stage is bipolar with a positive and negative resolution. The instrument also gives an estimation of the degree of resolution for the conflicts in each stage. Although the MPD consists of 112 self-descriptive statements that are rated on a five-point scale that ranges from "very much like me" to "not at all like me," only two subscales were used in this study: the positive (P5) subscale of identity formation and the negative subscale of identity confusion. These two sub-scales capture the appropriate stage for pre-adolescence. There are seven items that comprise the positive identity subscale and seven items that comprise the negative identity subscale. An example of a positive identity item is as follows: "Clear vision of what I want out of life." Conversely, a negative identity items is as follows: "Not sure of my basic convictions."

According to the manual, positive identity is characterized by the following description. High scorers are individuals whose values and attitudes cut across their multiple roles as students, friend, and family members. They examine their roles, mesh their self-concepts with the conceptions of others, and form an integrated, consistent identity. An indication of their psychosocial well-being is the appreciation of their own uniqueness and individuality.

On the other hand, high scorers with identity confusion are characterized as having difficulty balancing multiple roles and maintaining consistent values and attitudes across them; the integration of a central identity is difficult. They have doubts concerning sexual identity, problems choosing a career because of conflicting interests and doubts about their place in life; they are slow to make commitments and decisions, and have difficulty relating to others.

Test-retest coefficients of reliability for the MPD are reported as particularly strong. Reliability coefficients for the positive and negative identity subscales were reported as .82 and .89 respectively. A multitrait-multimethod analysis was used to provide support for the construct validity of the MPD. Both convergent validity and discriminate validity were found to be sufficiently high.

Data in this study were scored by the directions given in the manual: raw scores on the negative identity scale were subtracted from raw scores on the positive identity scale. If negative scores were higher than positive scores, a negative result was obtained for the identity resolution scale score. Raw identity resolution scores were re-scaled with a constant (11 points) so that there would not be any negative scores. The resulting variable is identity resolution that can range from zero to 39.

Subjects who were missing more than three items from the 14 were eliminated (N=2). If students were missing 1-3 responses, but no more than two from either scale, the mean of either the positive identity responses or the negative identity responses was imputed (N=16). There were 14 subjects who were missing one response and two subjects who had two missing responses.

#### Descriptive Information

Gender was obtained from demographic items given to each subject as the first part of the assessment instruments. Other information included the student's identification number, ethnicity, name, level of education for both mother and father.

#### Family Characteristics

Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured using a proxy variable -- the use of free and reduced lunch taken from information provided by the school system. One limitation of this measurement strategy is that free or reduced lunch status is voluntary; families are free to choose to apply for the meals. That means that there are some families who qualify economically but who may choose not to use the opportunity. Also, with most Federally funded cut-off figures, there may be no significant quality of life difference between those who qualify for assistance and those who are a few hundred dollars over the limit for eligibility.

While this measure is not the most accurate measure of class status, it is the only one available. Students are not appropriate informants about family income, and parents were not surveyed. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system does not ask for family income range, nor adult caregiver occupation or education on its student information forms.

#### Future-Focused Role Image

Measurement of future-focused role image has followed three lines of conceptualization. The first line of research emphasized the variability of future-oriented behaviors. During the 1950's the study of delinquents and underachievers became the focus of interest for researchers investigating future orientation (Barndt & Johnson, 1955; Leshan, 1952; Teahan, 1958). Assessments of how density and extension of future-focused role image affect current behaviors have been done by paper and pen events tests. For these tests, the subjects are given a list or they generate a list of possible life events and are then asked to estimate the approximate age of occurrence for each event listed or marked. Possible life events are analyzed and compared by other categorizations of the subjects such as race, exceptionality, delinquency, gender, SES, IQ, and age.

The second line of research investigated future-focused role image and its components. Researchers ascribed several dimensions to the construct. The dimensions included

content, time span, and affect (Kastenbaum, 1961). The dimension of content refers to actual categories of events in ones' life, such as education, work, courtship and marriage, divorce, children, leisure and sports, travel, health, and death. Time span refers to extension into the future and affect refers to the interpretation of the event, i.e., optimistic, pessimistic, fatalistic, good, bad, or neutral. Subjects were interviewed and given open-ended questionnaires; responses were coded and counted.

The third research line consisted primarily of studies of development and emphasized the content, specificity, and evaluation of the future-focused role images of the subjects of varying ages. Assessment of these subjects mirrored the second line of research in terms of assessments and analyses. However, researchers further refined the concept of future-focused role image by drawing a distinction between individuals' conceptualizations of their "personal future" and the more general "societal future," and systematically investigating the demographic and ethnic patterns of personal future orientation (Cottle & Howard, 1969; Cottle & Pleck, 1969; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Khoury & Thurmond, 1978; Moerk, 1974; Papajohn & Spiegel, 1975; Poole & Cooney, 1987; Shannon, 1975). For example, greater extension into the future has been associated with more favorable attributes such as higher intelligence, achievement, socio-economic

status, and better personality adjustment while the negative attributes are associated with a more proximal future-focused role image and lower SES (Mehta et al., 1972). While appreciating the contributions of the three major lines of investigation, this study drew primarily from the first line of research as well as using the paper and pen events test.

The future-focused role image represents the anticipated future self in interaction with the environment. A revision of the Future Events Test (Stein, Sarbin, & Kulik, 1968; Wallace, 1956) - the Future-focused Role Image Inventory (FRII) developed for this research study - was created to measure the expectation of future events in the lives of young African American adolescents. The inventory consisted of 49 possible life events. Subjects were asked to indicate the likelihood of an event occurring to them by first answering if the event had already happened to them, if they thought the event would never happen to them, or if they thought the event might happen to them in the future. If they indicated that the event might happen to them, then they were to indicate how old they would be when it might happen to them. Items have been revised for use by younger, more modern youth by the author; a description of the pilot work is included in the appendix.

Subjects obtained both a positive and a negative density score -- the number of future events they thought might

happen to them. They also obtained a positive and a negative extension score -- the average age at which they thought the event might happen to them.

Possible life event items were assigned to positive or negative scales by a separate preliminary study. Valences were rated by a multiethnic sample of seventh grade youths (N=43) drawn from a rural school system and a college sponsored math and science residential summer program. They rated 31 of the items as generally positive future life events and 18 as generally negative future life events. The results of this process are described in detail in the appendix.

Improbable responses, i.e., subjects who said that an event had already happen to them that could not have chronologically happened were eliminated if there was more than one response of this sort (N=15). For example, some subjects responded that they had reached middle age and had graduated from high school. Given the age and level of maturity of the subjects, and the somewhat sophisticated format of the inventory, it seemed reasonable to allow them one "mistake"; choosing more than two such responses, however, did not seem accidental.

Subjects who responded to density items but failed to respond to any extension items, i.e., missing all ages, were eliminated (N=30). Only three subjects were missing one

positive extension response and nine subjects were missing one negative extension response. For these subjects (N=12), the mean age was imputed.

### Academic Behaviors

Indicators of academic behavior are the grades the students receive in both required subjects (those chosen for them) and in their electives (subjects they choose). Students in the middle schools do not accumulate grade point averages (GPA). Middle school students in this sample were allowed the opportunity to go to summer school to pass courses they have failed in the regular school year.

Only core courses were used to determine GPA. Quality points were given for each letter grade in the four core courses: A = four points; B = three points; C = two points; D = one point; and F = zero points. Total points were divided by four to obtain a grade point average. This system of assigning quality points is followed in the high schools of this system.

### Social Behaviors

After-school behaviors. Students were asked to identify the school-based, non-academic activities in which they participated. The In-School Activity Checklist (ISAC) asked students to check off the activities at their school in which they participated, for example, involvement in organized sports, lessons, clubs, and school-based religious

activities. The number of activities each student checked was counted. A high number of checked activities was interpreted as an indicator of more social behaviors - In-School Activities.

In-School Behaviors. Data regarding the behavior of the subjects in school were gathered from the school system's Discipline Record (D1) Forms. This D1 form included information about referrals students had had for discipline. On the form were the student's name, sex, race, school course/grade, date and time of the incident. The referring person was indicated as well as a description of the offense and a description of the action taken. This form has to be signed by school personnel and the student; a copy is sent home to the parent or guardian.

Two variables were constructed from the D1 forms reflecting negative in-school behaviors. For the first index, the number of D1 forms received by a student was counted. For the second, the extent of severe infractions was estimated by tallying those behaviors considered more serious.

Out-of-school activities. The Out-Of-School Activity Checklist (OSAC), similar to the ISAC, asks the subjects to identify the activities in which they were engaged when they were not in school. These activities included youth organizations, helping others do their work, grooming,

talking on the phone, lessons, participation in religious groups and organized sports. Similar to the ISAC, the number of activities each student checked were counted. A high number of activities was interpreted as a higher score of prosocial behaviors - Out-of-School Activities.

#### Variables to be Tested

Table 1 lists the variables to be tested in the operational model. Although career aspirations were discussed in the conceptual model, they were not a part of the operational model because data were not consistent or available across the middle schools. There was no standard administration of a career assessment in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School system; that is, teachers had a choice of instruments they could use with their individual classes. The data from the assessments were kept in the individual folders of the students and were not managed or maintained by the central office system as are the D1 form data.

#### Statistical Analysis

Future-focused role image is the central construct in the model. The literature and theory suggested that there may be two dimensions to the construct - density and extension. Density reflects the multiplicity and richness of a future as seen by youths. It is reflected in the number of items the subject marks "might happen." Extension reflects

Table 1

Variables in the Operational Model

## Personal

Gender  
 Self-Concept  
     Academic  
         achievement  
         ability  
         classroom  
     Social  
         peer  
         family  
 Presentation of Self  
     confidence  
     physical  
 Identity Resolution

## Family

Lunch Status

## Future-focused Role Image

Postive density (number of positive events)  
 Positive extension (age positive events likely to occur)  
 Negative density (number of negative events)  
 Negative extension (age negative events likely to occur)

## Academic Behaviors

Grade point average (GPA)

## In-School Behaviors

Discipline Records (D1 Forms)  
     number of forms student receives  
     number of serious infractions

Activities (number participated in by subject)

## Out-of-School Behaviors

Activities (number participated in by subject)

Total Variables in Operational Model = 15

the distance into the future that the possible life events may occur. It is reflected as the age specified by the respondent for the identified positive or negative possible life events.

Initially, data were organized and summarized to provide a detailed description of the demographic characteristics of the sample. The various research questions and hypotheses were addressed through approaches that were essentially correlational.

Research Question 1 asked how African American youths describe their futures. This question asked for a summary of the views held by African American youths regarding their future lives. Responses to each of the 49 individual items, the possible life events, of the Future-Focused Role Image Inventory were tabulated for the group; the number of students checking each event was determined. Those events most frequently and least frequently viewed as possible life experiences were identified. The average age for each of the individual items (possible life events) was also calculated.

Research Questions 2 and 3 each had one or more general hypotheses, each with one or more specific hypotheses. These questions required inferential statistical analysis. The common feature of questions two and three is that each addresses the relationship of the four future-focused role images variables (positive and negative density and

extension) with all other variables in the model. Research Question 4 addressed the relative contribution of future-focused role image to the model. The general approach to testing the hypotheses involved the use of both simple and multiple regression analysis. The SPSS computer package was used to analyze the data. Each hypothesis was analyzed in the following manner.

Each of the six general hypotheses states that, when applicable, there will be a significant relationship between a total set of variables (or single variable) and each of the four future-focused role image variables. The purpose of the multiple regression analyses was to determine whether the set of independent variables accounted for a significant proportion of the variability in the dependent variables. The four future-focused role image variables were both independent and dependent variables because the model was tested in two parts: first, with predictor variables, and second, with outcome variables. The  $F$  statistic for each multiple regression model, along with its associated  $p$ -value, were used to evaluate the proportion of variability in the four future-focused role image variables explained by the set of independent variables.

Each of the sub-hypotheses indicates directionality. Likewise, they state that higher scores in the variable of interest will be positively related to positive density and

extension of future focused role image while that same variable will be related negatively to negative density and extension. The relative contribution of each of the independent variables to explaining variance in the dependent variable was determined by examining the standardized regression weights. The significance of the correlation between each independent variable and the dependent variable, with the effects of the other variables controlled for, was tested and individual conclusions regarding each independent variable were made. The sign of the correlation coefficient and the significance test described above were used to test the specific directional hypothesis.

The general hypothesis H-1 states that there will be a significant relationship between the total set of personal characteristics (gender, identity resolution, academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-concept) and each of the four future-focused role image variables. In each, the variables of gender, identity resolution, academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of self self-concept were entered as a set of independent variables.

Hypothesis H1-1 states that academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-concept are positively related to positive density and positive

extension of future-focused role image and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis H1-2 states that identity resolution scores are positively related to positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis H2 states that there will be a significant relationship between lunch status and each of the four future-focused role image variables.

Hypothesis H2-1 states that non-free or reduced lunch status is positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and extension and free or reduced lunch status is positively related to negative density and negative extension.

Hypothesis H3 states that there will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and in-school behaviors.

Hypothesis 3-1 states that positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to in-school inappropriate social behaviors (as evidenced by a fewer number of Discipline Records) and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 3-2 states that positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related

to severe in-school socially inappropriate behaviors and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 3-3 states that positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to in-school (but after-school) activities and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 4 states that there will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and academic behavior, i.e., higher grade point averages (GPA).

Hypothesis 4-1 states that positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to grade point averages and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 5 states that there will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and out-of-school activities.

Hypothesis 5-1 states that positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to out-of-school activities and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 6 states that the future-focused role image variables will explain significant additional variance in academic and social behaviors when combined with the personal and family predictor variables. This hypothesis was examined

by performing a two step multiple regression analysis where in the initial step, the entire set of personal and family variables was regressed on the five outcome variables and in the second step, the set of four future-focused role image variables were added. The purpose of the multiple regression analyses was to determine whether the four future-focused role image variables added significant prediction over and beyond the set of personal and family variables. The  $F$  statistic for each multiple regression model, along with its associated  $p$ -value, was used to evaluate the level of significance of the proportion of variability in the set of personal and family variables and in the set of outcome variables explained by the four future-focused role image variables. Figure 3 illustrates the model to be tested.

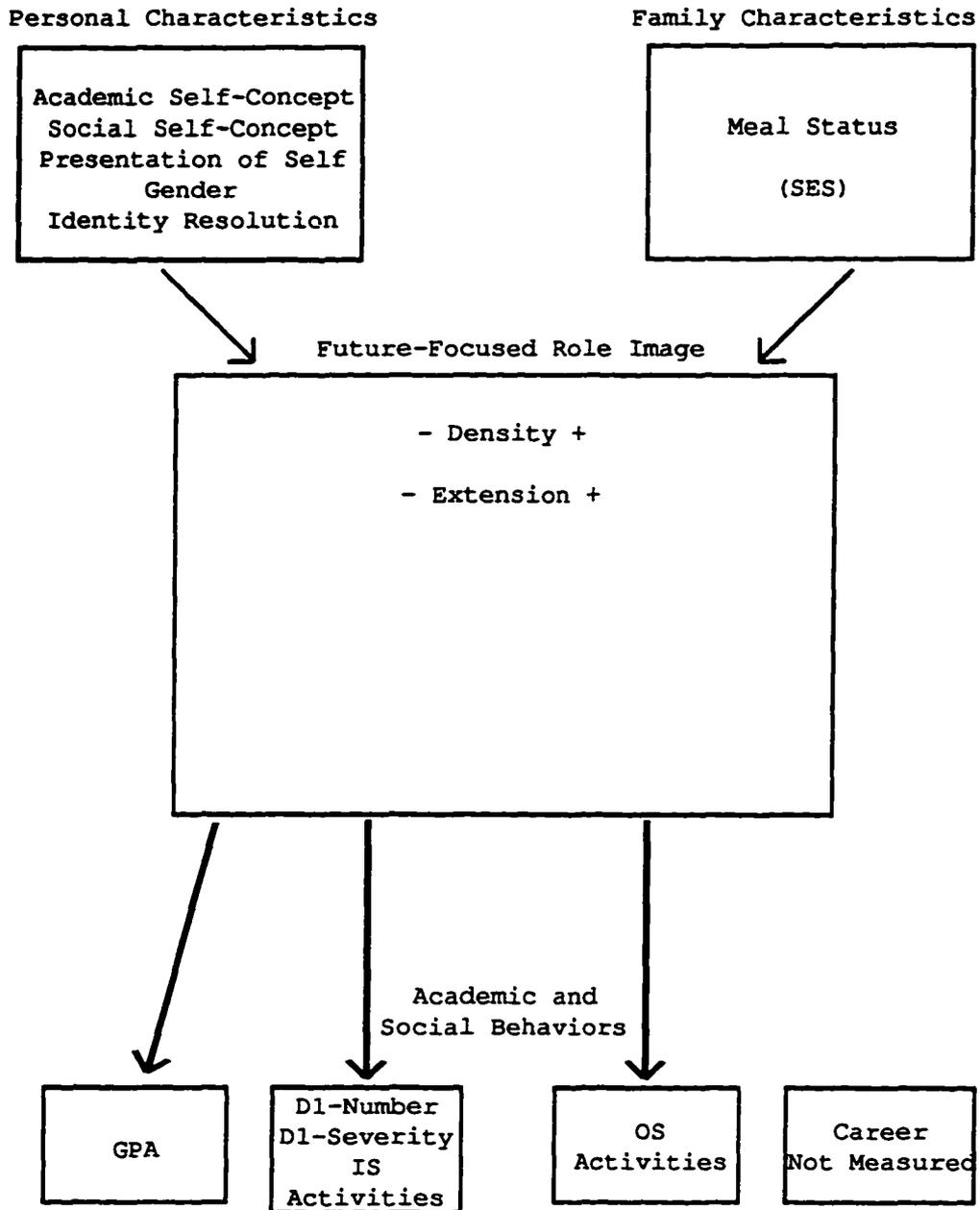


Figure 3. Operational Model of African American Adolescent Future-Focused Role Image

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Research Question 1: Future-Focused

##### Role Image (FFRI)

The first research question focused on how African American youths describe their futures. By definition, future-focused role image is a self-image projected into the future that determines present behaviors. Future-focused role image has two components: density and extension. Density reflects the multiplicity and richness of a future as seen by youths: it is reflected in the number of events youths believe will occur to them in their lifetimes. Extension reflects the distance into the future that the possible life events may occur. It is reflected as the average age specified by the respondent for the identified possible life events.

The Future-Focused Role Image Inventory, developed for this research study, consisted of 49 events. Responses to each of the individual items, the possible life events, were tabulated for the group; the number of students identifying each life event as something that might happen in the future was determined. Since the life events that comprise the future-focused density and extension variables may be

positive or negative, four separate variables were defined: positive density, positive extension, negative density, and negative extension. Those events most frequently and least frequently viewed as possible (might happen) life experiences were identified. The average age for each of the individual items (possible life events) was also calculated.

#### Positive Density and Extension

Table 2 summarizes the responses of subjects to items designated as positive events that have either already happened to them or that might happen to them in the future. Respondents indicated for each life event whether the event had (1) already happened, (2) would never happen, or (3) might happen in the future. Table 2 indicates the percentage of students who indicated that the event had already happened and the percent that responded that the event might happen. In addition, the average age at which the life event "might happen" was computed and entered into Table 2. For example, over 90% of the subjects indicated life events that might happen to them in the future included graduating from college (98.5%), buying a home (94.2%), having a new car (95.6%), getting the job they really want (91.2%), retiring from a job (90.5%), and graduating from high school (90.5%). Fewer than 70% of the subjects indicated that certain life events might happen to them in the future including moving to another city (65%), becoming famous (65.7%), becoming some kind of leader

Table 2

Responses to Positive Life Events on the Future-Focused Role  
Image Inventory (N=137)

Item	Has Already Happened	Might Happen		Range
	%	%	Mean Age	
Graduate from college	0.0	98.5	22.6	13-63
Get the job you really want	3.6	97.2	23.8	14-60
Have a new car	2.9	95.6	19.7	14-50
Buy a home	0.7	94.2	26.7	13-80
Retire from job	2.2	90.5	46.1	13-100
Graduate from high school	1.5	90.5	27.4	13-80
First grandchild is born	0.0	87.6	46.5	20-100
You reach middle age	6.6	87.6	45.1	13-100
Start driving	10.2	87.6	22.4	13-100
First greatgrandchild is born	0.0	87.1	64.7	13-100
Your first child gets married	0.0	86.9	33.8	13-89
Have a nice apartment	3.6	84.7	24.5	13-100
Have a first child	4.4	83.9	25.0	13-91
Get married	0.7	83.9	26.0	13-72
Child achieves great success in life	3.6	83.2	31.8	13-63
Open a checking account	11.7	81.8	22.6	13-90
Spend lots of money any way you want	11.7	80.3	26.6	13-100
Stay out as late as you want to	21.9	75.2	20.8	13-98
Vote in a presidential election	1.5	75.2	21.3	13-65
Get rich	2.9	73.7	30.4	13-65
Go on a long vacation	19.0	73.0	28.3	13-90
Have most of the things you want	21.9	70.8	27.3	13-73
Visit a foreign country	9.5	70.1	26.5	13-80
Become famous	8.0	65.7	26.7	13-91
Move to another city	9.5	65.0	26.2	13-90
Become some kind of leader	19.7	64.2	25.6	13-100
First date occurs	30.7	64.2	22.9	13-100
Be satisfied with self	32.1	54.0	23.2	13-80
Marry someone of another race	3.6	54.0	31.8	13-65
Become a great athlete	19.0	53.3	23.3	13-100
Ride an airplane	27.7	44.5	25.3	13-90

(64.2%), the first date occurring (64.2%), marrying someone of another race (54%), becoming a great athlete (53.3%), being satisfied with self (54%), and riding an airplane (44.5%).

Subjects provided ages only for life events which "might happen." Ages ranged from the first great-grandchild being born at 64.7 years of age to having a new car at 19.7 years of age.

Generally, the responses of the subjects to the positive possible life events of the FFRI Inventory were optimistic. Every positive item was chosen by at least 70% of the children as either already having occurred or occurring in the future except "marrying someone of another race." That item was chosen by 57% of the group.

#### Negative Density and Extension

Table 3 summarizes responses to those items designated by subjects as negative life events that might happen to them in the future. For example, responses ranged from 28.5% of subjects reporting that they would start smoking cigarettes to 93.4% acknowledging their death ("you die"). Ages ranged from subjects getting in trouble with police at 22.5 years of age to anticipating their own death at 84.8 years of age.

Some items were chosen by less than 50% of the subjects. These included "be involved in a crime," "get in trouble with police" and "start smoking cigarettes."

Table 3

Responses to Negative Life Events of the Future-Focused Role  
Image Inventory (N=137)

Item	Has Already Happened	Might Happen		Range
	%	%	Mean Age	
You die	0.0	90.8	85.0	15-100
Youngest child leaves home	1.5	83.9	38.3	16-
Father dies	4.4	82.5	58.1	17-
Mother dies	1.5	82.5	60.6	13-100
Can no longer have children	0.7	81.8	54.9	19-
Get a ticket for fast driving	1.5	78.8	22.5	13-100
You reach old age	3.6	78.8	58.1	13-100
Get divorced	0.0	65.7	28.6	13-90
Have an auto accident	5.8	65.7	24.5	13-100
Too old to be physically attractive	7.3	65.0	56.5	13-100
Friend will die	20.4	62.8	27.5	13-100
Get drunk	8.0	46.7	23.7	13-61
Become separated from spouse	2.9	46.7	24.7	14-100
Hurt by lose something because of a crime	12.4	41.6	20.5	13-100
You or your peers try drugs	16.1	40.1	18.8	13-65
Be involved in a crime	7.3	35.8	20.7	13-70
Get in trouble with police	10.2	35.0	22.3	13-65
Start smoking cigarettes	10.2	28.5	48.2	13-100

A small percentage of subjects also indicated improbable future life events having already happened. These included retirement, reaching middle age, graduating from high school, and marriage.

Conclusions For Research Question 1

African-American youths seemed to describe both their positive and negative future life events in developmentally appropriate ways. They indicated that they think that the

positive social future life events will happen to them between 19-24 years of age. They will be satisfied with themselves, date, stay out late, drive, buy a new car, get a job, open a checking account, go to college, get a job, and vote. In the middle and late adulthood developmental periods - age 33 and over - they will reach middle age, have a first child to marry, retire, and have a first great-grandchild.

In addition, 45-80% of subjects indicated that during the early adulthood developmental period, negative illegal future life events might happen or had already happened. Specifically, they indicated that they would try drugs, be victims of a crime, get in trouble with police, get speeding tickets, and get drunk.

Becoming separated and divorced, were indicated as happening during this same time period. Consistent with their typical expectations, African-American youths indicated that death, of themselves and significant others, would happen in late adulthood.

#### Research Question 2: Predictors of

##### Future-Focused Role Image

The entire operational model was sub-divided into sections to test various hypotheses. Figure 4 refers to the first part of the operational model on which several analyses were performed.

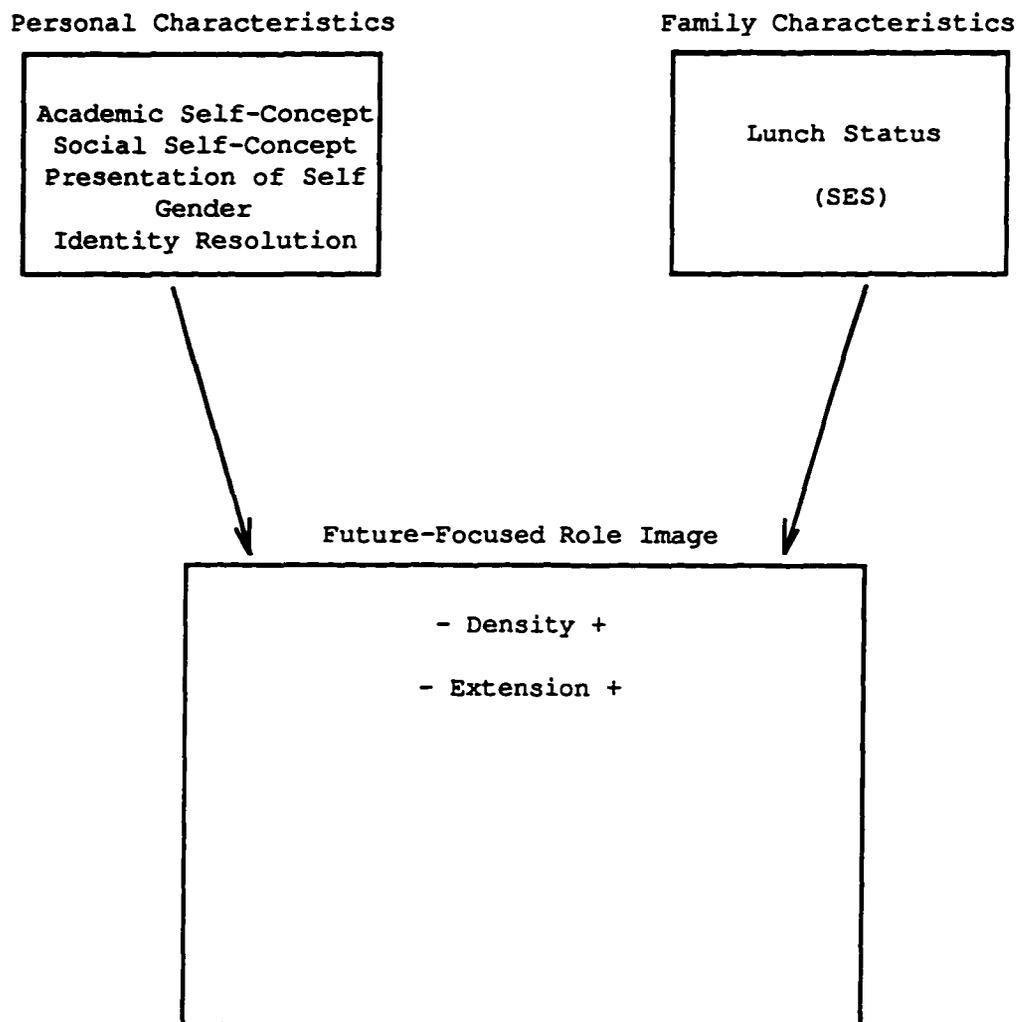


Figure 4. Operational Model of African American Adolescent Future-Focused Role Image (Predictors)

The second research question addressed this aspect of the model and asked what personal and family characteristics are related to the four future-focused role image variables (positive density, positive extension, negative density, and negative extension) of African American young adolescents. To answer this question two general hypotheses were specified.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between the set of personal characteristics and each of the four future-focused role image variables.

Hypothesis 1-1: Academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-concept are positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 1-2: Identity resolution scores are positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Table 4 contains a descriptive summary of the ranges, means, and standard deviations of the predictor variables for this aspect of the model.

Table 4

Frequencies, Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of the  
Major Predictor Variables (N=137)

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Gender <sup>a</sup>	1.51	0.50	1-2
Identity Resolution	21.53	7.89	5-39
Academic Self Concept	3.69	0.67	1-5
Social Self-Concept	3.84	0.73	1-5
Presentation of Self-Concept	3.64	0.61	1-5
Positive Density	24.04	4.43	10-31
Negative Density	11.15	3.81	2-18
Positive Extension	29.26	4.59	13-45.5
Negative Extension	46.78	11.19	14-84.8

<sup>a</sup> Male: n=65; Female: n=72

Table 5 contains a summary of the simple correlations of the predictor variables and the four future-focused role image variables. The results indicate weak significant positive correlations between identity resolution and positive extension ( $r=0.18$ ) and between social self-concept and positive extension ( $r=0.22$ ). There were no other significant correlations for this portion of the model.

Table 5

Simple Correlations of Personal Characteristics of African American Youths With Future-Focused Role Image

	Positive Density	Negative Density	Positive Extension	Negative Extension
Gender	-0.133	-0.081	-0.091	-0.044
Lunch	0.119	0.126	0.013	-0.016
Identity Resolution	0.035	-0.015	0.181*	0.076
Academic Self-Concept	0.110	0.073	0.138	-0.034
Social Self-Concept	0.093	0.022	0.222**	0.029
Presentation of Self-Concept	-0.036	0.018	0.111	0.078

\*  $p \leq .05$

\*\*  $p \leq .01$

The first general hypothesis was designed to determine the relationship between the total set of personal characteristics (gender, identity resolution, academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-concept) and each of the four future-focused role image variables. Four separate multiple regressions predicting the dependent variables of positive density, positive extension, negative density, and negative extension were run. In each, the variables of gender, identity resolution, academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-

concept were entered as a set of independent variables. As can be seen in Table 6, the only significant relationship was found between the set of personal characteristics and the future-focused role image variable of positive extension.

The general Hypothesis 1 was not supported. The set of three self-concept variables (academic, social, and presentation-of-self) did not predict positive or negative density and extension of future-focused role image (H1-1). The identity variable predicted positive extension of future-focused role image (H1-2). Each of the null hypotheses were retained, therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between lunch status and each of the four future-focused role image variables.

Hypothesis 2-1: Non-free or reduced lunch status is positively related to positive density and positive extension, and negatively related to negative density and and extension and free or reduced lunch status is positively related to negative density and negative extension.

The second general hypothesis was designed to determine the relationship between a family characteristic (lunch status) and four future-focused role image variables. The

Table 6

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Personal  
Characteristics of African American Youths Predicting  
Future-Focused Role Image (N=137)

Variable	B	SE_B	β	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	p
Positive Density				0.062	0.027	0.127
Gender	-1.40	0.77	-0.16			
Identity Resolution	0.01	0.05	0.03			
Presentation of Self Concept	-1.75	0.89	-0.24			
Academic Self Concept	1.03	0.80	0.16			
Social Self Concept	0.97	0.82	0.16			
Negative Density				0.015	-0.022	0.846
Gender	-0.64	0.68	-0.08			
Identity Resolution	-0.01	0.05	-0.02			
Presentation of Self Concept	-0.17	0.78	-0.03			
Academic Self Concept	0.69	0.70	0.12			
Social Self Concept	-0.11	0.72	-0.02			
Positive Extension				0.081	0.046	0.047
Gender	-1.33	0.79	-0.15			
Identity Resolution	0.08	0.06	0.14			
Presentation of Self Concept	-0.69	0.91	-0.09			
Academic Self Concept	-0.05	0.82	-0.01			
Social Self Concept	1.55	0.84	0.25			
Negative Extension				-0.025	0.011	0.629
Gender	-1.35	1.98	0.06			
Identity Resolution	0.13	0.14	0.09			
Presentation of Self Concept	2.61	2.29	0.14			
Academic Self Concept	-2.47	2.05	-1.48			
Social Self Concept	-0.04	2.11	-0.00			

variable of lunch was entered as the independent variable and positive density, negative density, positive extension and negative extension were entered into the regression equation

as the dependent variables. Therefore, four simple regressions were run and tested with (alpha at)  $p < .05$ . As can be seen in Table 7, no significant relationships were found between lunch status and the four future-focused role image variables.

Table 7

Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analyses for Family Characteristics of African American Youths Predicting Future-Focused Role Image (N=137)

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	p
Positive Density Lunch	1.05	0.76	0.12	0.014	0.007	0.167
Negative Density Lunch	0.96	0.65	0.13	0.015	0.008	0.144
Positive Extension Lunch	0.12	0.79	0.01	0.000	-0.007	0.883
Negative Extension Lunch	-0.36	1.93	-0.02	0.000	-0.007	0.854

Neither the general Hypothesis 2 nor the sub-hypotheses were supported. The variable of lunch status did not predict any of the four future-focused role image variables (H2-1).

### Conclusions for Research Question 2

The data indicate that there is no relationship between personal and family characteristics and the four future-focused role image variables. Self-concept, identity resolution, and gender do not have significant positive or negative relationships with the future-focused role image variables. Despite the fact that approximately half of the subjects had free/reduced lunch status, no relationship was indicated between poverty represented by lunch status and future-focused role image either positively or negatively.

### Research Question 3: Predictive Value of Future-Focused Role Image

Figure 5 refers to the second part of the operational model on which the analyses were performed. In this part of the model, the relationship between the future variables and the outcome variables of in-school activities, out-of-school activities, discipline records (sum and severity), and grade point average are analyzed.

There were 23 in-school activities that subjects could have participated in monthly. The availability of these activities varied among the middle schools in the system. Fifteen percent of the subjects reported participating in zero or one activity a month; 76% reported participating in two to 10 activities a month; and 9% reported participating in 11-23 activities a month.

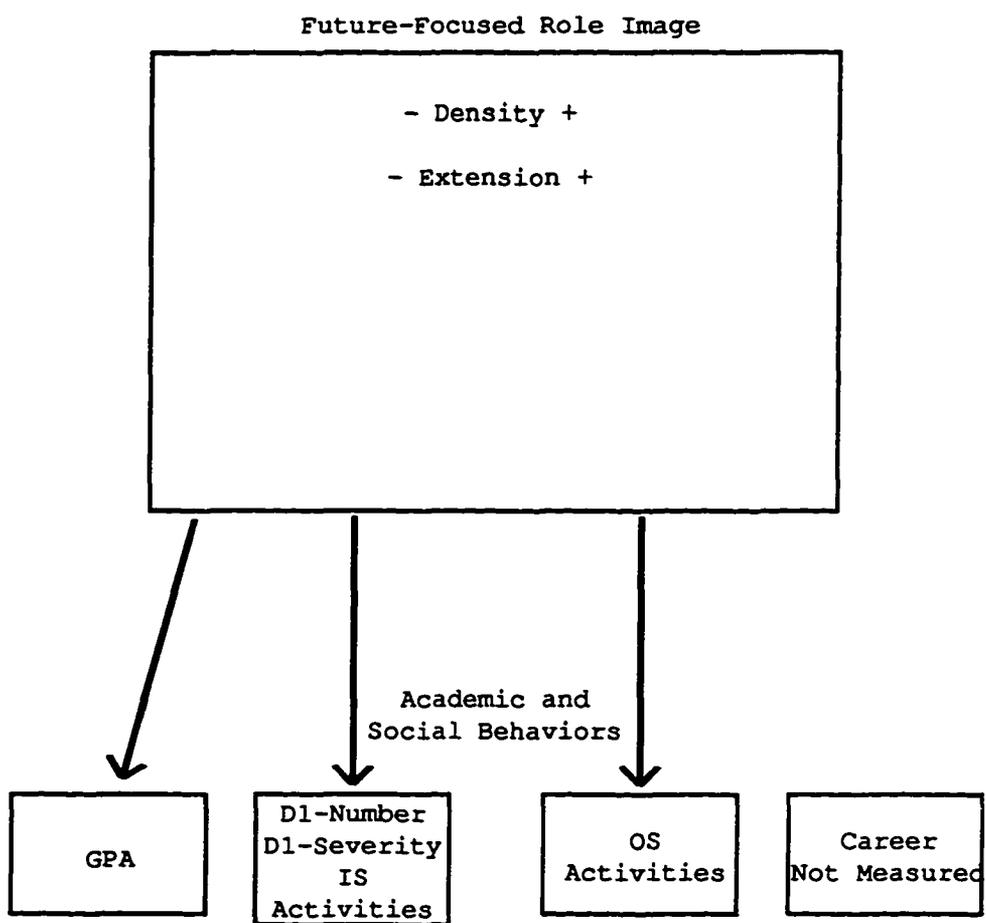


Figure 5. Operational Model of African American Adolescent Future-Focused Role Image (Outcomes)

Similarly, there were 17 out-of-school activities that subjects could have participated in monthly. Only six percent of the subjects reported that they participated in zero to five activities a month. Another 33% reported participating in six to 10 activities a month; 74% reported participating in 11-15 activities a month; and 7% reported participating in over 15 activities a month.

The subjects in this sample had a grade point average of 1.86 on a scale of 0.00 to 4.00. The grading scale had the following percentages: 26% were failing (less than 1.00), 28% were D's (1.0 - 1.99), 32% were C's (2.0 - 2.99), 15% were B's (3.0 - 3.99), and 8% were A's (4.00). (It should be noted that the grade point average for all others, i.e., non African-American students, was 2.37).

Of the total number of 137 subjects, 68% had zero to three discipline records, 22% had four to ten records, and 9% had 11-19 records. Only one subject had over 20 records. Likewise, 77% had no severe discipline records and 18% had one severe record.

The third research question asked how the four variables of childrens' future-focused role image explained variability in social behaviors, in and out of school, and academic behaviors (grade point average). To answer the research question, three hypotheses were proposed.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and in-school behaviors.

Hypothesis 3-1: Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are negatively related to in-school inappropriate social behaviors (as evidenced by a fewer number of Discipline Records) and negative density and negative extension of future-focused role image are positively related to in-school inappropriate behaviors.

Hypothesis 3-2: Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to severe in-school socially inappropriate behaviors and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Hypothesis 3-3: Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to in-school (but after-school) activities and negatively related to negative density and extension.

Table 8 contains a descriptive summary of the frequencies and percentages of number of discipline records for all subjects. Table 9 contains a descriptive summary of the means, standard deviations, and ranges of the outcome

Table 8

Frequencies and Percentages of Number of Discipline Records  
for All Subjects (N=137)

Number of Discipline Records	n	%
Total Number of Discipline Records		
0	53.0	38.7
1-3	40.0	29.1
4-7	17.0	12.4
8-10	13.0	9.5
11-19	13.0	9.4
20+	1.0	0.7
Number of Severe Discipline Records		
0	106.0	77.4
1	24.0	17.5
2	5.0	3.6
3	2.0	1.5

variables for this aspect of the model. Table 10 contains a summary of the simple correlations of the outcome variables and the four future-focused role-image variables. The results indicate significant weak positive correlations between average grades and negative density ( $r=0.18$ ); number of discipline records and negative extension ( $r=0.17$ ); and

number of severe discipline records and negative extension ( $r=0.21$ ).

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of the Outcome Variables (N=137)

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
In-School Activities	5.62	4.02	0-23
Out-of-School Activities	11.04	3.57	0-17
Discipline Records	3.67	5.54	0-42
Severe Discipline Records	0.29	0.61	0-3
Grade Point Average	1.86	1.11	0-4

The third general hypothesis was designed to determine the relationship between the total set of in-school social behaviors (number of discipline infractions, number of severe discipline infractions, and in-school activities) and the four future-focused role image variables. There were three separate multiple regressions - one for each dependent variable - each including the four independent variables of future-focused role image. Each model was tested with alpha set at  $p < .05$ . A significant relationship was found between

Table 10

Simple Correlation of the Outcome Variables of African  
American Youths With Future-Focused Role Image

	Positive Density	Negative Density	Positive Extension	Negative Extension
Grade Point Average	0.158	0.182*	0.019	-0.150
Sum of Discipline Records	-0.064	-0.144	-0.061	0.175*
Sum of Severe Discipline Records	-0.065	-0.153	-0.017	0.208*
Number of In-School Activities	-0.099	0.117	-0.015	0.073
Number of Out-of-School Activities	0.104	0.154	0.022	-0.091

\*  $p \leq .05$

the set of four future-focused role image variables and number of in-school activities.

The four future-focused role image variables were entered into the regression equation as the independent variables and number of discipline infractions, number of severe discipline infractions, and number of in-school activities were entered into the regression equation as dependent variables (see Table 11).

The general Hypothesis 3 was not supported. The variables of positive density and extension did not predict

Table 11

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting In-School Behaviors of African American Youths From Future-Focused Role Image (N=137)

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	p
Sum of Discipline Records				0.045	0.016	0.195
Positive Density	-0.00	0.14	-0.00			
Negative Density	-0.13	0.16	-0.09			
Positive Extension	-0.08	0.11	-0.06			
Negative Extension	0.08	0.05	0.16			
Sum of Severe Discipline Records				0.054	0.025	0.117
Positive Density	-0.00	0.01	-0.01			
Negative Density	-0.01	0.02	-0.09			
Positive Extension	-0.00	0.01	-0.02			
Negative Extension	0.01	0.00	0.19			
Number of In-School Activities				0.081	0.053	0.024
Positive Density	-0.26	0.10	-0.29			
Negative Density	0.36	0.12	0.34			
Positive Extension	-0.02	0.08	-0.03			
Negative Extension	0.06	0.03	0.17			

number of discipline infractions (H3-1), nor number of severe discipline infractions (H3-2). The four future-focused role image variables predicted number of in-school activities (H3-3). Although an overall significant relationship was indicated between the four future-focused role image variables and number of in-school activities, the directions of the predictions were not supported. Therefore Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and academic behavior.

Hypothesis 4-1: Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image are positively related to grade point averages and negatively related to negative density and negative extension.

The fourth hypothesis was designed to determine the relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and academic behavior.

The four future-focused role image variables were entered into the regression equation as the independent variables and the variable of average grade was entered into the multiple regression as the dependent variable. Therefore there was a single multiple regression with a single dependent variable and four independent variables.

The results of the testing with alpha set at the  $p < .05$  level are reported on Table 12. No significant relationship was found between the four future-focused role image variables and grades. Neither the general Hypothesis 4 nor the sub hypothesis 4-1 were supported. The variables of positive density and extension of future-focused role image

did not predict grade point averages (H4-1). Therefore Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Table 12

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Academic Behaviors of African American Youths and Future-Focused Role Image (N=137)

Variable	B	SE_B	β	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	p
Grade Point Average				0.053	0.023	0.126
Positive Density	0.03	0.03	0.12			
Negative Density	0.02	0.03	0.08			
Positive Extension	0.00	0.02	0.01			
Negative Extension	-0.01	0.01	-0.13			

Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant relationship between the set of four future-focused role image variables and out-of-school activities.

Hypothesis 5-1: Positive density and positive extension of future-focused role image and positively related to out-of-school activities and negatively related to negative density and extension.

The fifth hypothesis was designed to determine the relationship between the set of four future-focused role

image variables and out-of-school activities. The four future-focused role image variables were entered into the regression equation as the independent variables and number of out-of-school activities was entered into a multiple regression equation as the dependent variable. The null hypothesis that  $R^2=.00$  was tested with alpha set at  $p<.05$ .

The results are summarized on Table 13. No significant relationship was found between the set of four future-focused role image variables and the number of out-of-school activities.

Table 13

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Out-of-School Behaviors of African American Youths and Future-Focused Role Image (N=137)

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	p
Number of Out-Of-School Activities				0.027	0.002	0.449
Positive Density	0.03	0.09	0.04			
Negative Density	0.11	0.11	0.12			
Positive Extension	-0.00	0.07	-0.00			
Negative Extension	-0.02	0.03	-0.06			

The general Hypothesis 5 and the sub hypothesis were not supported. Taken as a set, the variables of positive density and extension of future-focused role image did not predict

out-of-school activities. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

### Conclusions for Research Question 3

There were no significant relationships indicated in either the in-school or out-of-school activities despite the fact that over 50% of the subjects reported themselves as engaged in activities approximately 10 times a month. Thus, despite their positive expectations of the future, and their relatively active lifestyles, their expectations did not relate to their level of activity.

The African-American subjects, as a group, had grades that were significantly lower than those of non-African American subjects. The data indicate that although the subjects had positive expectations of their future, their academic achievement, as indicated by grades, remained low. Specifically, 26% of the African-American subjects were failing their core courses and another 21% were passing with D's. This means that barely half (53%) of the African-American subjects were making average or above average grades.

### Research Question 4: The Function of Future-Focused Role Image

The fourth research question asked about the relative contribution of future-focused role image to the model. The conceptual model proposed that future-focused role image

variables explain additional variance in the relationship between the predictor (personal and family) and outcome (academic and social behaviors) variables. Thus, if the future-focused role image variables explain significantly more variance, it suggests that the future-focused role image of the students must be considered as salient to the understanding of academic and social behaviors.

Hypothesis 6: Future-focused role image variables will explain significant additional variance in academic and social behaviors when combined with the personal and family predictor variables.

The sixth hypothesis was designed to be a test of the importance of the future-focused role image variables to the model. The model specifies that the variables of average grade, number of discipline records, number of severe discipline records, number of in-school activities, and number of out-of-school activities as outcome (dependent) variables and the future-focused role image variables of positive and negative density and positive and negative extension as intervening variables between personal (gender, identity resolution, academic self-concept, social self-concept, and presentation-of-self self-concept) and family (lunch status) variables. The strategy to test this hypothesis consisted of two steps. In the initial step, the

set of personal and family variables was entered as a set of predictors for five dependent variables. Thus, five multiple regression equations were specified. In the second step, the four future-focused role image variables were added for each dependent variable. The results are summarized on Table 14.

Results of the multiple regression analyses indicated that the future-focused role image variables added only minimally to the predictability of the personal and family variables. The incremental increase ranged from 2% (out-of-school activities and average grade) to 8% (in-school activities). Additional analysis indicated that the increase of the prediction by the future-focused role image variables was significant only for in-school activities.

#### Conclusions for Research Question 4

The results of the inclusion of the four future-focused role image variables in the model as intervening variables suggest that these variables are important to the conceptual model. However this contribution should not be overstated. The relative contribution of 10 variables is only 14% making this a relatively weak conceptual model.

Table 14

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting the Relationship of All Variables in the Conceptual Model of African American Youths and Future-Focused Role Image (N=137)

Dependent Variables	Personal and Family Variables			Personal, Family, and Future Variables			Difference (Increase)		
	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$
Average Grade	0.243	0.208	0.000	0.272	0.215	0.000	0.029	0.007	0.291
Sum of Discipline Records	0.118	0.077	0.011	0.160	0.093	0.012	0.042	0.016	0.184
Severity of Discipline Records	0.079	0.037	0.091	0.133	0.064	0.050	0.054	0.027	0.108
Number of In-School Activities	0.059	0.016	0.240	0.143	0.075	0.030	0.084	0.059	0.018
Number of Out-of-School Activities	0.088	0.046	0.058	0.115	0.045	0.103	0.027	-0.001	0.433

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the future-focused role image of African American youths and its relevance to their activities and achievements. More specifically, the study focused on the relationship between what African American young adolescents think about their future, their academic behaviors (grades) and social behaviors in school (department and activities) and out of school (community activities in clubs, organization, religious circles).

The main theoretical perspectives that provided the conceptual framework for the study were the theories of Lewin (1935) and Erikson (1968); the theories of symbolic interactionism (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993), cultural psychology (as described by Shweder, 1990); and the theories of Bandura (1986) and Trommsdorff (1983).

A particular focus of this study was describing the stage in which the challenge of constructing a present role image and a concurrent future role image, i.e., identity versus role confusion, has particular saliency for African American seventh grade youths. Also during this developmental stage, motivation problems have been observed

in the middle grades. One possible reason indicated was future-focused role image: the link between cognition and motivational behaviors related to choices, strategies, school-related failure, life goals, and life tasks.

It was hypothesized that personal and family characteristics such as gender, poverty, more resolved identity, and higher self concepts would predict positive future-focused role image. It was also hypothesized that positive future-focused role image would predict higher grade point averages, fewer discipline infractions, fewer severe discipline infractions, more in-school activities and more out-of-school activities. It was further hypothesized that when combined, future-focused role image would explain more of the variance in academic and social behaviors than would the personal and family characteristics.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that few of the variables in the model significantly predicted positive or negative future-focused role image. The results also indicated that positive or negative future-focused role image did not significantly predict grades or social behaviors. However, results of the study support the notion that future-focused role image variables contribute to the conceptual explanation of the relationship between personal and family characteristics and the academic and social behaviors of African American middle school youth.

### Summary of Results

Future-focused role image is a cognitive-motivational construct that is distinguished by the specified aspirations the individual hopes to achieve. As conceived in the current study, it has the characteristics of attention to the self, a sense of time, and the ability to affect current behavior.

Before discussing the promising findings, it will be useful to consider in some detail the possible reasons for the lack of support for the specific hypotheses of the study. There are at least three different possibilities for the general lack of significant findings. First, the model may be fundamentally sound, but the current study was unable to test it adequately because of the inability to obtain trustworthy measures. There is considerable evidence in the obtained data to suggest that students in the study did not understand some of the questions being asked of them, or were careless in responding. This is evident from numerous responses that were physically impossible (living to be over 150 years of age) or highly unlikely (being a grandparent before the age of 20). The number of such impossible or unlikely responses calls into question the trustworthiness of at least some portion of the data obtained. Second, it is possible that the basic elements of the proposed model are correct, but the situation may be more complicated than the preliminary model implies. That is, a full and adequate

theory of the role of future-focused role image in explaining current behavior in young adolescent African Americans may contain other intervening variables not considered in the present study. Of particular relevance in this regard is Boykin's notion of the "triple quandary" in which African American students find themselves. Boykin argued that African American children's view of their present (and in this study, their future) is influenced by three distinct, sometimes conflicting sources: the mainstream experience, the minority experience, and the African American cultural experience.

Third, it must be admitted that the fundamental rationale underlying the proposed model (and related hypotheses) may be erroneous. The author does not believe this to be the case. Specifically, the construct of future-focused role image is similar to the construct of the possible selves - that part of self-concept that is a person's images or conceptions of senses of what he or she might become in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). It was thought that, like possible selves, future-focused role image, as a cognitive-motivational construct, would influence middle school academic and social behaviors. In addition, like the construct of possible selves, future-focused role image has structuring capabilities (Inglehart, Markus, & Brown, 1989), i.e., a distinct conceptualization of a goal -

"be a leader" or "become a great athlete," or "you or your peers try drugs."

The Future-Focused Role Image Inventory was developed to measure the construct. Despite the threats to the trustworthiness of the data noted above, there is reason to believe that many students took the study seriously and had a time perspective that is consistent with others. Indeed, for the most part, subjects reported developmentally appropriate expectations (density) and ages (extension) that are generally determined by the American culture's social clock. The majority of the students had expectations of positive events happening to them in their lives. At the same time, they had realistic expectations that some negative things would happen to them as well. African-American youths reported the expectation of engaging in, or being affected by, socially risky behaviors (crime, nicotine/alcohol/drug use, driving tickets and accidents) and engaging in these activities at young, rather than later ages. According to Oyserman and Saltz (1993) delinquent behavior is rare in early adolescence but seems to increase during mid-adolescence, and peak between 15 and 17 years of age. Therefore the descriptions of the subjects in this study seem consistent with other adolescent behavior.

Spencer (1995) has noted that the self-concept of African American adolescents tends to be somewhat higher than

the conventional wisdom would imply. The results of this study tend to confirm this finding. African American students in the study reported neither poor self-concepts nor role confusion. They indicated a high level of involvement in various social activities both in and out of school. Consistent with Berger's (1995) characterization of adolescent psychosocial development as a period of new and changing social interactions with family, teachers, and friends, African American students in this study reported healthy degrees of prosocial involvement with their environment.

The majority of students in the sample had few incidences of formal discipline and about one fourth had only one record. The students in the sample were clearly not behavior problems.

The average grades reported by the school system were somewhat alarming. As stated earlier, the local school system does not calculate a grade point average at the middle school level: end of the year grades are reported for all courses and students are required to take an end-of-the year test. It is their success or failure on the test that allows them to proceed to the next grade. Approximately one-fourth of the students in this sample were failing their core courses.

To better understand the low grades of the subjects under investigation, an analysis was conducted to compare the grades of the African American subjects to their counterparts. The available data were from students who were not African American, but who had also been surveyed in the same schools and classrooms. The analysis revealed that the African American students had statistically significantly lower grade point averages than did their classmates.

#### Limitations of the Study

Several procedural issues can be addressed. In general, on-site quality control could have been better. Specifically, this means that the time to respond to five instruments in only two Advisor/Advisee periods may not have been adequate. Students may have required more time so that they could give thoughtful responses. Also, no provisions were made for exceptional students, i.e, more time, a reader, or verbal questioning. Another limitations of the data collection was the loss of subjects because of missing data. Thus, the number of subjects did not provide enough statistical power to address the hypothesized relationships for the number of variables in the model.

There were weaknesses with two of the instruments: the measure of identity resolution and the FFRII. Students found the identity resolution measure somewhat advanced despite the clarifications of wording that were already added based on

the pilot work. For example, subjects did not understand the word "uniqueness." Subjects also reported that they had difficulty with the FFRII. Students who expressed difficulty during the data collection were encouraged to use strips of paper much like beginner readers.

While subjects responded to over seventy percent of positive future life events, the distinction between those events and the negative events may not have been strong enough. For example, in the research on delinquency involvement (Oyserman & Saltz, 1993), subjects were also asked about "being involved in a crime." However, in their study, Oyserman and Saltz asked their subjects "Your friend asks you to deliver drugs for him." A more detailed, specific item like this may have made a clearer distinction between positive and negative future life events for this sample of young adolescents.

On another instrumentation matter, the data indicated a moderate amount of multicollinearity between the two variables of positive density and negative density. It is therefore recommended that the model be modified prior to additional studies.

It has been previously acknowledged that the lunch status variable was a weak proxy for SES; other more robust measures such as family income, were unavailable. Typically, the measure of SES includes family income, level of

education, and job status. In this study lunch status represents only a relative degree of poverty rather than a true estimation of relative wealth, poverty, or status.

#### Implications

It is quite apparent that future studies will have to approach the collection of information about young adolescents' view of the future in a decidedly different way or ways than that undertaken in the present study. Reliance upon a strictly paper-and-pencil mode of data collection, no matter how straightforward the instructions and language of the instrument, will not result in uniformly trustworthy data. Probably the only really reliable way to collect information about future-focused role image from children of middle school age is via direct, one-on-one interviews. Not only would this allow the interviewer to expand upon questions that children are having difficulty understanding, but it would also permit the interviewer to attend to a host of non-verbal cues that would help in assessing the validity of the data. The expense of such data collection would be more than offset by the substantially increased quality of the data.

It is apparent that the students in this study experienced difficulty in conceptualizing their own future-focused role images. Part of the problem stems from the demands of the paper-and-pencil mode of data collection.

However, some of the difficulty was no doubt genuine, and may have resulted from what Boykin (1986) refers to as the "triple quandary" of African American young adolescents. African American young adolescents must attempt to internalize the values and precepts of the mainstream culture. At the same time, they are members of a distinct and, more often than not, disdained minority. Third, they are also enculturated into the distinct African American culture. Negotiating a mature and realistic sense of the future, in general, and their own future, in particular, is a considerable developmental task. The present study indicates that, while some succeed in developing a realistic sense of the future, many have not achieved a sense of the future that is grounded in an awareness of social realities.

It also means that African American seventh grade youths have at least four places their future-focused role image is derived from: the person (self), family, neighborhood/community, and school. For example, according to McCandies (1993), significant others, outside of home and school environments, play important roles in the lives of African American youths in reducing emotional and behavioral problems. It is therefore reasonable to think that they may also influence their future-focused role image: there may or may not be consistency or congruency across "places."

Given that African American young adolescents face a triple quandary of life experience in the present, it is likely that they may also face this same triple quandary in their near and far future expectations. Another one of the intriguing findings of this study was the unrealistically rosy view that African American young adolescents have about their future as "adults," their distant future, in contrast to their more realistic view of the "near future." This optimism about the future was not limited to students who were doing well in school, but was also observed in students who were doing poorly. It is as though the obvious connection that majority Americans see between one's current behavior and one's future life is diminished in these children.

This study examined within school variables, at school, without looking at how the school environment may have influenced their responses. Examples of clear influences not measured are informal discussions and comments by teachers, parent/teacher conferences, counselors and cognitive or social exposure to possibilities (e.g., motivational speakers, famous athletes, career day activities, etc.). This schooling, i.e., the "focal socialization agent" (Parsons, 1959) of youth in this developmental period, is the development of commitments and capacities. Boykin (1986) refers to its importance when he speaks of the purpose of

schooling as training for the existing social order by both homogenizing and differentiating among students. This difference in schooling for African-American students may or may not be related to differences in future perceptions and expectations. This difference in schooling may also be reflected in the low grade point averages of the African American subjects.

The relationship between grades and future-focused role image is unclear: they were not correlated in this study. In the school environment, grades are emphasized as the primary vehicle for positive life achievement and success. Grades that are significantly lower could be an indication of a socially suppressing school environment, differential expectations from and treatment by teachers and administrators. Low grades could also be a "signal" from these students that they are experiencing problems, i.e., a quandary related to future expectations. This might be their way of conveying to adults their confusion and low prioritization of the importance of grades to other expected life events. If it is taken for granted that grades represent a positive value in the mainstream cultural experience it might also be seen that their poor grades are an expression of cultural inversion (Ogbu, 1986), i.e., the deliberate effort by involuntary immigrants to hide their

ability so as not to seem to peers as adopting the majority/mainstream cultural value.

Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the connections of meanings, behaviors, and socialization. While pilot work determined meaningful items to include on the revised instrument, not enough work was done to distinguish between the expected future life event and the hoped for future life event. Therefore, there was a poor connection, and subsequently no support from the data, between meaning and behaviors. Thus, little understanding was gained about the meaning of this construct to African-American youths.

The study of the construct future-focused role image and its role in young adolescent development should continue for several reasons. First, the theoretical and practical rationale for further research is sound and has been touted by psychologists and educators alike. Specifically, the areas of motivation, goals, and anticipated dimensions of the self are relatively underexplored in the social sciences. Second, there is a need for more research in the area of young adolescents - both minority and majority - but particularly minority. Third, instruments appropriate for this particular group of young people need to be refined and developed.

#### Recommendations

The study investigated the future-focused role image of African American seventh grade young adolescents and its

relationship to certain in and out-of-school social behaviors and academic behavior (grade point averages). Students were able to describe their future-focused role image but with several limitations. They were limited by poor on-site quality control, weakness of the FFRII and the MPD, and a lack of understanding of the construct.

Given this exploratory study several recommendations can now be made. First, changes in the format of the FFRII are necessary. Likewise, a revision of the MPD (identity measure) or more cognitively appropriate measures should be used.

Second, it would be advantageous for researchers and educators alike to gain greater clarity on what the construct future-focused role image means to African-American youths. Researchers may better understand the future-focused role image of African American young adolescents by a combination of paper-and-pencil surveys, interviews, and projective techniques such as stories and games. Longitudinal studies or repeated measure designs may also provide the foundation for learning more about this construct and its meaning to these youths.

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APPENDIX A  
FUTURE ORIENTATION VALENCE SUMMARY

**FUTURE ORIENTATION VALENCE SUMMARY**

(MSSP=33, Asheboro=10, N= 43)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>MSSP</u>	<u>P/N</u>	<u>ASHEBORO</u>	<u>P/N/N/M</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1. Grandchild		27/5		9/1	36/6
2. You die		8/25		4/6	12/31
3. Stay out late		20/13		5/5	25/18
4. Too old to attract		5/27		0/10	5/37
5. Child achieves		32/1		9/1	41/2
6. Start smoking		0/33		1/9	1/42
7. Youngest leaves		13/20		2/7/1	15/27
8. Mother dies		3/30		2/8	5/38
9. Old age		10/23		3/6/1	13/29
10. First date		30/1		2/2/1/5	32/3/1/5
11. Middle age		23/10		8/2	31/12
12. Father dies		4/29		2/8	6/37
13. No children		12/21		2/7/1	14/28/1
14. Great-grandchild		27/6		7/3	34/9
15. Have most things		33/0		9/1	42/1
16. Graduate college		33/0		9/1	42/1
17. Visit country		32/1		7/3	39/4
18. New car		33/0		8/2	41/2
19. Job		32/1		9/1	41/2
20. Get married		31/0		8/2	39/2
21. Auto accident		3/30		2/7/1	5/37/1
22. Checking account		31/2		9/1	40/3
23. Buy a home		30/3		10/0	40/3
24. Ticket for driving		1/31		2/8	3/39
25. Move to city		19/13		5/5	24/18
26. Own firearm		OMIT		2/7/1	2/7/1
27. Get drunk		0/33		0/10	0/43
28. Get rich		32/0		8/2	40/2
29. Get divorced		8/24		1/9	9/33
30. Have first child		29/4		9/1	38/5
31. Ride airplane		22/11		8/2	30/13
32. Involved in crime		0/33		1/9	1/42
33. Graduate high school		23/0		9/1	32/1
34. Retire job		21/10		4/6	25/16
35. Long vacation		33/0		7/3	40/3
36. Go to jail		0/33		0/10	0/43
37. Start driving		33/0		9/1	42/1
38. Friend dies		5/27		2/8	7/35
39. Satisfied with self		30/3		8/1/1	38/4/1
40. Marry another race		21/12		2/7/1	23/19/1
41. First child marries		31/2		8/2	39/4
42. Spend money		29/4		8/2	37/6
43. Nice apartment		32/1		7/3	39/4
<u>ITEM</u>	<u>MSSP</u>	<u>P/N</u>	<u>ASHEBORO</u>	<u>P/N/N/M</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
44. Great athlete		30/3		8/2	38/5

45.Be leader	33/0	7/2/0/1	40/2/0/1
46.Be famous	27/6	10/0	37/6
47.Try drugs	0/33	0/10	0/43
48.Separated spouse	8/22	1/9	9/31
49.Victim of violence	0/33	0/10	0/43
50.Vote	31/3(?)	8/2	39/5

## Coding Key

P = POSITIVE  
N(1) = NEGATIVE  
N(2) = NEUTRAL  
M = MISSING

APPENDIX B  
INSTRUMENTS

IDNO      SCH

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Do not mark outside this line

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Gender      Male      Female
- 2. Ethnicity    African American (Black)  
                  Asian American  
                  European American (White)  
                  Native American (Indian)  
                  Hispanic  
                  Other
- 3. Highest education level of mother    Less than high school  
  High school  
  Technical training  
  Some college  
  Undergraduate college degree  
  Masters or doctorate
- 4. Highest education level of father    Less than high school  
  High school  
  Technical training  
  Some college  
  Undergraduate college degree  
  Masters or doctorate

MONTHLY IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
5. Basketball	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
6. Softball	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
7. Football	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
8. Tennis	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
9. Track	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
10. Wrestling	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
11. Soccer	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
12. Swimming	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
13. Bowling	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
14. Chess Club	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
15. Writing Club	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
16. Dance Club	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
17. Boys/Girls Club	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
18. Orchestra/Band	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
19. Drill Team	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
20. Cheerleading	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
21. Student Council	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
22. Newspaper Staff	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
23. Yearbook Staff	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
24. Computers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
25. Art	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
26. Award Day	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
27. Dances	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
28. Tutorial	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+

29. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_









Do not mark outside this line

Might happen

Will never happen

Has already happened

- 15. You can say that you have most of the things you want  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 16. You graduate from college  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. Visit a foreign country  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. Have a new car  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 19. Get the job you really want  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 20. Get married  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 21. Have an auto accident  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 22. You open a checking account  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 23. Buy a home  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. Get a ticket for fast driving  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. Move to another city  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 26. Get drunk  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 27. Get rich  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 28. Get divorced  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 29. Have a first child  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 30. Ride an airplane  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 31. Be involved in a crime  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 32. Graduate from high school  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 33. Retire from job  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 34. Go on a long vacation  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_
- 35. Get in trouble with police  
Age it might happen \_\_\_\_\_

Do not mark outside this line

		Has already happened	Will never happen	Might happen
36. You start driving				
37. Friend will die	Age it might happen _____			
38. Be satisfied with self	Age it might happen _____			
39. Marry someone of another race	Age it might happen _____			
40. Your first child gets married	Age it might happen _____			
41. You can spend lots of money any way you want	Age it might happen _____			
42. Have a nice apartment	Age it might happen _____			
43. Become a great athlete	Age it might happen _____			
44. Be some kind of leader	Age it might happen _____			
45. Be famous	Age it might happen _____			
46. You or your peers try any type of drugs (including alcohol)	Age it might happen _____			
47. Become separated from your spouse	Age it might happen _____			
48. Be hurt by or lose something because of a criminal act	Age it might happen _____			
49. Vote in a Presidential election	Age it might happen _____			

APPENDIX C  
CORRELATIONS OF THE STUDY VARIABLES

**Correlations of the Study Variables**

	GENDER	NEWIDR	SCACA	SCSOC	SCPRES	LUNCH	AVGRADE	DISSUM
GENDER	1.000	0.227	0.111	0.136	0.084	-0.188	0.142	-0.213
NEWIDR	0.227	1.000	0.375	0.466	0.370	-0.030	0.230	-0.122
SCACA	0.111	0.375	1.000	0.680	0.617	0.053	0.278	-0.075
SCSOC	0.136	0.466	0.680	1.000	0.687	0.011	0.099	-0.159
SCPRES	0.084	0.370	0.617	0.687	1.000	0.050	0.019	-0.106
LUNCH	-0.188	-0.030	0.053	0.011	0.050	1.000	0.268	-0.184
AVGRADE	0.142	0.230	0.278	0.099	0.019	0.268	1.000	-0.508
DISSUM	-0.213	-0.122	-0.075	-0.159	-0.106	-0.184	-0.508	1.000
DISSEV	-0.193	-0.065	-0.079	-0.107	-0.114	-0.143	-0.312	0.469
NISACT	-0.188	-0.043	0.076	-0.038	0.040	0.042	0.010	0.140
NOSACT	0.178	0.100	0.217	0.241	0.149	-0.007	0.108	0.011
POSDENS	-0.133	0.035	0.110	0.093	-0.036	0.119	0.158	-0.063
NEGDENS	-0.081	-0.015	0.073	0.022	0.018	0.126	0.182	-0.144
POSAGE2	-0.091	0.181	0.138	0.222	0.111	0.013	0.019	-0.061
NEGAGE2	-0.044	0.076	-0.034	0.029	0.078	-0.016	-0.150	0.175

GENDER: Gender  
 NEWIDR: Identity Resolution  
 SCACA: Academic Self-Concept  
 SCSOC: Social Self-Concept  
 SCPRES: Presentation of Self  
 LUNCH: Lunch  
 AVGRADE: Grade Point Average  
 DISSUM: Sum of Discipline Records

DISSEV: Number of Severe Discipline Records  
 NISACT: Number of In-School Activities  
 NOSACT: Number of Out-of-School Activities  
 POSDENS: Positive Density  
 NEGDENS: Negative Density  
 POSAGE2: Positive Extension  
 NEGAGE2: Negative Extension

**Correlations of the Study Variables - Continued**

	DISSEV	NISACT	NOSACT	POSDENS	NEGDENS	POSAGE2	NEGAGE2
GENDER	-0.193	-0.188	0.178	-0.133	-0.081	-0.091	-0.044
NEWIDR	-0.065	-0.043	0.100	0.035	-0.015	0.181	0.076
SCACA	-0.079	0.076	0.217	0.110	0.073	0.138	-0.034
SCSOC	-0.107	-0.038	0.241	0.093	0.022	0.222	0.029
SCPRES	-0.114	0.040	0.149	-0.036	0.018	0.111	0.078
LUNCH	-0.143	0.042	-0.007	0.119	0.126	0.013	-0.016
AVGRADE	-0.312	0.010	0.108	0.158	0.182	0.019	-0.150
DISSUM	0.469	0.140	0.011	-0.063	-0.144	-0.061	0.175
DISSEV	1.000	0.124	-0.106	-0.065	-0.153	-0.016	0.208
NISACT	0.124	1.000	0.261	-0.098	0.117	-0.015	0.073
NOSACT	-0.106	0.261	1.000	0.104	0.154	0.022	-0.091
POSDENS	-0.065	-0.098	0.104	1.000	0.578	0.242	0.027
NEGDENS	-0.153	0.117	0.154	0.578	1.000	0.183	-0.266
POSAGE2	-0.016	-0.015	0.022	0.242	0.183	1.000	0.122
NEGAGE2	0.208	0.073	-0.091	0.027	-0.266	0.122	1.000

GENDER: Gender  
 NEWIDR: Identity Resolution  
 SCACA: Academic Self-Concept  
 SCSOC: Social Self-Concept  
 SCPRES: Presentation of Self  
 LUNCH: Lunch  
 AVGRADE: Grade Point Average  
 DISSUM: Sum of Discipline Records

DISSEV: Number of Severe Discipline Records  
 NISACT: Number of In-School Activities  
 NOSACT: Number of Out-of-School Activities  
 POSDENS: Positive Density  
 NEGDENS: Negative Density  
 POSAGE2: Positive Extension  
 NEGAGE2: Negative Extension