

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON
ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

by

Raymond Christian

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2017

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON
ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

by Raymond Christian

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2017

APPROVED BY:

James A. Swezey Ed D., Committee Chair

Jessica Talada, Ed D., Committee Member

Kathy Keafer, Ed D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to discover the characteristics of African American parental behavior regarding the importance of school, and its influence on their high school children's academic success in a rural school district, for recent African American graduates in Mountain County, North Carolina. The research study utilized a collective case study approach and included five African American parents and, their children that had graduated from Mountain County High School and gained college acceptance. Guided by Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and Risk and Resilience Theory (Catalano, Hawkins, 1996), data collection methods included interviews, document analysis and, focus groups. Methods of analysis included thick description, categorical aggregation, pattern checking, and coding. After data collection and coding, the following themes were developed: "woke", parental expectations, parental friendship, pursuing future dreams, and parental encouragement. The study concluded that the behavioral characteristics of African America parents provided protective and promotive environment for their children. Recommendations for further research included case studies that examine different geographic regions that were part of the focus of this study or phenomenological studies that can exam African American parental behavior as a behavioral response to environmental conditions, utilizing risk and resilience theory as part of the theoretical frame work.

Keywords: influence, risk, promotive, protective.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
List of Tables	8
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	9
Overview.....	9
Background.....	9
Situation to Self.....	13
Problem Statement	14
Purpose Statement.....	15
Significance of the Study	15
Research Questions	16
Central Question	16
Sub Questions	16
Definitions.....	17
Summary	17
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	18
Overview.....	18
Search Process	18
Theoretical Framework.....	19
Ecological Theory.....	19
Risk and Resilience Theory	20
Related Literature.....	22
The Achievement Gap	22

Parental Influence	28
African American Students' Perceptions.....	38
Rural School District High School Academic Outcomes	40
Risk and Protective Factors	43
Summary	49
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	52
Overview.....	52
Design	52
Research Questions.....	53
Central Question	53
Sub Questions	53
Setting/Site.....	53
Participants.....	54
Procedures.....	54
The Researcher's Role	55
Data Collection	56
Interviews.....	56
Semi-structured Interview Questions.....	56
Document Analysis.....	58
Focus Groups.....	59
Focus Group Questions.....	59
Data Analysis	61
Organization of Data Files	61

Memoing	61
Describing	61
Categorical Aggregation	62
Interpretation.....	62
Trustworthiness.....	62
Credibility	62
Dependability	63
Transferability.....	63
Confirmability.....	63
Ethical Considerations	63
Summary	64
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	65
Overview.....	65
Participants.....	66
Antoinette.....	67
Angie.....	67
Barbara	68
Betty	68
Carolyn.....	69
Cathy	69
Debra.....	70
Doug.....	70
Eddie	71

Earl.....	71
Results.....	71
Document Analysis.....	72
Theme Development.....	73
Research Question Answers	103
Summary.....	106
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	108
Overview.....	108
Summary of Findings.....	108
Discussion.....	111
Theoretical	111
Empirical.....	116
Implications.....	118
Theoretical	118
Empirical.....	119
Practical.....	120
Delimitations and Limitations.....	121
Recommendations for Future Research	123
Summary.....	124
REFERENCES	125
APPENDICES	129

List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Table 2: Diploma Track, GPA and College Attendance

Table 3: Versus Codes with Illustrative Examples

Table 4: Class Ranking

Table 5 Axial Codes with Illustrative Examples

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Historically, African American high school students have been faced with numerous social and cultural disadvantages that negatively influence successful academic achievement. However, despite multiple disadvantages, some African American students continue to have positive outcomes (Shepard, Salina, Girtz, Cox, Davenport, & Hillard, 2012). This study will explore the characteristic of parental influence as a mitigating factor in their child's academic success.

Parental influence is known to be a strong component in the reduction of risk associated with being in a rural school district, and African American (Chabra & Kumari, 2011). Chapter One will explore the background, problem statement, purpose and, significance of the study, research questions and, the research plan. In addition, the general research questions, delimitations and limitations are identified.

Background

When compared to White high school students, African American students are confronted with social and cultural risk that may influence successful academic achievement. But despite disadvantages, there are African American students who do very well academically (Shepard et al., 2012). There exists in the American school system a disparity between the academic successes of African American and White students (Beatty, 2013; Labelle, 2011). Parental influence is known to be a strong component in the reduction of risk associated with attending a rural school district and, being African American (Chabra & Kumari, 2011).

Historically, research on African American resilience and protective factors has been primarily limited to urban school districts and the academic success of this geographic

population (Brittian & Gray, 2014; Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012). Factors that may potentially influence the achievement gap have been widely studied from the theoretical framework of various learning theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Neblett, Rivas-Drake & Umana-Taylor, 2012). Parental influence was shown to be a significant factor in the reduction of risk associated with being in a rural school district, and African American (Chabra & Kumari, 2011). Additional research studies revealed that African American parents who do not place emphasis on the importance of school have children who are less likely to be academically successful in urban settings (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012).

There is an achievement gap between White students and African American students in American schools, leaving the latter at risk for academic failure (Friend, Hunter, & Fletcher, 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011; Rust, Jackson, Ponterotto, & Blumberg, 2011). Rural school districts have a disproportionately low graduation rates for all students compared to urban schools, and more specifically for African American students (Cooper, Brown, Metzger, Clinton, & Guthrie, 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard, Zimmerman, & Bauermeister, 2012). There are numerous protective factors that are associated with the minimization of risk factors for African American students (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). For example, parental behavior regarding school has an important impact on improving the academic achievement of African American students. The literature review includes the five individual components of the study, African Americans, parental behavior, high school students, rural school district, and academic achievement. Individually, these elements and their influence on the achievement gap have been widely studied from the theoretical framework of various learning theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Glaser, 2011; Neblett et al., 2012).

The theoretical framework begins with an examination of ecological theory to provide a broad perspective on the interconnectedness of environment and behavior in society as a starting point for exploration into the achievement gap, risk of academic failure, mitigating factors for African Americans in a rural school district, and the role of parental influence. Lastly risk and resilience theory is examined and focuses more narrowly on protective factors that more precisely provide perspective and understanding of African American academic achievement, and the ability of parents to influence positive outcomes within the context of the research study.

Ecological theory was proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) for the purpose of understanding why people behave differently in the presence of family, in school, or at work. Bronfenbrenner sought a way to analyze individuals to determine the impact various environments have within these structures. Ecological theory facilitates the organization of information about people and their environment, allowing a clear understanding of the interconnectedness of people and their environment. Ecological theory broadly examines how humans and other systems move through numerous transitions in life that require environmental support and coping skills. Social problems that may include health care, family, income, conflicts with law enforcement, unemployment, and educational outcomes, can all be incorporated within ecological theory, which enables research to analyze factors within the individual's environment that may be relevant to these types of social problems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Risk and resilience theory originated from the field of sociology. The theory was developed by Catalano and Hawkins in 1996 who were influenced by Bronfenbrenner's 1979 articulation of ecological theory. Focusing on environment as the primary context for child development, the theory defines risks as factors that create negative social outcomes and low academic achievement with typical risks including limited education opportunities, racial

discrimination, and parental conflict. Resilience, on the other hand, contributes to children's academic success and is composed of elements that serve as protective factors. These factors are forces that can create positive academic outcomes and can include parental involvement, parental education, and religious exposure (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young, Austin, & Grove 2013).

Risk and resilience theory advances ecological theory by providing descriptive rationale for behavior associated and influenced by internal and external forces (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). In addition, this theory helps to explain and identify causation for academic achievement among African Americans (Friend et al., 2011; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013). Parents who influence the attitudes and behaviors of their children may create protective factors such as socially accepted responses to the effects of racial discrimination. Protective factors can provide a child with the ability to resist potential stressors in their community. The more numerous these factors are in a child's life, the greater the resilience (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Factors related to parental involvement from a global viewpoint can impact academic success among African American high school students (Petty, 2008). Very specific forms of African America ethnic heritages may contribute to academic achievement, while there maybe others that do not (Brittian & Gray, 2014). African American children in rural communities are exposed to the same risk factors as White children similarly situated but with fewer protective factors (Myers, 2013).

African Americans live in a mixed continuum of risk and protective factors based on socio-economic status (Stoddard et al., 2012). Both racism and racial discrimination must be perceived by the individual to some extent to be experienced however, social realities may override perception (Cooper et al., 2013). Multiple and diverse interpretations and theories can

be developed when the research discipline of study is expanded outside of the field of education (Franklin, 1995).

There is a disparity between the academic successes of African American and White students in American schools (Beatty, 2013; Labelle, 2011). African American parents who do not place emphasis on the importance of academic success have children who are less likely to be academically successful. Previous research studies have examined the achievement gap and risk factors for African American students in depth but, literature on African American resilience and protective factors that may mitigate risk factors is limited. This study will explore the characteristic of parental influence as a mitigating factor in their child's academic success.

Situation to Self

Interest in this topic began from my academic background in African American history and education. Despite the obvious disadvantages African American students face at all levels of education in American schools. I have observed directly and heard anecdotally that some students are academically successful despite social and cultural disadvantages. I live in a rural part of Mountain County, North Carolina. I have been a resident of this region for more than 12 years. I have been employed part time at Appalachia State University located in Mountain County, North Carolina for 13 years. Since residing here I have occasionally come in contact with students who graduated from high school locally. In my social and professional life I have had the opportunity to make social connections with the small African American community in Mountain County.

The rural nature of Mountain County has created a unique African American community outside my previous experience. The African- American community represents less than 1% of the county population. It is important that I do not allow my training and personal experience to

affect or influence my analysis of the data and participation in the research, while acknowledging that bias does exist.

While I cannot completely separate my own experience from those of study participants, I will clearly differentiate comparative or contrasting experiences with those of the study participants where necessary to provide the reader with context. The philosophical assumptions guiding this study are from a constructionist perspective and biblical worldview that inform my ideas and beliefs.

Problem Statement

The problem is the disparity between the academic successes of African American and White students in American schools (Beatty, 2013; Labelle, 2011). African American parents who do not place emphasis on the importance of academic success have children who are less likely to be academically successful. The focus of this research study is African American students from rural backgrounds (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Previous research studies have examined the achievement gap and risk factors for African American students in depth. However, the recent literature on African American resilience and protective factors that may mitigate risk factors is small, and limited to urban school districts.

Searches conducted in a research review of the issue include, achievement gap, African American academic achievement, parental influence, risk factors, resilience factors, protective factors and rural school districts. Searches revealed that the least amount of research involved rural school district for all races, but more centrally for African Americans. Participants of the study are all members of the same racial group and reside in the same geographic location. A collective bounded case study methodology is being utilized because the research topic under study occurs in a real life contemporary setting, contains a unique set of multiple cases to

illustrate African American academic achievement and requires detailed descriptions to analyze (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to discover the characteristics of African-American parental behavior regarding the importance of school, and its influence on their high school children's academic success in a rural school district, for recent African American graduates of the Mountain County High School, in Mountain County, North Carolina academic achievement will be generally defined as high school achievement sufficient to gain acceptance to, and college attendance. College (four-year or community college) attendance can serve as a way to demonstrate the level of success parents have had influencing their children regarding the importance of school. The primary theory guiding this study is risk and resilience in childhood (Carnahan, 1994; Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004), as it provides a possible explanation for the success of African American students who face a higher risk for academic failure, based on multiple factors with a focus on resilience.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to education researchers, practitioners, parents and students, by contributing to the further understanding of the contribution of protective factors specifically parental behavior in the minimization of risk factors associated with academic failure for African American high school students (Hayes, 2012; Stull, 2013; Wallace, 2013). This research study has the potential to expand on research previously focused on the achievement gap (Beatty, 2013; Durham, 2012; Rowley & Wright, 2011), parental influence on the academic achievement of African American children (Hays, 2012; Young et al., 2013), problems of practice related to rural students (Irvin, 2012; Myers, 2013), and protective factors (Friend et al., 2011; Neblett et

al., 2012; Stull, 2013). The study will focus primarily on the characteristic of African American parental behavior as a protective factor, and its influence on their children's academic success.

Specifically, the research will explore the unique intersection of five components, African Americans, parental behavior, high school students, rural school district, and academic achievement. Individually, these elements and their influence on the achievement gap have been widely studied from the theoretical framework of various learning theories. However, from the perspective of risk and resilience theory, and collectively, these components have not been previously researched and represent a gap in academic research on the achievement gap and resilience protective factors as it relates to African American academic achievement. This study will be of significance to classroom teachers' counselors, parents, and students who may gain insight that will allow them to develop programs or interventions for at risk students.

Research Questions

Central Question

What practices do African American parents employ to improve the likelihood of their child's academic success? Parental influence has been shown to serve as a protective factor that may mitigate risk factors for African American students (Friend et al., 2011; Hays, 2012; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

Sub Questions

SQ1. How do African American parents communicate the importance of school? The degree of direct and indirect communication between parents and their student child may influence the overall perception of the importance of education (Friend et al., 2011; Hays, 2012; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

SQ2. How knowledgeable are parents regarding school and higher education requirements? African American parents who have obtained some level of advanced education beyond high school are more frequently involved in student planning for college (Friend et al., 2011; Hays, 2012; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

SQ3. How do students respond to their parent's behavior regarding the importance of school? The children of African American parents may respond more positively to the influence of parents when reinforced by community standards (Friend et al., 2011; Hays, 2012; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

Definitions

1. *African American / Black* – Interchangeable terms that refer to any person who is decedent from the original people of Africa currently living in America, or a person who self identifies as a member of this group (Hines, Hines, & Harrold, 2010).
2. *Protective Factors* – Social or community conditions that minimize potential risk for negative social outcomes (Fraser & Fraser, 2004).
3. *Risk Factors* – Social or community conditions that increase the potential for negative social outcomes (Fraser & Fraser, 2004)

Summary

This chapter explored significant research studies that have sought to explain the achievement gap in American schools between White and African American students and the theoretical framework of ecology and risk and resilience theory. In addition the chapter explained the background, problem; purpose and significance of this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This qualitative collective case study explores the characteristics of parental practices demonstrated by African American parents whose child was academically successful in a rural school district. The review of academic literature relevant to this study was guided by an absence of research on the characteristic of African American parenting and African American student risk factors in rural school districts. This chapter presents steps taken to examine relevant research on the topic of the study, interconnected issues and the theoretical framework that guided the literature review.

Search Process

Multiple types of primary and secondary sources were reviewed from a variety of education and social science perspectives. Types of sources included academic books, peer reviewed academic journals, reviews and published dissertations. To avoid study duplication only current research, conducted within five years of this study was reviewed (Yin, 2011). To conduct searches for relevant research studies, I accessed numerous online databases including, Academic Search Complete and the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC).

Research began with an exploration and search of theories that could provide insight into the potential risk for African American student failure and factors that could provide parallel insight into academic success. This research revealed studies that examined the role of parents in a child's academic success and failure. The search then focused on studies that examined High School student populations in rural and urban school districts. This was followed by a review of studies that explored the achievements gap between Black and White students. Additional searches were narrowed to studies that were similar both in racial make up and geographic

location of study participants, that being Black students in a rural school district. Throughout the literature review process I maintained a research binder and annotated bibliography that contained relevant studies for easy access and examination of comparisons and contrast. The binder and annotated bibliography were continuously updated.

The examination and analysis of research relevant to this study involved the linking of connected theories. The theoretical framework begins with a view of ecological theory, which provided a broad perspective on the interconnectedness of environment and behavior in society as a starting point for exploration into the achievement gap, risk of academic failure, mitigating factors for African Americans in a rural school district, and the role of parental influence. Focusing more narrowly on promotive and protective factors, risk and resilience theory was examined. This theory provided a more precise perspective of African American academic achievement, and the influence of parents on positive outcomes. The additional significant research topics of achievement gap in American schools, parental practices that influence academic performance, African American student perceptions, promotive and protective factors, and rural school districts were also explored for informative data that may potentially address the primary and secondary questions of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Ecological Theory

To understand the impact of environment and cultural influences on the individual Ecological theory was examined. Ecological theory was first proposed in 1979 by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), for the purpose of understanding why people behave differently in the presence of family, in school, or at work. Bronfenbrenner (1979) sought a way to analyze individuals to determine the impact various environments have within these structures.

Ecological theory facilitates the organization of information about people and their environment, allowing a clear understanding of the interconnectedness of people and their environment. Each individual moves through numerous transitions in life that require environmental support and coping skills. Social problems that may include health care, family, income, conflicts with law enforcement, unemployment, and educational outcomes, can all be incorporated within ecological theory, which enables research to explore factors within the individual's environment that may be relevant to these types of social problems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007). Ecological theory is relevant to this study by proposing possible explanations and insight into the importance and significance of both internal and external influences that include parents and community in the achievement outcomes of African American students. The current study explores the impact of environment from a very specific cultural region of the United States that may reduce many of the generalities of the theory.

Risk and Resilience Theory

While Ecological theory provided understanding of the individual's response to the environment, Risk and Resilience theory more specifically describes and explains both Risk and promotive factors that influenced academic success. Risk and resilience theory originated from the field of sociology. The theory was developed by Catalano and Hawkins (1996), who were influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) articulation of ecological theory. Focusing on environment as the primary context for child development, the theory defines risks as factors that create negative social outcomes and low academic achievement with typical risks including limited education opportunities, racial discrimination, and parental conflict. Resilience, on the other hand, contributes to children's academic success and is composed of elements that serve as protective factors. These factors are forces that can create positive academic outcomes and can

include parental involvement, parental education, and religious exposure (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Extending the reach and nature of protective factors even further Neblett et al., (2012) wrote, “It may be important to consider how various dimensions of ethnic racial socialization convey meta messages regarding the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity to youth” (p.12) Contextually, protective factors create conditions that mitigate the influence of negative social conditions within a child’s environment (Friend et al., 2011; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013).

Parents who influence the attitudes and behaviors of their children may create protective factors such as socially accepted responses to the effects of racial discrimination. Protective factors can provide a child with the ability to resist potential stressors in their community. The more numerous these factors are in a child’s life, the greater the resilience (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). There are four typical patterns of resilience:

- Dispositional resilience is the general sense of individual autonomy.
- Relational resilience is the actual role in society and in their relationships.
- Situational resilience is the ability to solve problems, and take action.
- Philosophical resilience is the individual’s belief in the importance of personal development.

Additional factors can include internal motivation, good use of time, family support and school related activities. Understanding risk and resilience factors can help in the creation of education strategies for students at high risk (Friend et al., 2011; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013). Risk and resilience theory advances ecological theory by providing descriptive rationale for behavior associated and influenced by internal and external forces (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). In addition this theory helps to explain and identify

causation for academic achievement among African Americans (Friend et al., 2011; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013). This study advances the theory by including components that have not been previously considered in previous research. The combined variables, of African American students, from a rural area utilizing a qualitative approach may provide new information on the nature of risk and resilience from a new perspective, thus building on previous research that explores the causation and mitigation of risk factors for African American students.

Related Literature

Several variables of the research question were examined to locate relevant research data. The components of the related literature review include the achievement gap, parental behavior, African American students, rural school districts, and risk and protective factors.

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap was examined to discover the level of disparity between Black and White students. The achievement gap favors White students over African American students in academic achievement. To explore this phenomenon more specifically a quantitative study conducted by Rust et al. (2011) sought to discover if cultural identification played a significant role in the creation of an achievement gap. The independent variable was biculturalism, and the dependent variable was cultural identification (Rust et al., 2011). The hypothesis of the study was in three parts. Biculturalism will be positively related to cultural identity, global self-esteem, academic self-esteem, and academic achievement; biculturalism will account for more variance in academic achievement than will cultural identity and global self-esteem; and biculturalism will account for more variance in academic achievement than will cultural identity and academic self-esteem. The sample was 65.8% female and 34.2% male. Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 19 years ($M= 15.56$, $SD= 1.21$). Approximately 24% were in ninth grade, 27% were in 10th

grade, 31% were in 11th grade, and 18% were in 12th grade. Instruments utilized included the Orthogonal Cultural Identification Scale to measure biculturalism. The African American Acculturation Scale-Revised was used to measure biculturalism. The Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure was used to measure cultural and ethnic identity. The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents was used to measure self-esteem (Friend et al. 2011; Rowley, 2011; Rust et al., 2011).

Participants for the study were from schools and academic programs that served African American students. Informed consent was obtained from students and their parent or guardian. After the demographic questionnaire, the remaining four surveys were administered in a counterbalanced manner to control for order effects. The results of the study demonstrated that there was a correlation between biculturalism and the OCIS. A multiple regression analysis demonstrated several significant variables. The analysis also demonstrated that cultural identity and academic self-esteem were significant. Cultural identity was found to be related to self-esteem and academic achievement. Global self-esteem was not found to be related to academic achievement or academic self-esteem (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011; Rust et al., 2011). The author notes that “research has found that a strong cultural or ethnic identity, the extent to which an individual identifies with, participates in, and feels positively about his or her cultural/ethnic group, helps individuals deal with conflict related to intercultural contact, acculturate stress, and second culture acquisition” (Rust et al., 2011, p.131).

Academic achievement and self-esteem were also demonstrated to have a strong correlation. These findings may suggest that there is some level of interaction between cultural identity and academic achievement for African Americans. The limitations of the study include the finding that biculturalism may have been inadequately measured in this study. As a possible

explanation for this finding, there may be no additional value with biculturalism for the academic achievement of African American high school students. The findings of the study indicated that the two measures of biculturalism or multi-cultural identity did not correlate. Other limitations include the construct validity of the biculturalism scales. Another limitation of this study included the difficulty in defining African Americans as an ethnic group. While participants in the study all self-identified as African American, nearly half of them (46.3%) identified their primary identity as something other than African American. Building on this research, future studies could focus on defining biculturalism for African American children. The most significant finding is that “bicultural competence may facilitate participation in the predominantly European American educational and occupational opportunity structure while maintaining identification with one's culture of origin or racial group” (Rust et al., 2011 p.138). The author recommends that additional research be conducted to confirm these findings and to inform interventions with African American high school students that seek to improve academic performance (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley, 2011; Rust et al., 2011). What is known based on this study is that bicultural competence is related to academic achievement of African American students. What is not clearly understood, in the amount of influence the gender of the parents has on building cultural competence in their children. This research study extends the understanding of parental influence by examining the nature of parental influence and the characteristic of that influence with African American parents in a rural setting.

A quantitative study undertaken by Rowley & Wright (2011) explored the achievement gap by examining whether Black students who are similarly situated as other White students are at any disadvantage. The independent variable for this study is math scores and the dependent

variables are reading scores and the school environment. The author did not state a hypothesis but the following research questions were noted:

- Do White students similarly situated have the same disadvantages as Black students?
- Are White students similarly situated at a disadvantage?
- How much does parental involvement offset other negative factors?

Participants were solicited from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (US Department of Education, 2002), a study of a national representation. The sample consists of students in the 10th grade in the 2001-02 school years. Of the 27,000 schools 752 participated in the study (Rowley & Wright, 2011). Instruments used in the study included univariate and bivariate analysis to obtain population parameters of the sample including the subgroups of White and Black students for each interval and variable. A group means test was utilized to determine if the two groups were statistically different (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011; Rust et al., 2011).

Data was collected from all participants that included students, parents, teachers, librarians, and administrators. Timed tests in math and reading were given to students, following this they completed the survey. Based on the results on the timed tests, students completed another round of tests based on ability. The other non-student participants were given questionnaires that were collected on this same day while a team inspected. The theoretical framework of this study provided a reliable process to examine the test score gap between Black and White students. Factors included in this study demonstrated statistical differences between Black and White students in relation to test scores. The results of the findings demonstrate a need to further examine varying academic experiences of students. The study also finds that a one size

fits all solution may be ineffective in closing the achievement gap between Black and White students (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley, 2011; Rust et al., 2011).

While this study had wide spread implications for educators there were some limitations. Limitations include the use of the ELS: 2002 data set that had problems because it was not the most recent available during the study. Second, the data did not contain enough information such as class sizes, teacher experience, or curriculum. An examination of these variables may have allowed a more extensive view of effect size. Third, the ELS were prohibitive when it came to analyzing the effects of neighborhoods because information for each of the schools was not included in the data. The author made the following recommendations. He asserts that schools that provide services for low-income students should be strengthened, and provided funding to overcome educational deficits and, that schools that have poor students should not be penalized (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley, 2011; Rust et al., 2011).

What is learned from this study is the gap between Whites and Blacks may be influenced by other factors such as mental abilities, IQ, along with mental and emotional challenge as well. What is also learned from the study is that the most significant predictor of academic achievement in general is the social status of the parent. White students who have a disability may be at the same disadvantage as African American students. Lastly, that the structure of the family alone was not significant enough to predict academic outcomes. What is understood from the study is that disabilities may put all children at risk regardless of their racial or ethnic makeup and risk factors, while risk factors have a great significance on negative outcomes for White students who are similarly situated (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011; Rust et al., 2011). What is not understood is how the additional risk factor of being an ethnic or racial

minority influences mitigating factors. The current study can provide information previously absent on the risk factors associated with race and a rural community.

Friend et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study that explored the achievement gap by examining the relationship between racial socialization and academic achievement. The independent variables of this study included gender and GPA. The dependent variables in the study were pride development and preparation for bias. The author hypothesized that racial socialization would be positively associated with academic achievement and that this association would be moderated by gender and race. Participants included 132 African American fifth grade students and their mothers. The children were 5% female and 45% male. 3 of the children were in the fourth grade, the remaining children were in the fifth grade. The instruments used for the study included the Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status to measure social status, the parents Experience Racial Socialization Scale. Academic achievement was measured using GPA. Third grade children and their parents from 9 elementary schools in the southeastern region of the United States participated in school data collection. However data collected from schools were not analyzed for the current project (Friend et al., 2011).

The author asserts that race and gender could not be considered separately when trying to understand the influences and effects of environment on academic achievement and the achievement gap. Addressing the importance of racial socialization he states, “Effective environment influences the cultural norms of a population and results in the creation of adaptive culture. Adaptive culture includes traditions, cultural legacies, emergent cultural tasks, and context-specific models of success or competence as well as a population’s specific child-rearing techniques designed to develop these competencies” (Friend et al., 2011 p.42). A significant limitation of the study was the small sample size that precluded further modeling of distinctive

social classes and multi-group analyses. The suggestion was that further research should examine diverse social classes and gender among African Americans. What is learned from the study is that the most significant predictor of academic achievement in general is the social status of the parent. White students who have a disability may be at the same disadvantage as African American students. Lastly, that the structure of the family alone was not significant enough to predict academic outcomes. This study extends the understanding of the combined effects of race and environment on achievement outcomes by adding the additional variable of a rural school district that may defy any generalizations from previous studies.

Parental Influence

Parental influence was explored to determine parental behavior characteristics and their influence on academic achievement. In a qualitative case study Wallace (2013) examined the significance of parental influence on academic achievement. The study variables included parental involvement and family school relationships. While no hypothesis was stated the following research questions were noted:

- How are parents involved in academic achievement?
- What school exclusions prevent parental involvement at school?

The sample included a total of 197 students, 24% African American, 21% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic, and 18% identified as Asian American, with the remaining percentage classified as other. Instruments used during the study included recorded interviews, observations, field notes, and public documents. Several semi-structured group interviews were conducted with parents. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interviews with teachers and administrators were informal and lasted a minimum of 10 minutes each. Field notes were recorded during events

open to the public, school documents were only collected only if they were a part of the public record.

Parents were found to be always welcome to attend the various performances put on by student during the school year. However, teachers on some occasion took issue with parents coming in class to work with students. The author points out “There are many advantages associated with parent involvement in education. Students with actively involved parents are, by and large, more engaged in the classroom” (Wallace, 2013 p.197). Several teachers had a problem with students coming out of class to meet with parents. Teachers discovered that students leaving class was disruptive. As a result parents were often excluded from events based on teacher perception of interference. Many parents were marginalized when they participated in ways that where not seen as legitimate and appropriate by teachers. “Considering the importance of parents in the education of all children, it would seem that schools should harness the support and participation of all parents, not dismiss it” (Wallace, 2013 p.207). Results of the study cannot be generalized given the limited geographical and socio-economic status of the parents. The author suggests that the notion of parental involvement should be replaced with the idea of collaboration. Perhaps such a framework might foster a more productive marriage that serves the interests of both teachers and parents of all racial and ethnic backgrounds (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). What is known from the study is parental involvement may be influenced by teacher attitudes. What is not clear from the research is the impact of parental influence when parent contributions are not legitimized. This study seeks to explore the nature of behavior by parents within the context of a rural school district that may further highlight the significance of parental influence by African American parents outside the

typical urban areas and large geographic locations (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

Young et al. (2013) explored parental influence in a qualitative study by examining the impact of direct involvement by parents from low economic circumstances. The variables included parental involvement and the perception of school administrators. Young asked the following questions:

- Why do children whose parents are directly involved in their academic decision overwhelming successful?
- Why do children whose parents come from lower economic circumstances place less importance on academic achievement?

The sample consisted of participants who submitted a definition of parental involvement. 100 participants submitted written responses to the question. The study instruments included written questioners and surveys. Participates were required to answer open-ended question about how they define parental involvement. Responses were collected and organized into categories. Data was collected, analyzed and reduced to themes through coding. The primary limitation of the study was in its geographical and gender considerations along with broad generalizations. The research was conducted and in some instances may not accurately reflect true motivation. The scope of the research could have been expanded to include specific perceptions of teachers and administrators and their impact of parental involvement. On the importance of parental involvement “Parental involvement boosts a child's perceived level of competence and autonomy, offers a sense of security and connectedness, and steps to internalize the value of an education and performance” (Young et al., 2013 p.229). What is understood from the research is that parental involvement can be influenced by school administration. There are also varying

degrees of push back on more parental involvement. What is not known from the research is if parental influence is more or less important to positive outcomes for children in a rural school district (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). This study may fill that gap in understanding by exploring African American parents and their children in a rural environment.

Exploring the impact of parental encouragement with regards to parental involvement Chabra & Kumari (2011), conducted a quantitative study to ascertain the correlation between parental encouragement and achievement motivation. The hypothesis of the study was that there is no significant correlation between parental encouragement and achievement. The findings also concluded that there is no significant difference between parental encouragements of high and low motivated students. The sample included 80 male and female adolescents studying in different schools. The instruments used during the study included the Parental Encouragement Scale (PES) and the Achievement Motivation Test (AcMT). The study also used the ex-post facto correlational method to determine whether there is a relationship between parental encouragement and achievement motivation. A significant correlation between parental encouragement and academic achievement motivation may imply that the nature of the encouragement given to the child by his parents is important as far as the academic achievement motivation is concerned. Moreover, “successful parents frequently use words of encouragement and supportive actions to show their children how to make improvements” (Chabra & Kumari, 2011, p. 76). The study was not able to evaluate the impact of parental involvement when involvement is more immersed. The results of the study demonstrated that teachers, should try to create awareness in parents regarding the importance home environment has on academic achievement. “The most enduring question for educational research is to find reasons for

children's failure and success in the school" (Chabra & Kumari, 2011, p.77). Chabra's conclusions stand in contrast to most other researchers who find a strong positive correlation between parental encouragement and a child's level of self-motivation. However, Chabra does note that the primary purpose of his research was to determine why students fail. While providing a necessary and in-depth perspective, his results do not shed much insight into the factors that contribute to student success.

What can be understood from the study is there is a relationship between parental involvement and opportunities provided by the school to participate or engage in school activities (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). What is not known from this study is whether parental involvement is influenced by teachers. However, the studies exploration of the characteristic of parental behavior did contribute to the limited research on African American academic achievement in a rural school district.

A quantitative study exploring the role of parental involvement by Hayes (2012) examined the effects of parental involvement and academic achievement of African American students. The independent variables consisted of family income, age, parental involvement and parent education. Out of the three parental behaviors examined in the study, parent perceptions of home involvement and achievement values were expected to be predictors of achievement in urban African American students. Parental perceptions of achievement were also expected to be a predictor of achievement for young and older urban African American students. Parental perceptions of home involvement were assumed to be, a better predictor of achievement in older urban African American students than in younger students. Lastly, family demographics were not expected to have a major impact on the achievement of urban African American students. Participants consisted of 145 parents and guardians of urban African American high school

students from two large urban U.S. cities. Seventy-two percent of the African American parents in the study were mothers. Data from the city was collected in a large urban school district of mostly low-income minority students (Hays, 2012).

Instruments used in the study measured perceptions of parental values and attitudes about the importance of academic success. Parents responded to several items that asked about parental perceptions of communications with school regarding learning with their children. Academic achievement was measured utilizing parental reports of the grades their child received.

Absentees were measured from parental reports of the number of days they believed the child missed from school during the academic period. Negative student behavior was measured from parent's report of the number of discipline write-ups their children received from school during the academic year. What is known from the study is that African American demographics in of themselves are not a significant factor for determining the likelihood of success for African American students (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

What is not understood is the mitigating impact of parental influence on negative student attitudes regarding school (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). This study examines the attitudes of students as well as the attitudes of parents with respect to the importance of school so that an analysis of risk and protective factors can be accessed in the context of a rural school district on African American student achievement.

Parents completed a survey that provided demographic information, assessed the level of involvement in their child's life, and assessed the perception of the achievement of their child as it related to grades, attendance, and behavior problems in school. The study revealed that there are significant relations between child achievement outcomes, school involvement, and achievement. Hays noted that focusing entirely on economically disadvantaged African

American families may create incomplete findings on the influences of parental involvement and student outcomes” (Hays, 2012, p. 569). Results from the study did not support the hypothesis that parental perceptions of achievement is a predictor of achievement for younger or older adolescents; however it did support the hypothesis that parental perceptions of home involvement was a better predictor of achievement outcomes in older urban African American students. The results from the study provide important data regarding parental perceptions of involvement behaviors that better predict achievement in African American high school students, how these involvement behaviors predict different outcomes for younger and older adolescents. The initial hypothesis was partially supported. In general the results indicated that home involvement was the only predictor of achievement in this sample of African American students. The author suggested that additional research examining the correlation between parental involvement and school based initiatives should be conducted (Hays, 2012). What is known from the research is that results indicated that home involvement was the only predictor of achievement in this sample of African American students (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). What is not known from the research is the impact of parental home involvement for African American students in a rural school district is approximately the same as for urban students (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). The current study will examine this gap in the literature to explore the possible influence of parental education, and the nature of parent’s relationship with their child as a factor in improving their children’s academic outcomes.

Hines & Holcomb-McCoy (2013) conducted a quantitative study to answer the question of how parental education influences parental behavior regarding the importance of education.

The independent variables of the study included both parents' level of education. The dependent variable in the study was parental relationship. There was no stated hypothesis but the following research questions were noted. What is the relationship between perceived African American parenting style and academic achievement of African American males, and which combination of factors best predicts African American male high school achievement? Participants in this study included 153 African American 11th and 12th grade males at two schools in a school district located outside a major city in the northeastern United States. Instruments used for the study included the Parenting Style Index, the Academic and Family Supplemental Questionnaire, the free time sub scale, and the Family and academic sub scale (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). Results from the study showed no significant relationship between parental styles and honors course enrollment. The father's education in two-parent families was shown to be positive predictors of grade point average, while father's expectation was shown to be a negative predictor of GPA. "Neglectful or uninvolved parents, similar to permissive parents, do not provide adequate support for their children. Common characteristics of neglectful parents include low to no interest in the welfare of their children, lack of parental involvement, and no restrictions or limitations on the child" (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013, p. 69).

The significance of this study for counselor practice and research are that African American father's educational background and expectation, along with family structure of African American homes play a more significant role in the academic achievement of African-American males than parenting style and other ecological factors (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). The limitation of the study includes the geographic location of the research study located in the Northeast region of the United States. This location may not be representative of all African

Americans across the country. Lastly, the parenting style index lacked validity information. Additional research should explore the possibility that the influence of fathers and mothers may be different than the combined efforts of both in the academic achievement of their African American children (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). What is understood from the research is that in African American homes, parents play a significant role in the achievement of African American males (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). What is not clear from the study is the impact of home interaction by parents for female African American students (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

Doctoral research conducted by Petty (2008) sought to further understand the role and significance of parental involvement. The main research question of the study was stated as “What are the dimensions related to school involvement of African American parents of students with high academic achievement?” Significant terms and definitions used in the study included, academic accomplishment, African American, educational outcome, parental involvement and social-economic status (Petty, 2008). Additionally the review examined research on parental involvement issues unique to the African American family and parenting styles. The research suggested that parenting styles, parental involvement in the African American community, or the factors related to parental involvement from a global viewpoint can impact academic success among African American high school students. The following main research question was addressed in this study: What are the dimensions related to school involvement of African American parents of students with high academic achievement (Petty, 2008)? The sample consisted of between 10 and 12 families. The target population of this study was African American parents who have a least one high school or middle school child presently attending school in grades 8 to 12 in a suburban high school with a grade point average of at least 2.5 with

no gender preference in the population for this study. Families in the study demonstrated strong belief in their ability to impact their child's academic achievement by taking an active approach. Assisting children with homework and other assignments was viewed as parents modeling and reinforcing their beliefs. This study added new information regarding parental involvement among African American parents whose children have had above average academic success. The significance of this study is it shows the substantial education gap between African Americans and Whites (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). There were two noteworthy limitation of the study that include concerns about the sample, the sample chosen was small and purposive with only ten families involved which may have limited the ability to generalize the results. The second limitation involved parent data collected during interviews. These included the possibility of distorted responses to some questions and distractions that may have taken place during the interview process. The research study provides an example and a theoretical framework for the development of a proposed case study that examines risk and resilience in African American children. This study also provides an example of the case study approach. Additionally, the research in this study provides significant guidance for the development of data gathering procedures. The study concluded that factors related to parental involvement from a global viewpoint can impact academic success among African American high school students. (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Petty, 2008; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). What is not understood from the research is how the influence African American parents differ in a rural school district. Further research should be conducted to determine if there are differences that exist between African American parenting in a rural area as compared to an urban school district

Jeynes (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of parental influence and examined the overall body of research on the influence of faith and family related factors that could indicate if there is a relationship between these factors and positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Jeynes (2013) noted “There might be a correlation between religious commitment and academic outcomes emerges from the propensity of people of faith to eschew behaviors that are typically regarded as undisciplined and harmful to educational achievement” (p. 19). In addition, the study examined a number of characteristics of research for use in this study that included report characteristics, sample characteristics, intervention type, research design, grade level or age of the students, outcome and predictor variables, attrition rate, and estimate of the relationship between Bible literacy and behavioral and academic outcomes. The data indicated that the overall effect size for biblical literacy demonstrates a 21% advantage in the outcomes utilized in this study (Jeynes, 2013). “The fact is religious faith, especially in conjunction with family structure, may be associated with such a significant reduction in the achievement gap” (Jeynes, 2013, p.19). What can be understood from this research is that of the numerous environmental factors that serve as a protective factor for the mitigation of risk, religion and spiritual beliefs may play an important role in the reduction of negative academic outcomes. This research study examined community and cultural protective factors practiced by parents that incorporate variables other than religion as a community resource.

African American Students Perceptions

Studies of African American students were examined to identify specific racial issues associated with Academic success. Brittian & Gray (2014) conducted a quantitative study to discover if race discrimination played a role in influencing the learning environment for African American students. No hypothesis was stated however, two research questions were noted. What

is the relationship between African American student's perceptions of differential treatment by teachers and educational outcomes and what were the factors that promote educational outcomes in the context of perceived discrimination, focusing mainly on the protective value of youth's cultural heritage as well as individual characteristics? (Brittian & Gray, 2014). The sample of the study included 385 African American students, 8th through 11th grade with fifty percent being female. The instruments used in this study included four items developed by the MADICS staff. These items asked if students felt close to friends of a similar race and if they believed that people of their race had a rich heritage. Perceptions of student's beliefs about the importance of school included questions that asked about the importance of school for students of their race, and the usefulness school in life for later success (Brittian & Gray, 2014). Researchers interviewed students and their parents in their homes. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and followed by a self-administered survey. The study demonstrated that differential treatment in 8th grade was associated with connection to racial heritage, but was negatively associated with academic self-concept and the importance of school in 8th and 11th grade. Males showed stronger connections to their racial heritage and females placed more importance on school. Academic self-concept in 8th grade was associated with academic self-concept in 11th grade. "Self-efficacy, defined generally as an individual's belief that he or she has control over achieving goals and objectives, is another factor that may protect African American students' educational outcomes" (Brittian & Gray, 2014, p. 2).

Lastly, positive associations were shown between academic self-concept and the importance of schooling in both 8th and 11th grade (Brittian & Gray, 2014). Differential treatment in 8th grade was positively associated with connection to ethnic heritage in 8th grade, but negatively associated with both academic self-concept and the importance of schooling in 8th

and 11th grade. Males reported stronger connections to their ethnic heritage than females, but females placed greater importance on “Perceived discrimination may represent a barrier that impedes expectations for educational success among African American youth” (Brittian & Gray, 2014, p. 6).

Academic self-concept in 8th grade was positively associated with academic self-concept in the 11th grade, just as importance of schooling in 8th grade was positively associated with importance of schooling in 11th grade. Finally, there were positive associations between academic self-concept and importance of schooling in both 8th and 11th grade. Previous research studies have been unable to ascertain whether student’s perceptions of differential treatment were a function of their experiences in a particular school (Brittian & Gray, 2014; Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012). Additional research into this topic should investigate whether race-based differential treatment takes on many forms and whether the effects of this differential treatment may be mitigated by protective factors, and the extent that protective factors mitigate negative treatment. This research study revealed that very specific forms of African American ethnic heritages may contribute to academic achievement, while there may be others that do not (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012). What is not clear is if racial heritage can contribute to negative academic outcomes for African American students in a rural school district (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012). This research study examined aspects of African American culture that includes parental attitudes about education that may provide new insight into the degree of influence parents have in the context of a rural setting.

Rural School District High School Academic Outcomes

Rural school districts were explored to examine similar geographic location for comparisons. Myers (2013) sought to examine the impact that parental influence and drug abuse

had on academic outcomes in a rural school district by conducting a quantitative study to address the issue. No hypothesis was stated but the following research questions were noted. For African American students living in a rural, southern community, what are the values and characteristics associated with alcohol or illegal drug use? The county involved in the study was a rural county in Georgia, with a population in 2006 of 45,135. The racial breakdown of the county included 61% White and 37% African Americans. Seventy-four percent of the adult populations were High school graduates, and 17% had a college degree. In addition, 17% of the total population lived below the poverty level with 25% of the population under the age of 18 living in poverty. Surveys were created and distributed to all the district's schools (Myers, 2013). The study revealed that the characteristic most associated with alcohol and drug use was having friends who use them. The limitations of the study include the inability to make broad generalities from the results because random sampling was not used; and data was collected on students from only one rural county; and lastly only currently enrolled students in high schools and middle schools were surveyed. A significant population of students who were not attending school could benefit from prevention programs. Lastly students completed the surveys in class in front of teachers and peers, that could have resulted in the under reporting of risky behaviors. Future research should examine the risk factors that contribute to substances abuse by African American youth along with potential protective factors. Myers (2013) found that

because of this shift during late adolescence and the serious consequences of substance use among African American youth, it is important that we try to understand the risk and protective factors that are at play with regard to African Americans during adolescence and early adulthood. (p.80)

What could be ascertained from the study is that African American children in rural communities are exposed to the same risk factors as White children similarly situated but with fewer protective factors (Irvin, 2012; Stoddard et al., 2012). The study did not determine the risk factors for African American children similarly situated and their academic outcomes (Cooper et al.; 2013; Franklin 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). This study examines the protective factors for African American students in a rural school district without regard to social class but rather academic achievement.

Exploring further the differences in rural school districts and urban school districts for African American students Irvin (2012) conducted a quantitative study to examine the promotive and protective factors that influence student engagement in a rural environment. “For resilience to occur, some risk for poor outcomes must be incurred” (Irvin, 2012, p. 177). No hypothesis was stated but the following research question was noted. What are the protective and promotive factors that may underlie the resilience of African American youth from low-income rural backgrounds? What contributing factors contribute to the promotion of academic achievement among African American children? (Irvin, 2012). “Although youth from various ethnic backgrounds in the rural South encounter poverty, African American youth from the rural South tend to experience the most severe and chronic poverty” (Irvin, 2012, p. 176). The study was conducted in two rural counties noted as the poorest in the southern United States. Instruments used in the study included the Interpersonal Competence Scale-Teacher (ICS-T), the Extracurricular Involvement Survey (EIS). Psychological engagement, end-of-year school grades and peer behavioral assessments. Study participants were selected from sixth grade classrooms of two elementary schools. Student self-report data were collected but kept confidential from school administrators. Academic grades were obtained from school records. The results of the

study indicated that behavioral engagement had an effect only on achievement for girls and only on aggression for boys. Behavioral engagement was shown to be a promotive factor for higher achievement among girls and lower aggression for boys. Psychological engagement was shown to serve a promotive function. This research study extends previous research on student engagement. The study also shows that promotive and protective factors may be population specific. The limitations of the study include a lack of generalization and the lack of involvement for specific activities of African American students in rural school districts (Cooper et al.; 2013; Franklin 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). The author recommends the development of psychometrically sound and more current measures capturing these dimensions of student engagement be created. What is known from the study is that behavioral engagement was shown to be a promotive factor for higher achievement among girls and lower aggression for boys (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). What is not clear from the research is if promotive factors are the same regardless of gender in a rural setting (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). This research study will examine the impact of parental influence in a rural school district without regard to gender.

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk and protective factors were examined for studies utilizing similar theories. Stoddard et al. (2012), conducted a quantitative research study to examine the role of risk and protective factors in academic achievement of African American students by exploring the individual characteristics and parental influences on academic achievement as they relate to the mitigation of risk factors. Lastly, peer and community support would serve as protective factors. “Although the relationship between risk and promotive factors and violence should not vary by race or ethnicity, the likelihood of exposure to risk and the accumulation of risk factors is higher for

ethnic minority children growing up in disadvantage “(Stoddard et al., 2012, p. 542). Data was collected from 850 students that were deemed to be at risk for high school dropout at the beginning of the ninth grade in four High schools in Denver. Individuals chosen for the study were required to have a grade point average of 3.0 or lower at the end of the eighth grade, not diagnosed as having emotional or developmental impairments, and self-identified as African American, White, or bi-racial. Instruments used for the study included, interview field notes, descriptive statistics, growth curve modeling, and t-test. Structured interviews were conducted with students in school.

The research discovered that individual and context could explain variations in behavior change (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). “Minority adolescents growing up in disadvantage may have access to fewer resources that function to promote healthy development and reduce the risk of violence. African American families are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods with severely concentrated disadvantage and suffer the associated consequences” (Stoddard et al, 2012, p. 543). Also discovered was that variations in risk and promotive factors could explain violent behavior over time. The research also suggested that prevention efforts to enhance promotive factors may help youth overcome the debilitating effects of risks they tend to experience (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). The research sample included urban, African American students who were at risk for negative outcomes due to low school achievement by eighth grade. The limitations of the study are that the findings may not be generalizable to all urban African American students. Lastly the study is based on the self-reporting of violent behavior, which could over or underestimate outcomes. The authors recommend further research and support for strength-based, culturally relevant interventions and policies for youth violence prevention. What is understood from the research is

that African Americans live in a mixed continuum of risk and protective factors based on socio-economic status. What is not clear from the research is the significance of socio-economics connected to parental influence. This study explores parental influence as a mitigating factor in reducing risk and promoting academic achievement.

Cooper et al. (2013) explored the influence of racial discrimination and the psychological adjustments to it as a risk and a resilience factor for African American students. The research hypothesized that racial discrimination would be associated with negative psychological and school outcomes for African American students. In addition they asserted that family and community support would be able to mitigate this relationship. Lastly they noted that community related support factors would emerge as protective factors for African American males. The sample included a total of 4,256. Fifty-nine percent of the sample was female. Students in this sample resided primarily in single-family Instruments used in the study included the Everyday Discrimination Scale was utilized to assess student perception of racial discrimination, and the Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). Lastly a self-report questioner assessed school behavior issues. “Supportive and engaged parenting practices reduced the negative impact of racial discrimination on African American adolescents’ adjustment, including fewer depressive symptoms and school conduct problems” (Cooper et al., 2013 p.16). Three significant findings emerged during the research. First, racial discrimination was associated with negative outcomes for African American and boys who reported greater closeness to parents as compared to girls. Additionally, girls also reported greater depressive symptoms, and fewer suspensions, along with more academic engagement than boys. “Familial relationships and religious beliefs also have been related to adjustment outcomes for African Americans boys” (Cooper et al., 2013 p.17). The limitations of the study included the single-informant design and the sample being

composed primarily of adolescents residing in single-family households and, may not be representative of all African American students, so no global generalizations could be made. The authors recommend that future studies should examine additional domains of social support and whether their protective function varies by gender. In addition, prospective studies should utilize qualitative or mixed-method approaches to further explicate the role of gender in African American adolescents' meaning-making surrounding issues of racial discrimination and available contextual supports.

What is understood from the research is both racism and racial discrimination must be perceived by the individual to some extent to be experienced however, social realities may override perception. What is not known is the impact of racial discrimination when parents and their children do not perceive or perceive it differently. This study will examine the perceptions of both African American parents and the children regarding their perception of discrimination and the impact it may have in a rural setting.

Franklin (1995) conducted early research into risk and resilience factors for African American students in his quantitative study of the topic. The author of this study introduces the argument that African American adolescents are faced with challenges to their academic success that are not similarly experienced by other racial groups. Prior research by the author found numerous sources that explored the failures of the child and the family as a cause for low academic achievement. "The plight of school failure and underachievement in African American youth has been disproportionately attributed to deficiencies in the child, the family and the culture" (Franklin, 1995, p. 2). However, this research study explores failures in social institutions as a cause for academic failure along with protective factors that contribute to academic success. "Educational and social disenfranchisement has produced poor, alienated,

embittered, and disempowered minorities with few opportunities for mobility” (Franklin, 1995, p. 6).

The literature review examined previous research on the sub-topics of poverty, institutional racism, social inequalities, and African American achievement. The review examined the conceptualization of the term risk and resilience, protective resources, and correlations between risk and protection. The review also contains numerous academic references on risk theory and protective factors of parents, community, peers, social institutions and an overview of research questions previously posed. The research participants were 179 African American 8th and 9th grade students. The details regarding procedures and instruments included study participate briefings, meeting times, locations, consent forms and questionnaires. Specific measurement instruments used included the Urban Risk Scale, Adolescents Protective Compensatory Factors Scale, School Engagement and Achievement Orientation Scale, and Social Responsibility and Behavior Index. The results of the study contained descriptive statistics, an examination of risk and compensatory factors, school engagement, orientation and a factor analysis. Charts were included as graphic illustrations of findings. Research questions regarding risk and protective factors were addressed individually and interview transcripts were included. The hypothesis of the research study was that under certain environmental conditions, namely the open classroom, poor children as a group display the same motivational tendencies and cognitive abilities as do middle class children.

The sample consisted of 179 8th and 9th grade African American adolescents with a mean age of 13.8 years. Two hundred subjects were initially administered the instrument, but 21 had to be omitted from the analysis due to incomplete data. Forty-two percent of the participants were male and 58% were female. Fifty-one percent of the participants lived with single-parent

families, and 49% lived in two parent families. The author organizes and summarizes the arguments for risk and resilience theory. The author contends that risk factors can be mitigated by the presence of certain protective factors. There is acknowledgment of the differential between African American males and females. The author notes that the limitations of the study include the Urban Risk Scale as a new instrument and the generalizations the study may generate. The study concluded that there is a range of resources and contexts by which risk and protective factors function. “Many students, in spite of their sociodemographic environment, have positive coping mechanisms and protective factors that move them along paths to maturity” (Franklin, 1995 p.9) The study concluded that students who are exposed to a high number of risk factors may experience the ameliorative power of protective resources but protection by itself may not be enough to mitigate the damaging effects of risk. The achievement outcomes for African American females when compared to African American males were significantly higher, reflecting national trends for this population. Lastly perceptions of teacher support can impact attitude and behavior in the classroom (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). Limitations of the study included the use of instrument that could have been more robust, if they distinguished emotional and psychological, information from family, and the community impacted achievement outcomes. The study may also be limited due to the geographical location. Not all African American youth reside in low-income, urban centers. Rural and suburban African American adolescents may demonstrate different outcomes. Future research should examine risk and resilience as a factor in the achievement of African Americans youth from rural and suburban areas. What is understood from the research is that multiple and diverse interpretations and theories can be developed when the research discipline of study is expanded outside of the field of education. While quantitative in nature, this research study provides a theoretical frame

work for the qualitative examination of risk and resilience within the larger body of achievement gap research.

Summary

The problem identified in the research is that there is a disparity between the academic successes of African American and White students in American schools (Beatty, 2013; Labelle, 2011). African American parents who do not place emphasis on the importance of school have children who are less likely to be academically successful in urban settings. The focus of this research study is African American students from rural school districts. Previous research studies have examined the achievement gap and risk factors for African American students in depth. However, the literature on African American resilience and protective factors that may mitigate risk factors is small and limited to urban school districts and the protective factors associated with their academic success.

The research concluded that there is an achievement gap between White students and African American students in American schools, leaving the latter at risk for academic failure and other negative outcomes (Friend et al., 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011; Rust et al., 2011). Rural school districts have a disproportionately low graduation for all students generally compared to urban schools, and more specifically for African American students (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). There are a number of protective factors that are associated with the minimization of risk factors for African American students (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). For example, parental behavior regarding school has an important impact on improving the academic achievement of African American students. What is not known or understood from the research are the characteristic of African American parental influence on their high school children in a rural school district (Cooper et al., 2013;

Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). However, the literature does not elucidate the specific parental behaviors and activities that influence positive academic outcomes, especially for African American students in rural high schools.

While there is no shortage of research on the separate topics of African American students, parental behavior, high school academic achievement, and rural academics, the literature is devoid of research that combines those concepts to explore the influence of parental behavior on the academic achievement of African American students, in rural settings, and more specifically, in a rural Appalachia (Cooper et al., 2013; Franklin, 1995; Stoddard et al., 2012). Increased student-teacher interaction leads to a smaller gap between those resilient and non-resilient students (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Petty, 2008; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). The most significant predictor of academic achievement in general is the social status of the parent. White students who have a disability may be at the same disadvantage as African American students. Lastly, that the structure of the family alone was not significant enough to predict academic outcomes (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Petty, 2008; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013).

When African American boys receive higher levels of preparation for bias messages they may be better prepared to understand and cope with the racism they encounter. Boys may then be able to employ specific behaviors as mechanisms to cope with the racism they encounter. As noted, African American boys may engage in attempts to be less threatening or to “fit -in” with the school culture (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Petty, 2008; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). Parental involvement is related directly related to opportunities provided by the school to participate or engage with the school. Home involvement was the only predictor of achievement in this sample of African American students

(Hays, 2012). Factors related to parental involvement from a global viewpoint can impact academic success among African American high school students (Petty, 2008). Very specific forms of African American ethnic heritages may contribute to academic achievement, while there may be others that do not (Brittian & Gray, 2014). African American children in rural communities are exposed to the same risk factors as White children similarly situated but with fewer protective factors (Myers, 2013).

African Americans live in a mixed continuum of risk and protective factors based on socio-economic status (Stoddard et al., 2012). Both racism and racial discrimination must be perceived by the individual to some extent to be experienced however, social realities may override perception (Cooper et al., 2013). Multiple and diverse interpretations and theories can be developed when the research discipline of study is expanded outside of the field of education (Franklin, 1995).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study is to discover the characteristics of African American parental behavior regarding the importance of school, and its impact on their high school children's academic success in a rural school district. This chapter describes the design, setting, and participants involved in the study. Also included are the specific procedures to be utilized, the role of the researcher, data collection, and analysis method.

Design

This research study will utilize a qualitative bounded collective case study methodology (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2011). The design of this study is drawn from the social sciences and defines a specific case that can be illustrative of the issue under study (Creswell, 2013). Case studies are effective in the development of in depth descriptions useful for the analysis of single or multiple cases (Creswell, 2013). Data collection for case studies includes the use of multiple sources, which may include interview, observations, documents and artifacts (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Strategies for the analysis of case studies include thick descriptions of a single case or cases under study and the development of a theme for a single case, multiple themes, and cross cases (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

In addition this study has boundaries that are bonded by time and location (Creswell, 2013). This case study is bounded because the cases under study are part of the same cultural community, and the student participants of the study are required to have been accepted to and attended college within five years of this study. This case study is collective because it will utilize multiple cases (Creswell, 2013). The use of multiple cases will allow for the analysis of themes within a single case or cross case analysis (Creswell, 2013, Stake, 1995). This approach

is being utilized because it is best suited to discover and describe the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Research Questions

Central Question

What practices do African American parents employ to improve the likelihood of their child's academic success?

Sub Questions

SQ1: How do African American parents communicate the importance of school? The degree of direct and indirect communication between parents and their student child may influence the overall perception of the importance of education?

SQ2: How knowledgeable are parents regarding school and higher education requirements? African American parents who have obtained some level of advanced education beyond high school are more frequently involved in student planning for college?

SQ3: How do students respond to their parent's behavior regarding the importance of school? The children of African American parents may respond more positively to the influence of parents when reinforced by community standards?

Setting/Site

The location of this research is Mountain County, North Carolina. This location is the site of the county's only High school. This site was selected due to the availability of two of the major components of the research study. The components include African American high school students and a rural school district that has not previously been the subject of education research. The Mountain County Public School district has historically maintained a very small African American population native to the region. Presently the district has a small influx of African

American students. The families of these students have moved to the district for employment at the local university, Appalachian State.

Participants

Convenience sampling will be utilized to illustrate the sub group under study and to limit participants to the same geographical area (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). According to the national census bureau as of July 2015 the population of Mountain County, NC was 52,906. The African American population was 1,058. Over the last five years, from 2011 to 2016, 16 African-American students have graduated from Mountain county High school. The most recent North Carolina school report card 2014-2015 reports college enrollment for all students in the state at 72%. Ignoring data on risk factors, this assumes 11 possible participants available for the study. As a result of the small participant pool five to seven cases will be selected, each consisting of an African American child who graduated from Mountain County High School after 2011 and his/her parent or primary caregiver. The primary care giver is the legal or de facto guardian of the child. The sampling size was selected based on accepted case study principles and to account for attrition of study participants (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The graduation time period was selected to locate participants more closely bounded by age and school experience (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Procedures

The research study utilized a collective case study approach. The study location was Mountain County, North Carolina. Participants in the study included five African American parents and their children for a total of 10 participants. All participants completed a consent form prior to data collection (see appendix B). Each of the children graduated from Mountain County High School, and gained college acceptance. Data collection methods included interviews, focus

groups, and document analysis. Methods of analysis included categorical aggregation, thick description, pattern checking, and coding (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Student participants were solicited from Mountain County region for inclusion in the study with the assistance of the local African American historical society for Mountain County and the local university, Appalachian State with notification flyers, and personal contacts within the African American community (see appendix C and D). Prior to conducting research Institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained (see appendix A). Interview questions were piloted with a similar participant group. Digital audio recordings and transcription of individual and focus group interviews were made at the participant's home or alternative locations mutually agreed upon. The interview transcriptions were supplemented with interview notes taken during all interviews. All documents utilized in the study were then labeled and placed in individual folders.

The Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher will be as a non-participant observer and recorder. Personal experience as an African American and as an instructor of African American history has some impact on my personal perspective and may minimally affect or influence my analysis of the data and participation in the research. Basic assumptions are from a constructionist perspective and a biblical worldview. To eliminate as much personal bias as possible I will take steps to clearly differentiate comparative or contrasting personal experiences with those of the study participants. I will also act as a facilitator to organize interviews and focus groups. The researcher will not be connected to the participants during the study. However, several African American students in the community have been students in my college course or are known to me socially by their parents.

Data Collection

Interviews

Initial data collection began with individual interviews. Semi-structured and focused interviews will be conducted with each of the five parents and the student while interview notes are taken. Each set of parents and student will be interviewed separately prior to the start of the study to document the level of importance the parents and the child place on the importance of school, and the related parental behavior. At the conclusion of the study all parents and their child will be contacted and briefed on the findings and allowed to proof their input to determine accuracy and add any additional comments they may wish to make. Interviews of parents will be limited to the individual who has the primary role of caregiver. Interview locations will ideally be the residence of the participants or at a location mutually beneficial. All personal interviews will be digitally recorded and supplemented with field notes.

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Parental Questions.

1. Describe the community's influence on your family's attitudes regarding the importance of school?
2. Describe your education experience?
3. How do you talk to your child about the importance of school?
4. How do you participate in school activities with your child?
5. What type of community and social activities is your family involved in?
6. How do you talk to your child about racial discrimination?
7. Describe how you motivated your child to do well in school?
8. What are the challenges to your child's academic success?

9. How would you describe your experience communicating with your child's teachers or other school officials to evaluate your child's needs?

Student Questions.

1. Describe the community's influence on your family's attitudes regarding the importance of school?
2. Describe how your parent talks to you about the importance of academic success.
3. How does your parent participate in school activities with you?
4. What type of community and social activities is your family involved in?
5. How does your parent talk to you about racial discrimination?
6. Explain your motivation for wanting to do well academically
7. How do you respond to prompts from your parents about academic achievement?
8. Describe the challenges to academic success your parents have talked with you about?
9. How would you describe your parents approach to talking about academic success?

The purpose of parental question one is to gain insight into the nature of parental involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parental question two seeks to discover the nature and level of educational experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parental question three are designed to solicit the characteristics of parental behavior regarding the importance of school (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The purpose of parental questions four and five are to discover the character and significance of social and community activities on attitudes regarding academic achievement (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Parental questions six, seven, and eight seek to discover the characteristics of parental influence (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013).

The purpose of student question one is to gain insight into the nature of parental involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Student question two is designed to solicit the characteristics of parental behavior regarding the importance of school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The purpose of student questions three and four are to discover the character and significance of social and community activities on attitudes regarding academic achievement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007). Student question 5 is designed to examine how parents prepare students for potential discrimination. The purpose of student question 6 is to examine individual motivation in academic achievement (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Student questions seven, eight, and nine are designed to explore the behavioral characteristics of parental influence (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013).

Document Analysis

Documents will be examined to analyze transcripts, demographic data and other written sources of information. High school transcripts of the final year, college acceptance letters of the final year of high school will be examined. Grades will be evaluated to determine the level of academic performance and compared to parental behavior and student's attitudes regarding the importance of school. High school transcripts and letters of college acceptance will be used to determine academic achievement. Grades will be recorded and analyzed. Additionally, newspaper accounts of academic achievement, and demographic data supplied by the Mountain County School district or the study participants will be reviewed for significance and patterns to provide perspective, fill in historic gaps, or confirm data obtained from another source (Creswell, 2013).

Focus Group

An additional source of data will be collected from focus groups. Two groups will be utilized as focus groups. One group of four to five students and one group of four to five parents will be interviewed collectively for approximately one hour. Information recorded from the focus groups will be analyzed to examine both parental and student attitudes regarding the importance of school utilizing semi-structured questions. Focus group interviews will be digitally recorded with memoing conducted during and after the encounter (Creswell, 2013).

Focus Group Questions

Parental Questions.

1. What kind of influence do you feel culture has on education?
2. How would you describe the nature of community support for academic achievement?
3. How would describe the schools support of parental involvement?
4. What do you believe has most contributed to your child's academic success?
5. Can you describe the impact that being African American can have on academic success?
6. Describe how you talked to your child about the unique challenges they could face?

Student Questions.

1. What kind of influence do you feel culture has had on your education?
2. How would you describe the nature of community support for academic achievement?
3. How would describe the schools support of parental involvement?
4. What do you believe has most contributed to your child's academic success?

5. Can you describe the impact that being African American can have on academic success?
6. Describe how you talked to your child about the unique challenges they could face?

The purpose of parental question one and two are to explore how parents perceive the cultural environments influence on academic success for their child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007). Parental question 3 was designed to discover how parents interpret the schools influence on their child's academic success (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Parental question four was designed to examine parents perceptions of external influence and academic success for their child (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The purpose of parental questions five and six is to discover how parents perceive race as a risk factor for success and how they go about minimizing that risk with their child (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013).

The purpose of student question one and two are to explore how students perceive the cultural environments influence on their academic success (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007). Student question three was designed to discover how students interpret the schools influence on their academic success. Student question four was designed to discover student perceptions of external influence on their academic success (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The purpose of student questions five and six is to discover how students perceive race as a risk factor for success and how their parents go about minimizing that risk (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013).

Data Analysis

The analysis will examine the primary and secondary research questions of the study beginning with the organization of data files, followed by memoing, descriptions, categorical aggregation and coding, ending with an interpretation.

Organization of Data Files

A modifiable status board will be maintained to track task to be accomplished and task completed will be utilized. In addition, a data log will be kept for participant information, observation notes, recordings, transcripts and expenses. Electronic files will be created to facilitate organization, categorization and editing, backed up by paper file folders that separate individual participants, issues, and locations. A chain of custody related to all collected information will be observed and recorded to allow any external observer to trace each step in the study from initial research to the conclusion of the study (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Memoing

A complete re-reading of all data collected for the study will be conducted. Notes will be taken to document new narratives and significant issues as they emerge (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Describing

Relevant historical data will be provided to give context for the cultural and community reality of the research setting. A complete description of data collected utilizing thick description to describe in detail, the context of the study that includes, the setting, time and, anticipated and unanticipated events. Data from other research studies will be collected to examine and describe plausible rival explanations (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Categorical Aggregation

Categorization and re-categorization was implemented using codes when subcategories emerged that required more specific discussion to summarize the essence or meaning of significant issues to aid in pattern detection (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Interpretation

To find meaning in the results of the study coding was utilized. Initial coding began with in vivo coding to find words or short phrases derived from the language of participants to discover those that had significant meaning to them. A second cycle of coding used was versus coding to identify codes and categories from which themes could be ascertained. Lastly, axial coding was used to focus data that was separated out during the versus coding process to identify themes relevant to the research (Creswell, 2013; Saldana, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a study can be maintained by utilizing detailed procedures and maintaining accurate records (Yin, 2011).

Credibility

Credibility ensures the accuracy of data collected. Detailed field notes will be maintained along with high quality audio recordings that will be transcribed. Digital audio recording and transcription of interviews and focus groups will be kept to ensure accuracy of recorded information. Utilizing triangulation, multiple sources of information will be collected to ensure the reliability of data obtained. Member checking will be used to verify the accuracy of transcripts and conclusions for changes, accuracy and correctness. A database of all collected information will be maintained to maintain reliability and accuracy (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Dependability

Dependability is essential for maintaining usable and accessible information throughout the research process. Thick descriptions and rich details will be used along with the continued auditing of the research process to ensure accuracy and consistency (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Transferability

It is essential that data collected can be utilized by other researchers. Thick descriptions with details of the context of the study will be utilized to allow other researcher to determine if there are shared characteristics. Results from other studies of similar locations and educational context as the Mountain County school district will be compared for any outstanding results. The corroborating results from the other studies may provide a unique perspective on the results of the research (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Confirmability

Data collected must be verified and confirmed by the researcher and participants. Member checking will be used to ensure that records created accurately reflects the data provided along with continued auditing of the research process to ensure that any changes are noted and reflected in the record (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Participants will be allowed to proof their input to determine accuracy and add any additional comments they may wish to make.

Ethical Considerations

Local participants in the study will be informed that there will be no social or professional penalty for refusing to participate in the study or quitting the study before its completion. The written and informed consent of participants will be obtained. Privacy and confidentiality of participants will be considered. Potential conflicts may arise if participants feel

that they are pressured to participate in the study based on perceived influence of the researcher. Member checking is important because it provides the participants who are the prime catalysts for a successful research prospectus the opportunity to check for accuracy. If the participants do not feel the results are credible, the results of the study will be limited in its academic usefulness. Participants' names will be replaced with pseudonyms to protect privacy (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Summary

This chapter describes the research method, design, research questions, setting and participants of this study. In addition the chapter explores procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection, and data analysis employed in the study. Lastly the chapter examined the trustworthiness of the research method, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and analysis of data collected for this study. Included in this chapter is a full and detailed description of the study participants. Additionally, a description of the coding process and theme identification is provided. Following the identification of themes the central and sub research questions of the research project was addressed and answered.

The purpose of this collective case study was to discover the characteristics of African American parental behavior regarding the importance of school, and its influence on their high school children's academic success in a rural school district for recent African American graduates of the Mountain County High School, in Mountain County, North Carolina. Academic achievement was generally defined as high school achievement sufficient to gain acceptance to, and college attendance. College attendance can serve as a way to demonstrate the level of success parents have had influencing their children regarding the importance of school. The primary theory guiding this study is risk and resilience in childhood (Carnahan, 1994; Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004), as it provides a possible explanation for the success of African American students who face a higher risk for academic failure, based on multiple factors with a focus on resilience.

This research study utilized a qualitative bounded collective case study methodology (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The design of this study is drawn from the social sciences and defines a specific case that can be illustrative of the issue under study (Creswell, 2013). Case studies are effective in the development of in depth descriptions useful for the analysis of single or multiple cases (Creswell, 2013). Data collection for case studies includes the

use of multiple sources, which may include interview, observations, documents and artifacts (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Strategies for the analysis of case studies include thick descriptions of a single case or cases under study and the development of a theme for a single case, multiple themes, and cross cases (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

Participants

The participants in the study included five self-identified African American parents and their children for a total of 10 participants. Each of the children graduated from Mountain County High School, is over the age of 18, gained college acceptance within the last five years, and self-identifies as African American as well. Table 1 displays a demographic table of participants and contains pseudonyms, parent's or student's participant identification, gender, and age.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

<i>Pairing</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Parent / Student</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>
1	Antoinette	<i>Parent</i>	<i>female</i>	46
	Angie	<i>Student</i>	<i>female</i>	21
2	Barbara	<i>Parent</i>	<i>female</i>	66
	Betty	<i>Student</i>	<i>female</i>	19
3	Carolyn	<i>Parent</i>	<i>female</i>	45
	Cathy	<i>Student</i>	<i>female</i>	20
4	Debra	<i>Parent</i>	<i>female</i>	52
	Doug	<i>Student</i>	<i>male</i>	21
5	Eddie	<i>Parent</i>	<i>male</i>	61
	Earl	<i>Student</i>	<i>male</i>	19

Antoinette

Antoinette is a 46-year-old single African American female and the mother of Angie, who is also a participant of the study. Antoinette was born and raised in Mountain County and attended Mountain County High School herself. After graduating high school, she earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and is employed full time in a staff position at the nearby state university. She is an active member of her church and participates in a number of community activities. She expressed concern for her child's academic success based on race but believes she can overcome most disadvantages. She views education as extremely important for her daughter and expended a great deal of time and money ensuring her daughter could participant in school related activities, serving as her primary means of transportation throughout high school.

Angie

Angie is a 21-year-old African American female and the daughter of Antoinette, who is also a participant of the study. Angie has a very outgoing personality and has been involved with dance, musical performance, and Girl Scouts most of her life and all throughout high school. Her

activities with dance include many that are outside the school, as she seeks opportunities to perform during the summers. She believes there are more obstacles to success when you are African American but does not believe she has ever encountered any issues she was not easily able to overcome. She has always wanted to teach and always believed that without college this would not be an obtainable goal. She attributes her success to her mother being there for her just to talk to. Angie believes she is closer to her mother than any person on earth.

Barbara

Barbara is a 66-year-old single African American female, and the paternal grandmother of Betty, also a participant of the study. She also serves as Betty's primary custodian and caregiver. Barbara is a retired secretary who earned a Bachelor's degree late in life and recalls caring for her granddaughter while she was taking courses. She expresses great concern for the possibility Betty could find herself unable to get assistance if she were to ever fall behind because she is African American. She believes her sociability may cause her to overlook obstacle because of race. Despite perceived difficulties, she believes strongly that Betty will be successful and that education will be her only way out.

Betty

Betty is a 19-year-old African American female and the paternal granddaughter of Barbara, a participant of the study. Betty is very sociable and has maintained a large group of diverse friends since the start of high school. Primarily motivated by a desire to find a way to leave behind the community she grew up in, she had always considered going to college. She saw education as a way to achieve that goal. Throughout high school, she participated in dance and continues to express a great appreciation for her grandmother's efforts to ensure she could get to practice. She generally feels racism is something that can hold people back, but feels she

has never been held back by anything other than her own lack of effort. She believes her grandmother gave her sound advice about race, life, and education, much of which she did not fully understand until later, but she respects her opinions.

Carolyn

Carolyn is a 45-year-old single African American female and the mother of Cathy, who is also a participant of the study. She is a high school graduate with some college education and will be working to pursue her bachelor's degree in the spring. She works part time and on-call as a nursing assistant around the Mountain region. She wants more than anything to be a good example. She expresses this idea in a very emotional way—that next to raising her child, going back to school is the most important thing she has done in her life. Carolyn believes there are many opportunities for her daughter, as long as she stays socially aware about the world around her, does her best at all times, and does not fall victim to those individual White people who may not have her best interest in mind.

Cathy

Cathy is a 20-year-old African American female and the daughter of Carolyn who is also a participant of the study. She is very socially active and describes her friends as, “very diverse, but mostly White.” She goes to church regularly with her family and enjoys the interaction of community. Cathy was very active in high school, participating in dance, chorus, and theater. She believes the friends she developed in high school were socially progressive, but is aware that some people want more from African American students than from any other group. While she is socially aware, she does not feel she has ever personally been held back because of race. She views college as a way of achieving her goals and there is no other way to move beyond the community and achieve her dreams.

Debra

Debra is a 52-year-old single African American female, and is the mother of Doug, who is also a participant of the study. She is a high school graduate and has some community college education. Debra works part time as a secretary and has been a single mother from a very young age. She strongly feels that parents must be firm about the needs of their kids early on in school. She admits to being at school more than most parents, but she believes that African American parents have to show an extra degree of interest in their children's education. She believes her son's shy disposition may make him reluctant to address any issues and it is her duty to speak for him when he cannot speak for himself. She does not want to scare him about the reality of race as an obstacle, but she also knows he needs to be more socially aware. She believes his academic gifts will help him overcome any issues regarding race.

Doug

Doug is a 21-year-old African American male and the son of Debra, who is also a participant of the study. He is very shy and quiet and reported having very few friends throughout high school. He expressed that he was not comfortable in most social situations during this period. However, he was an active member of the school's robotic team and the math and science club. He believes strongly that his mother has had the greatest impact in his education because of her constant interactions with teachers and administrators. In addition, he feels no goal he wishes to obtain could be accomplished without advance education well beyond high school. He has always had awareness that things would not be easy for him because of his race, however, he has never felt his race has held him back before, nor will it do so in the future.

Eddie

Eddie is a 61-year-old single African American male, retired Army veteran, and the father of Earl, who is also a participant of the study. He is a high school graduate and has approximately two years of community college. He is currently working part time and seasonally, mowing yards, gardening, and landscaping. He is very sociable and has many friends with diverse backgrounds. He contends his time in the military made it easy for him to be in an environment of mostly White people. He feels strongly that his son will face obstacles, but feels just as strongly that he has all the skills necessary to work around them. In addition, he expresses the opinion that parents are duty-bound to help their children.

Earl

Earl is 19-year-old African American male and the son of Eddie, who is also a participant of the study. He is a very popular student, outgoing, with numerous friends. Throughout high school, he participated in football and track. He believes he has time to discover what he wants to do with his life, but he also believes whatever he decides, out of his many interests, all require him to go to college. He feels he has not been the direct victim of an obstacle to his success but has encountered what he considered to be negative attitudes. He feels close to his father and trusts his advice and experience.

Results

This section of Chapter Four outlines the results of the study, with tables outlining participant demographics and codes. This chapter also includes document analysis, theme development, unexpected themes, central and sub research questions with answers, and a summary.

Document Analysis

The documents collected for this study included high school transcripts, school district demographics, and college acceptance letters. Three of the five student participants of the study were on AP/Honors tracks, while the other two pursued general diplomas. Only one went to an out-of-state school initially, returning to an in-state school after one year. Average weighted GPA was 3.38 with a range of 3.1 to 3.7 with there being no difference between the general diploma and AP/Honors students (See Table 2). Of the two general diploma students, one graduated in the top 50% of the class, while the other reached the top 25%. For the AP/Honors students, two graduated in the top 25% with one lingering in the top 50% (See Table 3).

To provide a sense of racial context for the school district, the district reported the following demographics for the 2016-2017 school year: 85% White, 9% Hispanic, 3% Multi-racial, 1% African American, and 1% Asian. Document analysis confirmed academic success and placed student participants of the study within the context of their peers to ensure that they do indeed represent academic achievement both within the African American student population and the general population of the Mountain County school district.

Table 2

Diploma Track, GPA and College Attendance

	Track	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	College acceptance
Angie	AP	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.4	In-state Public 4 yr University
Barbara	AP	2.8	2.8	3.0	3.1	Out of State Public 4 yr university
Cathy	General	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.3	In-state Public 4 yr University
Doug	General	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4	In-state Public 4 yr University
Earl	AP/Hon	2.9	3.6	3.6	3.7	In-state Public 4 yr University

Table 3

Class Ranking

	Year	Rank		Class Size	Percentile
Angie	2013	36		212	Top 4th
Barbara	2014	112	Of	226	Top half
Cathy	2014	81		226	Top half
Doug	2015	41		207	Top 4th
Earl	2015	22		207	Top 4th

Theme Development

Data collection began with individual interviews. Semi-structured and focused interviews were conducted with each of the five parents and five students while interview notes were taken.

Each set of parents and students were interviewed separately at the start of the study to document the level of importance the parents and the child placed on the importance of school, and the related parental behavior. At the conclusion of the study, each parents and their child were contacted and briefed on the findings, allowed to proof their input to determine accuracy, and to add any additional comments they may have wished to make. Interviews of parents were limited to the individual who had the primary role of caregiver. Interviews took place at the residence of the participants or another location that was mutually beneficial within the community. All personal interviews were digitally recorded and supplemented with field notes. Student participants provided high school transcripts and college acceptance letters (Yin, 2011).

Using collected data, codes were developed to help identify themes. The first cycle of coding began with in vivo coding. *In vivo* refers to words or short phrases derived from the language of the participants in this study to determine terms and phrases which had significant meaning to them. This type of initial coding is especially useful at extracting a subculture's unique way of speaking or use of metaphors to frame them in context (Saldana, 2013). The second cycle of coding used was versus coding to identify codes and categories from which themes could be ascertained (Saldana, 2013). *Versus coding* identifies in dichotomous terms, groups and social systems that are in conflict with each other (Saldana, 2013). Versus coding seemed most appropriate from a risk/resilience perspective because the purpose of the study was to discover what resilience factors had developed in response/reaction to the risk posed by being a minority in a rural environment, therefore creating the inherent "conflict" that versus coding identifies (Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Saldana, 2013). At the conclusion of versus coding, five major conflicts were identified as outlined in Table 4, along with illustrative examples from the data.

Table 4*Versus Codes with Illustrative Examples*

Conflict	Illustrative Examples From the Data
Community Expectations vs Parental Expectation	<p>“I always told her that she needed to do well in school to reach her goals and she could do anything those other White kids could do and she did.”</p> <p>“I always said was important and knew I felt like it was important by the way I acted”</p> <p>“I mean we go to church but the church does not have an influence on school in any way”</p>
Intrinsic Motivation vs External Motivation	<p>“I would have to say that she has always been self-motivated”</p> <p>“He was always motivated or self-motivated to get things done,</p> <p>“He was interested and he would just on his own get it done”</p> <p>“She was always self-motivated”</p>
Parent vs Child	<p>“He knew I was always concerned not that I didn’t think he would do well but I would be looking, that I cared that he did well, I was gonna be looking at his grades”</p> <p>“I didn’t tell her who she could and could not associate with really but if I felt like I needed to tell her something about somebody I feel like we were close enough to talk”</p> <p>“My mom was always encouraging me and she was easy to talk to she never yelled or anything like that we could always talk.”</p> <p>“We always were really close and because he never really got out much most of his life it was just me as a single parent”</p> <p>“I can’t think of no time that we was not very close really.”</p>
Future Options/ Opportunities vs Stagnant Future	<p>“He always knew he had to go to college and that going to college is what it means to be successful”</p> <p>“She knew that whatever she wanted to do she needed to go to college”</p> <p>“I pretty much kind of said you really do need to go to college”</p> <p>“There has always been discrimination in the world and discrimination is still out there but she can do ok she can overcome it”</p>
Social Awareness vs Complacency	<p>“We have had many conversations about what it means to be out there, being ‘woke’ about what she could expect from people in the negative and the positive from people.”</p> <p>“We talked about what she could expect from people and how to deal with that by being a better person”</p> <p>“Oh I told her to she need to stay ‘woke’ because some folks will smile in your face but they are not good for you</p> <p>“She does need to know how things work in the world and that when your Black or African American things are gonna be different”</p> <p>“I think when I was young I was not aware of any discrimination, as I got older I knew it was there.”</p>

The third cycle of coding analysis utilized axial coding to focus data that was separated out during the versus coding process to identify themes relevant to the research. *Axial coding* extends the analytical work of in vivo and versus coding by reducing the number of codes. Axial coding is appropriate for research studies utilizing a wide variety of data forms such as transcripts and interviews (Saldana, 2013; Yin, 2011). Once these conflicts were confirmed, they became the core phenomenon for axial coding. With each conflict, the data were re-examined for specific actions (parenting behaviors) that promoted student's success in the face of the challenges. Table 5 describes the axial coding process by detailing the type of conflict and behavioral responses found in the data and the resulting themes or strategic approaches used to promote student success. Once behaviors were identified, only those behaviors that were described by all parent/child pairs were retained for further analysis and these were reviewed to determine themes or strategic approaches that all the pairs used to promote student success. At the completion of axial coding, the following themes were developed: "woke", parental expectations, parental friendship, pursuing future dreams, parental encouragement, and support—both emotional and with physical tasks.

Conflict	Behavioral Responses	Themes (Strategic Approaches)
Racial discrimination	“Be aware of the environment.” “Everyone does not want you to do well.” “You can overcome discrimination.” “Everyone needs to be treated equal to have a chance.”	“Woke”
Limited community support	“You can’t expect much for us in this community” “I feel she is my best friend” “We have been really close since she was a child” “We depend on each other”	Parental Friendship
Low community expectation for academic success	“A lot of people don’t really care around here” “We never get support from the community” “They don’t expect much from us” “You have to go above and beyond if your Black”	Parental Expectations
Limited opportunities in a rural area	“You need to leave the place to do anything” “There are more opportunities off the mountain” “She always knew she had to leave to reach her goals” “There are not really many opportunities around here for anybody”	Pursuing Future Dreams
Negative community influences	“Some people would rather you just settle back and do little or nothing” “Some of these folks have nothing going on good in the children’s lives” “There are a lot of em they want to see you do bad and get into bad” “People can try to discourage you when you Black sometimes”	Parental Encouragement

“**Woke**”. The term “woke” was repeatedly used by both parents and students to succinctly express the concept of social awareness. According to the 115th Congressional Black Caucus, it is “used by African Americans to remind themselves and those around them to stay focused on what’s really being said and done to their community” (2017) especially as it relates to issues of race and social injustice. The use of the term “woke” in official communication from

The Congressional Black Caucus elevates its usage from slang and formalizes its relevance in the discourse regarding social awareness within the African American community.

Role in Society. In describing the importance of being aware of your role in society and how others may perceive you, Antoinette said, “We have had many conversations about what it means to be out there, being ‘woke’ about what she could expect from people, in the negative and the positive from people.” Angie stated, “Let’s just say, I stay ‘woke’. Things are not as easy as they seem out there.” Barbara said, “We talked about what she could expect from people and how to deal with that by being a better person.” Carolyn asserted, “Oh I told her she need to stay ‘woke’, because some folks will smile in your face, but they are not good for you.” Doug stated, “You have to be ‘woke’ to be successful.”

Strong cultural and ethnic identity. It may be important to consider how various dimensions of ethnic racial socialization convey meta messages regarding the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity to youth. During the focus group, Antoinette said, “You have to let them know that Black people can have just as much pride, and can be successful, too.” All of the parent participants of the focus group identified themselves as being Black or African American with a positive expression and view of themselves. Antoinette said, “I consider myself a Black mountain woman.” Debra, “I am a Black woman first and foremost who was raised in the mountains.” Eddie, “I am a Black man first.” Carolyn, “I consider myself a Black mountain woman.” Barbara, “I identify as a African American woman who lives in the mountains.” Antoinette talked with great pride about her families’ contributions to the community saying, “Well as a family, we have always been involved with local community activities, some affiliated with the church and some associated with the school.”

Positive self-esteem. Barbara said “Well for me and my family, for my people, our people, we have always stressed the importance of education, more than some of these White families from up here, so yea I feel ok about that.” Angie stated, speaking her personal pride in identifying as African American, “I am very proud of my African American heritage and what my people have accomplished. Yep, I am very proud to be Black and African American. Yes I am. Can’t you tell?” Eddie demonstrated the same level of pride when he spoke of his military service, “I am proud of my military service. You could say that and maybe more proud as a Black man, because we had to do more and I did ok, we did ok in the Army.”

Racial socialization. Antoinette said, “I have always went to school with mostly all White people in high school and in college, and at work everywhere. You have to understand them, not be hostile, but I mean the things they can understand too because that’s real life learning to understand different people.” Angie said about her friends, “I would say most of my friends are White, other than those I am related to. It’s always been that way, never knew it any other way, but I know what’s up I try to stay ‘woke’ as much as I can. It’s not been a real challenge.” Barbara noted, “There really has never been a lot of our people, Black people up here so this is sort of what we are used to here, that is up here, but you have to learn and I told her this you have to learn to live in a larger world.” Barbara further noted, “I grew up pretty much in the same environment as her, with mostly White folks, so we had to learn to socialize, you didn’t really have a choice if you wanted to get somewhere.” Carolyn was more forthright in her assentation about the importance of being aware of society as a whole. “You just can’t let your child go out there and not think there are people, and I hate to say mostly White folks, some not all, especially around her, are not as aware of the world or ‘woke’ as they say as you are because

of your education.” Earl noted the point more bluntly in the focus group saying, “I mean either your child knows or they don’t know how the world works or that’s it for they ass, you know?”

Belief in control over dreams and goals. All of the parent participants concurred in both individual and focus group discussions that in the end no matter the obstacles or level of discrimination they may encounter their child could control the outcome of the success.

Antoinette said, “She has to know that she is the one who is really in control of what she can do, not others. I told her, ‘Don’t ever let anyone tell you or treat you like you don’t know what’s going or think they are better than you.’” Barbara said, “I always let her know that she was the one that was in control. When she got into that little spat with a group of White girls in school and she was so upset, I had to remind her not to let them get to her because she was the one in control of her, not them.” Earl concurred, “He knew, and I would remind him sometime, not often—you ain’t have to tell him much—sometimes I would say, ‘It’s really up to you and no one else but you.’”

Awareness of racial discrimination. There was a general consensus from the student focus group that racial discrimination could hinder your success if allowed to happen. Angie said, “Discrimination can be harmful if it is allowed to happen, but I won’t let it happen to me.” Betty said, “Discrimination is out there and I am aware of it, but it doesn’t impact me personally, as far as I am concerned anyway. I won’t let it impact me like that.” Cathy noted, “I believe there is discrimination out there against Black people, but I don’t let it influence how I behave towards other people. I don’t care what a person’s skin color is.” Doug said, “Yes, discrimination can have a negative impact on you, if you are not aware of it.” Earl concurred with Doug saying, “Yea, I agree discrimination can mess with your education, if you’re not aware of it, and could have a negative effect.” It should be noted that none of the student participants indicated that

they personally faced any level of discrimination that impacted them academically while in high school.

Perception of racial discrimination. Antoinette said, “For a long time when she was little and she would go play with the other little girls, I don’t think she was really aware of being Black, and certainly not aware of what adults were thinking, but as she got older, it was more if you don’t get approached with it you don’t see it for her.” Angie was in agreement with her mother. In individual interviews, she said, “I think when I was young, I was not aware of any discrimination. As I got older, I knew it was there but most of the time I never thought of it so it didn’t bother me, did not distract me none.” Earl said, “You could say out of sight out of mind, but you don’t want to do that, but I would say he was not aware of nothing when he was young and as he grew up it’s not what he thinks about too much so it ain’t affect him as far as school.”

Feeling uniquely challenged. Barbara said, “She does need to know how things work in the world and that when you’re Black or African American, things are gonna be different, because some White people are not going to give you a equal chance if you don’t look out for yourself.” Carolyn also said, “You just can’t go out there and not know how things work. You have to know.” Expressing the uniqueness of what African–American children experience Antoinette said, “You have to know that may have to work twice as much to get twice as less.” Debra said, “Oh, I just would never ever expect him to go out into the world and not know that some people might have it out for him because of his skin color.”

Parent’s level of awareness. Earl notes, “He could always come to me and talk to me about school stuff or anything that was bothering him about what he was interested in at school.” All of the parent participants of the study were fully engaged with the child’s in school and out of school activities, and aware of the positive social impact of participating in these events.

Antoinette said, “I would get all the information I could about her activities.” Debra said, “I was up there at that school all the time. I know them people were getting tired of seeing me but I don’t care. I wanted to know what I needed to know as a parent.”

Being woke is a necessary coping skill for African American parents and their children and serves as a protective factor. The parents in this study instilled a strong sense of cultural or ethnic identity and their children positively identified with it, and that helped them deal with conflict related to intercultural contact more effectively. They expressed evidence of the strong correlation between positive self-esteem and academic achievement which, in turn, implies that there may be some level of interaction between cultural identity and academic achievement for African Americans. The parents in this study discussed how racial socialization was indeed positively associated with academic achievement and gave examples of that support the idea that if an individual believes they have control over the ability to achieve their goals and objectives they are more likely to do so. In turn, this general attitude about the possibility for success serves as a protective factor against negative attitudes to the contrary. Moreover, parents detailed the social realities that played a part in their children’s perception of racism and racial discrimination, with several noting generational differences.

Parental Expectation. A common attitude expressed by parents is that their child must be able to adapt to the environment to be successful academically and in life. Social status and class values shaped parental views and perceptions regarding the importance of academic success. Parental expectations were realistic and achievable goals for their child. Parents provide their children with ideas of what they were likely to experience in society as African Americans. While none of the parents expressed the view that there would be any emotional consequences for their child not living up to their expectations, a number of the children expressed the idea that

fear of their parents loss of confidence was a strong motivator towards success. Parental expectations were clearly expressed and communicated.

Parents express interest in education as a priority. Antoinette said, "I always stressed it, when it comes to school that has always been a family priority over everything else. I mean if it's a vacation or a school activity that the others the White students get to go on, I wanted to make sure she was involved as well." Barbara said, "I always told her school was important, and she always knew I felt that way, it was important to our family always." Carolyn said "I always said was important and knew I felt like it was important by the way I acted. There was never any question about that." Deborah said, "He always knew I felt like school was important. I always said it. I always paid attention to it and it was something we always talked about so he always knew his whole life that I believed that school was important, and he knows that." Eddie also stated, "I always said school was important. I always said it to him and he knew I felt like it was important by the way I acted too. I looked at his school work made sure he had what he needed for school, things like that."

Parents communicated to their children socially accepted ways of handling perceived discrimination Antoinette said, "I always said to her that if you are Black you can expect to work twice as hard and get twice as less in life." Barbara added, "We always talked about how to act and what she could expect from some White people, not all, but some with old fashion ideas and things like that." Debra noted, "I told him all the time to do the best he can and to know that some people don't want to see him do well and may discriminate but as long as he does his work he would be ok." Debra also commented about how often she spoke to her child about discrimination saying, "I mean when he was young, I never wanted him to really worry, but as he

started to get older, I started to tell him every year before he went to school. We went over it, that's what I did, even to high school."

Parents universally believed their children would be successful. Antoinette said, "I told her she needed college to meet her goals but she also was very aware of that. That was something we talked about because she was expected to go to college, whatever she wanted to do." Barbara stated, "I pretty much kind of said you really do need to go to college but I always expected that she needed to go to college, she needed to go to college no matter what she wanted to do with her life to be successful." Carolyn added "She knew she needed to go to college to be successful in life. She knew she needed to go and I said she would be going to college that was always a part of it, being successful in life going, to college." Earl said, "He always knew he had to go to college and that going to college is what it means to be successful. Well that's not all you need to do as far as your education go and as far as having a better chance you need to go to college."

All of the African American parent participants of the study indicated that they were educated at the least the high school level and some additional training beyond. Antoinette said, "I graduated from high school and I have a BS and I am working on my masters right now as well." Barbara stated, "I have a high school diploma and I went back to school late in life and earned my Bachelor's degree." Carolyn shared, "I have a high school degree and some community college." Debra stated, "I have a high school diploma and I took some professional development course classes for credit, community college class." Earl said, "I have a high school diploma and I have some community college classes."

Religious faith had a small influence on academic success. Antoinette stated, "We go to church in our community. We go as a family. My entire family has been involved in the church

all of my life.” Barbara said, “Yes our family is very involved in the church and we have been going to church as a family for all of my life and her life as well. It’s something we do as part of our community and our faith, too.” Carolyn said, “We were very involved in the local church, and it’s something we practice our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have not been in a while because of some other things. But we have always had the Lord in our life and we have always had the Lord in our hearts. That’s what’s important. We have that.” Debra concluded, “We go to church with our family but the church does not really determine how we live like that in our life. I mean we go to church but the church does not have a influence on school in any way.” Earl also said, “I mean yea we attended church as a family when they were young, but I mean they still participate in activities or they did, because when they were, you had the transportation and they were young. But when they got the high school it was more things for them not in the church, but they still would go, to see their friends for church, to worship.”

There was also awareness of how discrimination was perceived. Antoinette said, “Discrimination is still out there, but she can overcome it. If she stays socially aware, or ‘woke,’ she should be ok.” Barbara noted, “There is discrimination and obstacles, but none that she should not be able to overcome. I believe that she can overcome it for the most part, as long as she does what she needs to do in school.” Carolyn said, “I do believe there is discrimination. Not as bad as it used to be. People now are not so in your face. That’s why you have to be aware more these days.” Debra added, “There has always been discrimination in the world and discrimination is still out there, but she can do ok. She can overcome it, if she works hard, I believe.” Earl said, “You do have discrimination in the world. It’s better now than in the past, but you can’t really get away with stuff like you use to, more people would say something about it. I would say something about it, but you have a few of the redneck types who could do something

or try to say something. Not so much in school, not that I have seen, but it's out there with a few."

The rural setting of the school environment influenced parental expectations of success. Antoinette noted, "I went to high school here. We had a few of them good ol' boys when I went to school up here because we didn't have many black students and just a few Black girls, so some of them was just not used to seeing Black people other than at school, the ignorant ones who never went anywhere." Barbara noted, "You do have some of those redneck types up here in the mountains. Some of it is ignorance. Some of it is the mountain culture. Well, I don't know. Some of it's a mountain thing they have and some of it is just being ignorant." Carolyn said, "Some country folks from the country, yea mountain people, I mean, we mountain too, but I mean White people, some are not like those who live in the town, because of what they parents do. They are educated and they travel get around, but they parents can be like that." Debra noted, "More country people who live out in the country with the confederate flags and stuff like that is hard to see. But it's a country thing, I guess, or a rural thing, I guess, but you see that more from the ones who don't live in town most of the time." Debra concluded, "It's different because we have a lot of people that live in the country and see themselves as more country than they do as part of the town. They have trucks and wear hats, yea hunting people, outdoor, lots of people identify with that life up here." Eddie noted, "It's a lot of country people, them rednecks who see themselves as more country. But you don't see no Blacks out there doing that and that may be the difference, that you don't see many but the Whites outside the town. So most of the Whites see themselves as country mountain folks, but we all country in this little place you know."

Leaving the community was seen as a sign of success Antoinette said, "She knew that whatever she wanted to do she needed to go to college and she needed to probably leave this

place to do what she wanted to do after high school.” Barbara said, “She always said she wanted to leave this place and she knew that the only way she was going to leave was to go to college.” Carolyn said, “She wanted to go to college and I knew she needed to leave here to live out her goals, yea I knew she needed to leave here to achieve whatever she wanted to do.” Debra noted, “I knew it would be good for him to leave here and what he wanted to do with his life to be successful, he needed to go to school some place different, go to college and leave the mountain area for school.” Eddie said, “Whatever he wanted to do he, needed to go to school and to leave home leave from up here on the mountain to go to school to do whatever his goals was would be best for him anyway.”

The level of parental involvement with activities was tied to the students level of interest Antoinette recalled, “I was her driver for most of her time in school. I was the one who had to take her where she wanted to go until she started to drive. Oh yes I was! And if I was going to drive her around she needed to be doing her part.” Barbara recalled, “I was the one who had to drive her to her events. When she got older, she started arranging rides with her friends or I had to meet and pick her up but I was always there to make sure she got where she wanted to go, and I always felt like it was good for her to participate in other school activities, to keep her interested and doing things too.” Carolyn said, “I always tried to keep her going to her activities. That’s part of it, to take them there and pick them back up, if you want them to participate.” Debra noted, “I did what I could to get him there if he was interested. I always did that. It was not always convenient but it’s what I had to do, just me.” Eddie also concluded, “I was the one driving him to everything he did. He didn’t drive even in high school, but you know they have their friends. But sometimes it’s too far for school events and you have to take 'em. I took 'em, yep, I was the one who took 'em.”

There was the impression that discrimination should be expected. Antoinette said, “There is discrimination out there, and I told her it was out there, but she could overcome it.” Barbara said, “I told her she could expect discrimination but not as much as in the past but that she could overcome it if she just did what she was supposed to do in school.” Carolyn said, “She knew from the time she was young I told her there would be people out there that would treat her different because of her color and she needed to do well in school because of it.” Debra said, “I told him a lot of things but I did not tell him everything while he was young, that there is discrimination out there, that some people, not all, but some would treat him different and he had to do good.” Earl said, “Well it’s not as bad as it used to be but he knows that some people may want to discriminate. He knows what it looks like but I didn’t tell him to really worry but more to be aware of some of ‘em, not all, not like it used to be.”

The expectations of the parents in this study were guided by social status and class values which shaped their views and perceptions regarding the importance of academic success. They placed emphasis on the importance of school which, consistent with research, led to having children who are more likely to be academically successful. Furthermore, their positive parental expectations created protective factors such as socially accepted responses to the effects of racial discrimination. Additionally, the educational background of the parents in this study influenced their expectations of the child’s likelihood for future success. Parents’ prepared their children to face anticipated racial discrimination to support their expectations of their child’s academic success and, as an indicator of success, expected children to leave the community after high school. Finally, the parents’ expectation of involvement was a factor in the degree to which their children participated in school activities.

Parental Friendship. Relationships between parents and their children were characterized by a unique bond between the parent and the child by the expression of enjoyment of the others company, the ability for both parent and child to express personal feelings without fear of judgment, and mutual respect for the others perspective. Parental and child relationship evolved age appropriately over time as parents gained more confidence in the child's ability to manage their personal affairs. Parents served as mentors and respected adults to their child.

There were close bounds shared between parents and their children Eddie noted that he feels a special connection with his son saying, "We was always close, as males for one thing. Ain't that many Black males up here anyway, so really it's just me and him, and as a single man I guess my relationship with him is close." Debra also committed on the nature of her relationship with her son; "his father was never really part of his life and I guess I was his mother and his father. But, you know a boy needs a role model, but we have been really close, maybe because he is a boy but we could always talk about anything at all. He could always talk to me like a friend." Antoinette said, "We were always close, from a very young age. I was always her mother but we shared many of the same things in common and we did things together more as she got older but I would say our relationship is really close."

Friendships between parents and their children came with mutual respect. Earl said, "I would say that he listened to what I had to say about most things. We was close enough to talk, talk about people that could influence him. But we could talk as closer than father and son about what you can trust, we trust each other maybe." Barbara also said "I didn't tell her who she could and could not associate with really but if I felt like I needed to tell her something about somebody I feel like we were close enough to talk, oh yea we could talk about people if we needed to." Debra said, "I would tell him what activities and things that I thought he needed to

know about that were bad for him, but I really didn't need to because, I mean he was not a problem, but we could talk about things."

Parents communicated with their children about the behaviors of others in the community. Antoinette said, "We could talk about other people that we needed to talk about, in the community or White people." Barbara also said, "I never had any problem talking to her about what she could expect from some people out there that would not have her best interest in mind, because of those folks some, not all, don't want to see a Black person do well." Earl said, "We could talk about those people, those redneck types that could be a bad influence. I am not gonna say they are really racist but they are... just they can get into trouble but if you Black you do the same and yea, you know, you in trouble, I would talk to him about that." Debra said, "He really didn't hang out like that but he would know of people I would disapprove of. I could talk to him about that. I never really need to but if I needed to I could."

Each of the parents in the study concurred that building their child's self-esteem was important to them and the closeness they felt to them. Barbara said, "I always tried to make her feel good about herself, like that time she had that incident with those White girls at school. But she got over that and she built herself back up. I told her that. 'Build yourself back up. You're beautiful as they are and can do as much as they do.'" Antoinette said, "I told her to feel good about herself all the time. You know her hair is not like the White girls, all long and whatever but she, you know, and things with boys and school work, but she was always very popular regardless of race and she did very well and she never saw herself as anything less than the other kids, her friends, her White friends." Carolyn said, "Yes I always encouraged her to feel good about herself. Yes, have high self-esteem and pride too."

Gender was seen as having some influence on parental friendship and closeness with their child. Antoinette said “We have been friends for a very long time, from when she was a little girl. Of course, I am still her mom but yes, we have always been close.” Barbara said “I would say we have been close all her life since she was a little girl.” Earl noted “We have always been close since he was small me and him being male and not a lot of us up here.” Carolyn also said “We have been close all her life. It has changed as she grew but we have always been close I would say.” Although Debra was on the only parent whose gender was different from that of her child, she still noted a close but evolving relationship. “We have been close all his life its different now but all his life we have been close.”

Parents and children most often shared common interest. Antoinette said, “We share a lot of the same things, same interest in a lot of things and that helps, we are close.” Barbara said, “We have some things in common. We have been involved in Girl Scouts together, I would say all her life; she loves it I do.” Debra said, “We like a lot of the same things. We look a lot of stuff on TV; we like mostly Comedy Central stuff. But, I mean, he is usually off to himself but we enjoy that together and we love to go hiking together. We do as much of that as we can.” Carolyn shared, “We like to do things together, like dance and shopping. She likes singing and I like to sing as well; I like to think I can sing anyway. But we do share that and church, of course, but we can be in each other’s company.” Earl also stated, “We like to go fishing, and of course we love football. I go to his games and we look at football on TV. We go for the same teams but some stuff like his music, not all of that. But we can share the radio; we can get along. We don’t have to fight for the TV well I got more than one so it’s not an issue anyway.”

Close relationships between parent and child began at an early age. Antoinette said, “I would say we have been really close sense she first started going to school.” Barbara noted, “I

have to say we have been close since she was little.” Carolyn said, “We have been close since she first started going to school but it changed over time not just over night, it grew.” Debra noted “I would say we have been close all her life. Earl said “I would say we have been close all his life. I can’t think of no time that we was not very close really...you have to start when they are young. It just don’t happen overnight with children because they grow up, they change, like that you know.”

Good communication between parents and their children appeared to be fundamental to their relationship. Earl noted “I would say that we could talk. I never really had to yell, he knew what I was always trying to say.” Eddie concurred with his father noting “Yea my daddy he never really yelled or anything like that. He was always really easy to talk to about anything.” Antoinette said “I did my best to treat her with respect and talk to her like she had some sense, so that she would be used to having others speak to her that way. I didn’t have to yell, but I could get my message across if I need to.” Barbara added “No, I never was one to really have to be loud or yell. She was easy to communicate with but, of course, she could get a little feisty sometimes, but she knew I would never tolerate that so it was not often but we could always talk. She knew she could always talk to me about anything.” Carolyn said “We could always talk. She was always easy to talk to. I never really had any problem from her with nothing because we were close and she would listen and I found that she listened to what I had to say.” Debra recalled, “We always were really close and because he never really got out much, most of his life, it was just me as a single parent and we would talk all the time but he is really kind a quiet but he knows that he can always come to me. I can’t remember ever really yelling at him for anything except maybe when he was little putting something in his mouth.”

There was a direct communication style between parents and their child. Antoinette stated, “I could be direct with her if I needed to. We could talk about anything. I mean as she got older we could talk about anything. Oh she knew I could get to the point if I needed to. I never had to hide what I was feeling with her.” Angie concurred with her mother “I would say she has her own style. We have always got along, I mean since high school. She is really easy to talk to. I mean she can be really persuasive but she has never really tried to be too pushy, sometimes, not really, not too pushy anyway.” Barbara said, “I guess I would say my style is to tell her one time, tell her what I think and let her decide for herself. Now I will guide her but let her decide, I mean as a teenager.” Carolyn also noted, “I would say my style is to let her know how to do something, what I expect and then check on her to follow up on her because she is still a child. But now I would say my style is to just be there for her and try to help her when I can but not really influence her life I mean not influence it so she can’t learn.”

The single parent status of parents greatly influenced the importance of success. Antoinette noted “I guess because I am a single parent I don’t really have to worry about what somebody else have to say. I mean I wish her father was more in her life; he was before he got remarried but I never had any problems as far as school or behavior or nothing because of it.” Earl noted, “Naw, I never really had any issues because I was single. I mean they all close to their grandparents. So no, really not a problem but I didn’t have any problem raising them by myself, not really.” Barbara said, “No, I never really had an issue because she was my grandchild. My husband had already passed away so it was never something that affected me as far as raising her. No I never had a problem.” Debra said “I have raised him my whole life by myself. His father was never really in his life and that’s ok. The Lord has been with us, but I

wish he had a man in his life but we have been close because of it. But no, I never had any problems but I really could have used some help but we got through it I guess.”

Parental friendship is that relationships between African American parents and their children were characterized by a unique bond between the parent and the child by the expression of enjoyment of the other’s company. The parents in this study expressed close personal bonds with their children and these bonds functioned as a form of friendship that, into adolescence, served as a protective factor. Additionally, parents shared evidence that their friendships with their children may have helped minimize disruptive community influences that could have impacted negatively on academic success and served as protective factor that mitigated negative influences of non-family social groups outside the home. Furthermore, parents discussed the closeness of their relationships and its ability to influence their children’s self-esteem. While research indicated that relationships between African American parents and their children that progress to friendship are more likely to occur between a child and parent of the same gender, the mixed gender parent/child pairing expressed a strong friendship in this study as well. Moreover, this study was consistent with the research that indicated that single African American parents more often maintain close relationships with their child.

Pursuing Future Dreams. Parents uniformly predicted that despite any social hurdles and obstacles their child would face they would be successful in the future. Parents supported the pursuit of their child’s individual passion. Parents taught children the value of persistence by word and example. Parents reacted positively to the possibility of the child’s dream becoming a reality.

Parents demonstrated a strong interest and their child’s future. Antoinette said, “I have always told her she needed to do well in school to accomplish her goals and she always knew

that.” Barbara said, “I always told her she needed to do well in school if she wanted to pursue her goals. I always wanted to see her do well.” Carolyn also noted, “I have always wanted to see her do well in school and I have always said that she needed to do well in school.” Debra said, “I was always interested. I know drove those counselors and teachers at the school crazy but I don’t care. I did what I thought I needed to do because I knew he would do well if he had a chance and I wanted him to have that chance, you know?” Earl said “He knew I was always concerned not that I didn’t think he would do well but I would be looking, that I cared that he did well. I was gonna be looking at his grades, and talking to his teacher; because I wanted to make sure he was doing ok.”

Parents had a strong interest in having their child believe in themselves. Antoinette said, “I always told her that she needed to do well in school to reach her goals and she could do anything those other White kids could do and she did.” Barbara noted, “I always told her to feel good about herself but we never had whole lot of problems with that.” Earl said, “He knew he should feel good about himself and he did well in school and in football and track so he was all-round in class, school work too.” Angie noted, “I never felt any different; I mean my mom had different kinds of friends and I had them as well yes White, so it was no big deal but I did whatever I wanted to do in school in every way I would say.”

Parents identified with the child goals Antoinette said “I can see her becoming a teacher. It’s something she always talked about and she has always loved school.” Barbara also noted, “Well I know she wanted to leave this community as one of her goals and I understand why. There are not many opportunities so I understand that she wants to do more than she could accomplish here at home.” Carolyn commented, “I guess the better she did the more I could see her doing later on.” Earl said, “You could take them more serious if you see they show the

interest and he did what he was supposed to do so I ain't have no problem with that. I was ok with what he wanted to do." Debra said, "I mean there were some things he wanted to do in school, study in college, I just didn't get but the more as time went on I got interested but not so much like he did but I did see how interested he was. So if he need a new computer, the Lord helped us find a way to get it for him or some or extra class."

Parents pursued their own academic goals and wanted to see their children do the same. Antoinette said, "I feel like if I could go to college, she could go to college because she had it better than I did in some ways. I mean she had more opportunities because more were available I mean as far as academic stuff and outside stuff, social stuff, networking, and I always wanted to get my Masters and I am doing it now so yes, I had my dream she can have hers." Earl said, "Well I really didn't have the same opportunities that he did but, I mean, I graduated from high school, got some college. I mean the school won't my dream but the job was my dream, still dreaming, but what I couldn't do he can do so I can see him have his dreams." Barbara noted, "I went back to school late in life and I always had a dream of finishing my degree. After I got married I put that off. And she has her dreams but her dreams include college, maybe not getting married. I mean these days it's just a different priority but she can have a chance of having a dream as a single person."

Young et al. (2013) suggested that African American parents who were directly focused on their child's academic achievement believed academic success would allow their child to pursue their goals. Earl said, "I was always interested in what he was doing in school. I looked at his report cards went to meetings up at the school, stuff like that. Talked with the people, talk to him about school." Barbara said, "I feel like I was always focusing on her being successful whatever that meant for her. But yes, academically too, in school." Antoinette concurred, "I was

focused on her doing well in school by being attentive and letting her know I believed that it was important. She knew I was in school and saw me study too.” Carolyn noted, “Yes I would say I was focused on her academics, and as far as her other activities, I wanted her to do well and be happy.” Debra said, “I paid a lot of attention to what he brought home from school, that’s for sure. You can ask them people at the school how much they must have hated me for all my questions. If one didn’t give me what I wanted, I went to another, not just teachers- school counselor and principle- whoever.”

There was a wide consensus among researchers that suggest that African American parents who participate or engage in school activities have significant influence on their child’s selection of goals (Chabra & Jumari, 2011; Hays, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Young et al., 2013). Earl noted, “I go to his games, his football games, and track. I drive him there or I did. I enjoy football too so yea, I guess you could say I was engaged with him. We was both there.” Antoinette said, “I was involved with Girl Scouts with her from Brownies on up and we enjoyed that activity and we she was involved in dance. I was involved and we always talked about her future. We could always talk.” Barbara said, “I was involved in Girl Scouts most of her life and dance with her at school. We talked about her goals. We had time to talk driving and waiting too, but yes.” Debra said, “I helped him get to places driving and we used that time to talk about stuff, random things. But as far as me being with him for activities, yes, I was there- all those little math contest and science things he did, really nice time. I can’t say I understood it all but he was glad I was there, I guess.” Concurring with his mother Doug asserted “Yea it always made me feel good that she could be there with me and she was interested.”

The parents in this study uniformly predicted that despite any social hurdles and obstacles their children would face, their children would be successful in the future and supported the

pursuit of their individual passions and future dreams. Parents' voiced an interest in their children's future academic outcomes that served as a protective factor and influenced the degree of effort and attention given to their continued focus on academic success. Parents encouraged and promoted their children's self-esteem which is correlated with the pursuit of future goals and potentially served as a protective factor against self-doubt and the potential for their children to give up and not try as hard as they could. Additionally, the parents identified with their children's future goals and had pursued their own dreams which, in turn, made them more likely to encourage their child to do the same.

Parental Encouragement. Each parent participants of the study sought to persuasively guide their child towards the continuing pursuit of activities and attitudes they believed would have a positive impact on them. Parents seek to boost their child's self-esteem, by routinely providing positive feedback and demonstrating interest in their academic and extracurricular activities. Parents demonstrate loyalty and commitment to their child success and general happiness.

Parents were very encouraging to their children Antoinette said, "I always let her know that I wanted her to do well and I encouraged her to do her best in school as often as I could." Angie concurred with her mother and said, "My mom always encouraged me to do the best I could in school." Barbara said, "I always encouraged her to do her best in school and whatever she was interested in." Betty agreed saying, "Yea, my Nana, she always encouraged me to do well in school." Carolyn noted, "I encouraged as well as I could to do well in school and look out for those things that could distract her from doing well in school. So I encouraged her and I cautioned her. You could say a little of both. I encouraged her to 'stay woke'." Eddie noted, "Yea, my daddy always tried to encourage me to do my best in school and in sports all the time,

you could say.” Eddie’s father, Earl, agreed, “Yea I always tried to encourage him to do his best in school, by letting him know that I was concerned and telling him he was doing well when he was doing well, to keep it up.”

All of the parents in the study agreed that their children were self-motivated. Antoinette said, “I would have to say that she has always been self-motivated. I never really had to tell her what she needed to do. She was always the one to know what she needed, keep her schedule, because it’s what she wanted to do. She had her own motivation.” Barbara said, “She was basically self-motivated. I really didn’t have to tell her what she needed to do much or push her.” Carolyn said, “She really was self-motivated for the most part and knew what she needed to do and she knew what she had to do and she would get on her assignments and projects. And that’s pretty much what her teachers said as well, that she was really motivated on her work, to get it done on her own.” Debra noted, “I mean I didn’t really have to push him towards anything, because of lot of the stuff he was working on I didn’t understand it anyway. I just knew he was interested and he would just on his own get it done. I never had to sit down with him after, say, elementary school to help him with anything involving school work ever, not even in high school.” Earl said, “No I never really had to push hard about anything as far as school is concerned because he was always motivated or self-motivated to get things done. Well he would do his school work, homework on his own and he knew he had to get it done; his grades was ok.”

Parents encouraged children by their unique manner of communicating. Antoinette said, “I would say I made my point known without yelling or anything like that. I never had to do that and I was say she was easy to communicate with. As a child we could talk about her future or anything.” Angie, agreeing with her mother and her communication style as it relates to encouragement, noted, “My mom was always encouraging me and she was easy to talk to. She

never yelled or anything like that. We could always talk.” Barbara said, “I always did encourage her. I never had to yell or anything like that.” Betty agreed with her grandmother, “She always encouraged me and she was easy to talk to. She never yelled. She was easy.” Carolyn said, “I encouraged her and I talked to her. I never had any problems with talking to with her about anything.” Cathy agreed with her mother noting, “My mom always encouraged me and she was easy to talk to most of the times, well, all the time about most things and about school. I would say she is an easy person to communicate with.”

Parents expressed their feelings about gender and success for their child. Earl said, “I would say as a man we had the some of the same things in common. We enjoyed some of the same things like football. I mean, his sister did too, but it was different, if you know what I mean. It’s not a lot of us up here, Black men. So I would say that his being a male may have something to do with how close we are.” Debra noted that there may an advantage to being a different gendered single parent. “His father never was involved in his life, but I always wished he had a father, a man. But he didn’t. He had me. But I think maybe we are much closer because of it, because I feel like I have to be so much more to him, so I think we are closer because of the difference.” Antoinette said, “I feel like we are closer because we are either females, or women now. On some level because we can relate to a lot of the same things and a lot of the stuff she has went through and will go through, I have been through because I am a women. So I have encouraged her as a woman to look out for how things are. Some of it’s not just color, a lot of it is about sex, the sex or gender of the person too, special things a Black women knows that we have talked about.”

Parents and their children were actively engaged communicating about activities. Debra said, “From the time he started school, I had to fight really hard to make sure he got all the

assistance he could get. I know those people up there at the school got tired of seeing my face because, if there was some piece of paper that came home about some project or award or things he could attend, I would be right up there at the school. If it said if you have further questions, I always had questions. I wanted to make sure he got what he needed.” Doug agreed with his mother saying, “My mom would talk to my teachers a lot and they would make a lot of suggestions, to talk to her to her to talk to me about college options and things like that, what things I wanted to do in school, in college.” Barbara, in concurrence with Debra, noted “One time I had this teacher, this White lady and she did not seem to take me as serious, so I stayed on top of this lady, I mean this class, to see that she was treating her fair. I am not sure but she seem to have this attitude were she would be short with me, just this one teacher that was it but I was say it influenced how I looked at her the teacher not the school.” Agreeing with her Grandmother, Betty said “Nana had to go talk my teacher. She just had this attitude with me. I ask her questions; she would ignore me but soon as I told Nana that was it.”

Parents often encouraged their children to do well in all school related activities as a push back against any perceived indifference on the part of school administration regarding their child success. Antoinette said, “I was involved with Girl Scouts as long as she was in it, as a Scout leader. I was involved from the time she was a Brownie, and that allowed us to spend a lot of time together and I did some dance with her too, not much dancing by me but we did that.” Barbara also noted, “I was very involved in Girls Scout with her too from the time she was a Brownie with her cousin, and that was something we all enjoyed together, you could say as a family.” Earl said, “I enjoyed football and he enjoyed football and when he played I encouraged him to do well and we did that together except when it got too windy and wet, did too much of that in the Army you know.”

The parents in this study sought to persuasively guide their child towards the continuing pursuit of activities and attitudes they believed would have a positive impact on them. Parents sought to boost their child's self-esteem by routinely providing positive feedback and demonstrating interest in their academic and extracurricular activities. This parental encouragement is a significant protective factor with student self-motivation serving as strong indicator of parental commitment. Parents concurred with the research supporting a strong correlation between parental encouragement and easy communication between the parents and their child and that gender may play a role in the type of encouragement African American parents provide their child to do well academically and all other activities. The parents in the study encouraged their children to pursue in school and extracurricular activities by actively engaging in conversations about their academic and extracurricular activities and by direct involvement.

Unexpected Themes. Single parenting was not expected to be a major factor but was consistent across all participants of the study. Although the literature consistently notes single parent homes as a risk factor, the results of this study may indicate that one parent with a single-minded focus without contradiction may have had a positive influence on the consistency of parenting behaviors and resulting positive academic outcomes for the students. While the research discusses single-parent households and the development of close relationships, this study had no two-parent households to serve as a comparison. Perhaps that fact that there are no competing interests and few opportunities for conflicting communication, children might get a more direct sense of parental expectations. However, future studies might explore which offers more protection and minimizes risk most- single, focused expectations or the added resources (physical, emotional, financial) of a second parent.

In addition to the unexpected emergence of the impact of single parent homes, there was one parent/child set that broke a couple of trends in the data. Debra and Doug were the only mixed gender pair in the sample which, for the most part, was not relevant to the study focus. Debra stated that this difference may have helped them to have a closer relationship but she also alluded to the nature to their relationship and closeness beginning to change as Doug enters adulthood. Because that was not the focus of the interview and the nuances of that did not emerge until data analysis, more details were not obtained. However, the recognition of this difference does leave an opportunity for other research about the changing dynamics of parental/child relationships based on gender.

Furthermore, Debra repeatedly noted that there were elements of Doug's school experience that she didn't understand or that were "above her head." It was noteworthy that this lack of understanding did not prevent Debra from continuing to push Doug to success. This parent/child pair, while different from the rest of the sample, did exhibit a dynamic experienced by successful African American males such as Ben Carson and the researcher himself.

Research Question Answers

This section of Chapter Four answers the central and sub questions posed by this study. . These were derived from a thorough review of the literature and the finding of a lack of research exploring the impact of African American parental characteristics on their children's academic success. The central question sought to discover the best parenting practices of African American parents and the manifestations of this behavior as it relates to the academic success of their child.

The Central Question. What practices do African American parents employ to improve the likelihood of their child's academic success?

African American parents with academically successful children exhibit five behavioral characteristics that influenced their child's academic success. The first characteristic is a strong sense of social awareness or being "woke", a necessary coping skill for African American children moving through various transitions in life. Being "woke" was found to be a protective factor against racial discrimination. The second characteristic demonstrated by African American parents was an attitude having high expectations for their child success. African American parents were found to commonly believe that their child must be able to adapt to the environment to be successful academically in life. The third characteristic is parental friendship. Relationships between parents and their children were characterized by a unique bond with close personal relationships between parents and their child evolving age appropriately over time. Close personal relationships between African American parents and their child was shown to serve as a protective factor that mitigates negative influence within the community or school.

The fourth characteristic demonstrated by African American parents was their belief in their children's ability to pursue their goals. African American parents uniformly believed their child could be successful, and encouraged their child to pursue their personal goals despite any social hurdles or obstacles they could face in the future. The fifth characteristic demonstrated by African American parents was their support of their children's dreams and goals. Parents were found to persuade and guide their child towards their continuing pursuit of activities and attitude they believed would have a positive impact on them. Parental support, both emotional and physical, was found to serve as a protective factor. The fifth characteristic that African American parents demonstrated was the encouragement. African American parents openly spoke to their child about their strong likelihood for success despite potential social obstacles they are likely to encounter. They demonstrate a high level of competence in their ability to communicate their

perspective and interpret the perspective of their child. In addition these parents provide emotional support through encouragement of academic and extracurricular activities and are committed to the physical and financial requirements of their child's activities such as paying fees and providing transportation to and from events and school related activities.

SQ1. How do African American parents communicate the importance of school? The degree of direct and indirect communication between parents and their student child may influence the overall perception of the importance of education.

Parents express directly and through everyday conversation, the significance of academic success by highlighting examples of success and the consequences of failure as they occur in everyday life. Parents also communicate to their children indirectly through example the importance of education by pursuing their own education goals in adulthood. African American parents demonstrated a communication style that clearly expressed their views and opinions while allowing their children to speak openly to them. Clear and open communication was found to serve as a protective factor that serves as a mitigating factor against conflicting social and cultural factors. Students were found to be close observers of the parents' attitudes and behaviors.

SQ2. How knowledgeable are parents regarding school and higher education requirements? African American parents who have obtained some level of advanced education beyond high school are more frequently involved in student planning for college.

African American parents were sufficiently knowledgeable to inform students about the requirements for obtaining a college education and the basic process for college acceptance. Parents demonstrate, through their personal experience, the importance of education by being enrolled in college or other courses during their child's upbringing. The results also indicate that

the children received advice from their parents about college admissions. Document analysis demonstrated that all of the children were able to successfully navigate the college admissions process. The results found that a lack of community support required African American parents to be more directly involved in their child's academic and extracurricular activities, to include providing moral support, transportation, and paying fees. Moreover African- American parents were more inclined to believe that without their direct intervention their child would not receive the same academic opportunism as other children.

SQ3. How do students respond to their parent's behavior regarding the importance of school? The children of African American parents may respond more positively to the influence of parents when reinforced by community standards.

Student children were positively responsive to the opinion and advice of parents, generally believing their parents have their best interest in mind. Most respondents indicated their parent's advice was respected. Students found their parents' advice regarding procedures and practices of college acceptance to be informative. Student participants of the study concurred that their parents' expectations for their long term success played a significant role in motivating them to well academically. Also, the results concluded that students did not want to disappoint their parents. Moreover students found they were far more influenced by the beliefs and desires of their parents than by those of religious groups or other community organization. While some children expressed some resistance to the parents' authority during adolescence, all were found to respect their parents view over anyone else.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study that included a detailed description of each of the study participants and their demographic information. The results of the study were

discussed by describing the data collection methods and the three-step coding process used to identify reoccurring phrases and terms that were collected during individual and focus groups interviews. These were further narrowed and developed into five relevant themes. Those themes were “woke” or social awareness, parental expectations, parental friendship, pursuing future dreams, and parental encouragement (both emotional and physical tasks). In addition, a document analysis was presented that confirmed the study participants’ statuses as academically successful. This chapter was concluded by answering the central research question and each of the sub-questions of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Chapter Five is the final chapter of this research study whose purpose was to discover the characteristics of African American parental behavior regarding the importance of school, and its influence on their high school children's academic success in a rural school district, for recent African American graduates of the Mountain County High School, in Mountain County, North Carolina. This chapter provides a summary of the study's findings with a discussion of both the theoretical concepts and empirical research that informed the analysis of results. In addition this chapter will present the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study along with its limitations and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

African American parents with academically successful children exhibited five behavioral characteristics that influenced their child's academic success. The first characteristic was a strong sense of social awareness or being "woke", a necessary coping skill for African American children moving through various transitions in life. Being "woke" was found to be a protective factor against racial discrimination. The second characteristic demonstrated by African American parents was an attitude of having high expectations for their children's success. African American parents were found to commonly believe that their child must be able to adapt to the environment to be academically successful in life. The third characteristic was parental friendship. Relationships between parents and their children were characterized by a unique bond with close personal relationships between parents and their child evolving age appropriately over time. Close personal relationships between African American parents and

their child were shown to serve as a protective factor that mitigates negative influence within the community or school.

The fourth characteristic demonstrated by African American parents was their belief in their children's ability to pursue their goals. African American parents uniformly believed their child could be successful, and encouraged their child to pursue their personal goals despite any social hurdles or obstacles they could face in the future. The fifth characteristic demonstrated by African American parents was their support of their children's dreams and goals. Parents were found to persuade and guide their child towards their continuing pursuit of activities and attitude they believed would have a positive impact on them. Parental support, both emotional and physical, was found to serve as a protective factor. The fifth characteristic that African American parents demonstrated was the encouragement. African American parents openly spoke to their child about their strong likelihood for success despite potential social obstacles they are likely to encounter. They demonstrated a high level of competence in their ability to communicate their perspective and interpret the perspective of their child. In addition these parents provided emotional support through encouragement of academic and extracurricular activities and were committed to the physical and financial requirements of their child's activities such as paying fees and providing transportation to and from events and school related activities.

Parents expressed, directly and through everyday conversation, the significance of academic success by highlighting examples of success and the consequences of failure as they occur in everyday life. Parents also communicated to their children indirectly through example the importance of education by pursuing their own education goals in adulthood. African American parents demonstrated a communication style that clearly expressed their views and opinions while allowing their children to speak openly to them. Clear and open communication

was found to serve as a protective factor that serves as a mitigating factor against conflicting social and cultural factors. Students were found to be close observers of the parents' attitudes and behaviors.

African American parents were sufficiently knowledgeable to inform students about the requirements for obtaining a college education and the basic process for college acceptance. Parents demonstrated through their personal experience the importance of education by being enrolled in college or other courses during their child's upbringing. The results also indicated that the children received advice from their parents about college admissions. Document analysis demonstrated that all of the children were able to successfully navigate the college admissions process. The results found that a lack of community support required African American parents to be more directly involved in their child's academic and extracurricular activities, to include providing moral support, transportation, and paying fees. Moreover African- American parents were more inclined to believe that, without their direct intervention, their children would not receive the same academic opportunities as other children.

Student children were positively responsive to the opinion and advice of parents, generally believing their parents had their best interest in mind. Most respondents indicated their parent's advice was respected. Students were found to find their parents advice regarding procedures and practices of college acceptance to be informative. Student participants of the study concurred that their parents' expectations for their long term success played a significant role in motivating them to well academically. Also, the results concluded that students did not want to disappoint their parents. Moreover students found they were far more influenced by the beliefs and desires of their parents than by those of religious groups or other community

organization. While some children expressed some resistance to the parents' authority during adolescence all were found to respect their parents view over anyone else.

Discussion

This section of Chapter Five outlines and discusses the findings of this study. The chapter discusses both the theoretical and empirical results along with the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study, including delimitations, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Theoretical

The theoretical framework that helped guide this research study included ecological theory with a specific focus on risk and resilience theory (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Ecological theory broadly examines how humans and other systems move through numerous transitions in life that require environmental support and coping skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007).

Social problems such as health care, family, income, conflicts with law enforcement, unemployment, and educational outcomes can all be addressed with ecological theory, which enables research to analyze factors within the individual's environment that may be relevant to these types of social problems. Moreover from an ecological perspective social awareness or being "woke" is a necessary coping skill for individuals moving through various transitions in life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2007).

Catalano and Hawkins (1996) developed risk and resilience theory. Focusing on environment as the primary context for child development, the theory defines risks as factors that create negative social outcomes such as low academic achievement and limited education opportunities, racial discrimination, and parental conflict. Resilience, on the other hand,

contributes to children's academic success and is composed of elements that serve as protective factors. While the focus of this research was on protective factors and comparable behavioral characteristics of the parents, resilience cannot exist in the absence of a definable risk that can be viewed in contrast to any protective factors that may minimize those risks. Those risks associated with the student participants were minimized by the overwhelming weight of protective factors. These factors are forces that can create positive academic outcomes and can include parental involvement, parental education, and religious exposure (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013).

Risk and resilience theory advances ecological theory by providing descriptive rationale for behavior associated and influenced by internal and external forces (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). In addition this theory helps to explain and identify causation for academic achievement among African Americans. Parents who influence the attitudes and behaviors of their children may create protective factors such as socially accepted responses to the effects of racial discrimination. Protective factors can provide a child with the ability to resist potential stressors in their community. The more numerous these factors are in a child's life, the greater the resilience (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Factors related to parental involvement from a global viewpoint can impact academic success among African American high school students (Petty, 2008). Very specific forms of African American ethnic heritages may contribute to academic achievement, while there may be others that do not (Brittian & Gray, 2014). African American children in rural communities are exposed to the same risk factors as White children similarly situated but with fewer protective factors (Myers, 2013). There are four typical patterns of resilience,

- Dispositional resilience is the general sense of individual autonomy.

- Relational resilience is the actual role in society and in their relationships.
- Situational resilience is the ability to solve problems, and take action.
- Philosophical resilience is the individual's belief in the importance of personal development (Myers, 2013).

Additional factors can include internal motivation, good use of time, family support and school related activities (Friend et al., 2011; Neblett et al., 2012; Stull, 2013).

The results of data collected from this study revealed five themes that provided examples of protective factors as indicated by risk and resilience theory. Those themes were “woke” or social awareness, parental expectations, parental friendship, pursuing future dreams, and parental encouragement (both emotional and physical support). Each of these themes has significant theoretical implications for education practitioners and researchers.

Risk and resilience theory identifies relational resilience as the actual role the individual plays in society and in their relationships with others and serves as a protective factor (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The results of the study indicated that African American parents both promoted and believed in a strong sense of social awareness. The parents communicated to the children from a very young age the importance of social awareness or being “woke”. Throughout their child's life parents informally engaged in candid conversations with their children about the existence of racial discrimination, social obstacles and, low expectations while succinctly informing them they were capable of overcoming these obstacles as long as they were aware of their existence. These results confirm the conclusions reached by previous research using risk and resilience theory and suggest that social awareness, when practiced and reinforced by parents, serves as a mitigating factor against negative community influences. However, the results diverge from risk and resilience theory in one

respect, its identification of the “actual role the individual plays in society” as an element of relational resilience was not clearly shown in this study. What was previously unknown prior to this research is the character of African American parental concern for social awareness or being “woke”. This research revealed the nature and character of African American parental behavior regarding social awareness and their children.

Previous studies utilizing risk and resilience theory found that parental influence on the attitudes and behaviors of children indicate that positive parental expectations can create protective factors such as socially accepted responses to the effects of racial discrimination (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The results of this study indicated that African American parents had high expectations for their child’s academic performance and future endeavors. A common attitude expressed by parents is that their children must be able to adapt to the environment to be successful academically and in life. Social status and class values shaped parental views and perceptions regarding the importance of academic success. Parental expectations were realistic and achievable goals for their children. Parents provide their children with ideas of what they were likely to experience in society as African Americans. While none of the parents expressed the view that there would be any emotional consequences for their children not living up to their expectations, a number of the children expressed the idea that fear of their parents loss of confidence was a strong motivator towards success. Parental expectations were clearly expressed and communicated. The results of the study confirm that high parental expectations serve as a promotive and protective factor in the mitigation of risk that may negatively influence African American students’ successful outcomes.

Risk and resilience theory identifies close personal bonds between parents and their children as a form of friendship that, into adolescence, can serve as a protective factor (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The results of the study found that parents formed close personal bonds with their children that evolved into friendships.

Relationships between parents and their children were characterized by a unique bond between the parent and the child by the expression of enjoyment of the others company, the ability for both parent and child to express personal feelings without fear of judgment, and mutual respect for the others perspective. Parental and child relationship evolved age appropriately over time as parents gained more confidence in the child's ability to manage their personal affairs. Parents served as mentors and respected adults to their child. The conclusion reached by the study confirms that close personal bonds between parents and their child can serve as a protective factor.

Risk and resilience theory identifies parents' interest in their child's future academic outcomes as a protective factor greatly influencing the degree of effort and attention given to their continued focus on academic success (Carnahan, 1994; Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004). The results of the study indicated that African American parents encouraged their children to pursue their future dreams. Parents uniformly predicted that, despite any social hurdles and obstacles their child would face, they would be successful in the future. Parents supported the pursuit of their child's individual passion. Parents taught children the value of persistence by word and example. Parents reacted positively to the possibility of the child's dream becoming a reality. The results of this study confirm that parental interest in a child's future academic outcome serves as a protective factor.

Risk and resilience theory suggest that parental encouragement is a significant protective factor (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). The results of this study demonstrated that parental encouragement and support was continuous. Parents provided both psychological and physical support for their children. Parents sought to persuasively guide their children towards the continuing pursuit of activities and attitudes they believed would have a positive impact on them. Parents sought to boost their children's self-esteem by routinely providing positive feedback and demonstrating interest in their academic and extracurricular activities. Parents demonstrated loyalty and commitment to their children's success and general happiness. The results of this study confirm that parental encouragement serves as a protective factor

Empirical

The results obtained from this study were consistent with results obtained from the literature review on the topics of the achievement gap, parental behavior, African American students, rural school districts, and risk and protective factors. However, the concepts applied in this research study were limited to a small geographical and cultural environment that was not prevalent in the literature. While rural context may be a factor in some educational studies, it does not appear to be a factor in this study because the findings were consistent with the literature and there were no divergent themes that emerged.

A significant research study exploring the achievement gap between White and Black students in American schools by Rust et al. (2011) found that strong cultural identity enhanced students' self-esteem and academic achievement. In this study, parents repeatedly reinforced strong cultural identity and self-esteem and their children made statements affirming their pride in their cultural identity and high levels of self-esteem. In a different examination of the

achievement gap, Friend et al. (2011) found that the social status of the parent may be the most significant predictor of academic achievement for African American children. The homogeneity of the parents in this study offered no opportunity for comparison but supported these findings. All the parents in the study had some advanced education and were at least lower middle-class, earning enough to consistently support their families and having the economic resources to support their children's involvement in activities. All the parents also possessed a certain amount of social capital with involvement in community groups and activities such as church and scouts.

Research exploring the impact of parental influence by Wallace (2013) noted the importance of parental involvement, indicating that collaborative efforts between the parent and school were key to students' overall academic success. In this study, parents indicated that they did not experience any barriers to involvement when needed and Debra specifically highlighted the extent and depth of her presence and active involvement. However, no parents discussed being specifically invited to collaborate but only that they were not prevented. Moreover, Young et al. (2013) found that parental involvement leads to the child's internalized value for education. The parents in this study reported being consistently involved and the students voiced a clear understanding of their parents' value for education as well as their own personal motivation for academic success. Students' internalization of the value of education is most evident in the fact that they all pursued higher education and valued that pursuit. Additionally, Chabra & Kumari (2011) concluded that parental encouragement and supportive actions were important factors in children's academic success and Hays (2012) stresses the important of these behaviors continuing in the high school years. Parents relayed the many ways, emotionally and physically, that they supported their children's involvement in school and school activities. They also

shared in how this involvement was “all throughout school” or “even in high school” which indicated that their support extended as recommended by Hays (2012).

In research exploring rural academic outcomes Myers’ (2013) concluded that rural African American children experienced more risk factors and fewer protective factors than their White counterparts. This finding provides a foundation for further exploration of the theme of “woke” or social awareness. It was surprising that “woke,” which is an urban progressive term, emerged as a theme from a study in a rural setting. However, upon further examination, the same type of racial diligence that is needed in urban settings appears to be needed in rural environments as well, despite the differing nature of the threat or risk. Given that rural African American students generally have fewer protective factors, it is important to discover and support those that emerge and are effective in promoting academic success.

Implications

The results of this research study include theoretical, empirical and practical implications for education practitioners and researchers along with parents, students, and school staff as stake holders.

Theoretical

Risk and resilience theory as proposed by Chabra & Kumari (2011), Fraser & Fraser (2004), and Young et al. (2013) is corroborated by the results of this research study. Additionally, the theoretical implications of this study are significant due, in part, to the limited amount of research available that explores the behavioral characteristics of African American parents as they relate to academically successful children. The results of this study provide additional and previously unknown theoretical data to both researchers and practitioners on the topic of risk and resilience in African American children and the influence of African American

parental behavior on successful academic outcomes. Moreover, the results of the study confirm the assumptions of risk and resilience theory. However, in a study of this nature, it is hard to ascertain the interaction of risk and protection. For example, rural and the resulting economic depression is a risk but parental education and economic status are protective.

Because the results of this study provides additional support for the use of risk and resilience theory as part of any theoretical frame work that examines the achievement gap between White and African American students, stakeholders would benefit from knowledge of the characteristics of risk and resilience theory. This theory provides information that would be useful in the development of educational policy, specific and target programs, as well as training materials for those who work directly with students. In light of the theoretical implications of this study, recommendations for education researchers and practitioners include future research exploration of risk and resilience theory that includes culturally specific models which account for contextual risks that cannot be manipulated such as race or geographical economic depression. This would provide more specific information on how to design culturally specific interventions in the face of those contextual risks.

Empirical

The empirical implications of this study are significant due to the lack of empirical data that examines rural African Americans parents and their behavior as it relates to the academic success of their children. The findings are consistent with the consensus of the literature in that parents of successful students reinforced self-esteem and cultural identity (Rust et al., 2011) and were involved in and encouraging of school activities, even into high school (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Wallace, 2013; Hays, 2012). Furthermore, the social status of the parents was consistent with the predictors of success identified by Friend et al. (2011). Finally, the students voiced and

demonstrated a value for education, internalized from their parents' influence (Young et al., 2013).

However, there is still limited information on the impact of a rural setting on the parenting behaviors and student success. The theme of “woke” emerged as important but the way in which it serves to protect students from risk is not adequately explored in existing literature. In addition, there may be rural and urban nuanced difference in the types of parenting behaviors as specifically associated with social awareness as the skills needed to be successful may be different in each setting. Based on the empirical implications of the study it is recommended that education researchers and practitioners review and engage with quantitative studies to clarify the strength of relationships between the parenting behaviors and outcomes. For example, certain behaviors may more strongly impact certain outcomes, which would guide intervention choices.

Practical

The practical implications of this study address the feasibility and application of results not otherwise addressed in theory or empirical research and includes three groups of stakeholders for consideration- parents, students and school staff, with recommendations for each. For parents, the results of the study reinforce a common-sense approach to parenting that does not require any radical changes or moral/cultural conflict. Although the nuances of each parent/child pair were different, the broad themes supported the parents' judgment on what was important for their children's overall success. It also provides information useful for community advocates as they gain some insight into how to support parents and which parenting behaviors to reinforce. From a student perspective, the study reinforces the strength of non-contentious parent/child relationships while not compromising the students' emerging independence. While students

themselves may not glean any useful points from the results, the study does provide insight into what is beneficial for and valued by students.

For school staff, the results of this study provide insight into how to promote and support parent involvement. For example, parents' ability to help with schoolwork varied but did not emerge as an important factor. However, the parents' physical presence and expressed support for student involvement was very important. Therefore, it provides school staff with guidance as to how to suggest parents be involved and what type of opportunities to offer. Given the practical implications of the study and the impact of parental behaviors well into the high school years, it is recommended that frontline educators, including teachers and administrators, focus the same amount of attention on encouraging and supporting parental involvement in high school as they do in elementary school.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study did not include students from urban areas because they were not a focus of the research question. The study did not delineate between biological parents, or require two parents as participants. The use of more than one parent would have limited the possible participants of the study. The goal of the study was to focus more on the role of the primary care giver to the child participating in the study. The study did not explore gender difference among African Americans or the experiences of other minorities whereby generalities could be made. These delimitations were made because these components were not a part of the research question. The number of African Americans required to gain the desired sampling size required the inclusion of both genders, and the inclusion of only one parent. The study was delimited to students who were over the age of 18 and did not require parental consent. Delimitation based on age or student participants was made for ease of contact and required children participants who were

attending college and likely to be over the age of 18. This case study lacked generalization or broad based application due to the study of more than one case, having the potential of diluting the analysis, and clear beginning and ending points may not be clear (Creswell, 2013). The study included only African Americans within the geographical area and scope of the study.

The most apparent limitation of this study was sample size. The population of potential participants was so small that the sample represents nearly all those eligible to participate. Generalizability was a challenge but it did provide an in-depth look at a group that represents a significant portion of the population. Therefore, although numerically small, the sample was proportionally significant which may imply that lack of generalizability cannot be not assumed. In addition, all of the families in the study were single-parent households. This was not intentional but simply occurred due to the demographics of the population. However, this does limit how the results can be interpreted and applied to two-parent households. By defining academic success, in part, by high school graduation and college acceptance, the study delimited student participants to those likely to be over 18. This focus on and perspective of the later years limits the insight into parental behaviors in the early educational years and this information may be important for the development of prevention practices.

In studies that examine parenting, one must explore that possibility of responses being guided by social desirability. Parents are always aware of the “textbook answer” of good parenting and one must consider if those are the answers that were given. There was not academically unsuccessful group for comparison of parenting practices. However, there were a few dynamics between the interviewer and the participants that would help the probability of truthfulness. The interviewer was also African American and familiar to the participants so there was a level of comfort and casualness that would support more truthful responses. Furthermore,

the parents in the study all have education beyond high school which means they were familiar, to some degree, with college type assignments and have interacted with college personnel. This experience helped to minimize an intimidation or shame (due to lack of academic success) that may have been experienced by lesser-educated parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for further research including exploration of the major themes developed in the results of this study: being “woke”, parental expectations, parental friendship, and the belief in children’s future dreams and goals should be considered for further study. Each of these themes could more fully explored utilizing case studies that examine different geographic regions that were not part of the focus of this study or phenomenological studies that examine African American parental behavior as a behavioral response to environmental conditions, utilizing risk and resilience theory as part of the theoretical framework. Additionally, while there is a wealth of information focusing on African American student parenting and student success, there is a gap in the research on the dynamics of the themes discovered during this study in a rural setting. Even when socioeconomic status is comparable, the nuances of rural poverty are different from those of urban poverty and may result in the emergence of different risk and the need for different protective factors. Additional questions recommended for study include quantitative exploration of the achievement gap, reduction of risk factors and the promotion of resilience include the following research questions. What is the impact of family configuration? How do risk and protective factors vary based on gender of the student and gender of the parent? How does social status and economic status of the parent impact student success? How does the educational experience of parent impact student success? And what social behaviors do academically successful students exhibit?

Summary

In all aspect of students' academic and social life parental involvement was fundamental to student's success. This study revealed five themes in the behaviors of rural African American parents of successful students. The results of this study provides vivid examples of social awareness or being "woke" and how parents instill in their child the belief that, in spite of challenges posed by race, they have some control over the ability to overcome perceived social obstacles and achieve their goals and objectives they are more likely to do so.

The academic expectations of African American parents for their children greatly influence the future goals and dreams of their child. The study also found that parents with high expectations for their children were able to influence their children by presence, involvement, and sharing their own experiences. Furthermore, friendship between parents and their children were characterized by a unique bond between the parent and the child by the expression of enjoyment of the others company, the ability for both parent and child to express personal feelings without fear of judgment, and mutual respect for the others perspective.

Parental and child relationship evolve age appropriately over time as parents gain more confidence in the child's ability to manage their personal affairs. Parents served as mentors and respected adults to their children. They persuasively guide their child towards the continuing pursuit of their dreams and goals. The parents in this study demonstrated their willingness to boost their child's self-esteem by routinely providing positive feedback and demonstrating interest in their academic and extracurricular activities demonstrating a strong loyalty and commitment to their children's success and general happiness.

REFERENCES

- 115th Congressional Black Caucus. (2017, April 28). #StayWoke: List of 100 actions. Press release. Retrieved from <https://cbc.house.gov/staywoke/>
- Beatty, A. S. (2013). Schools alone close achievement gap. *Issues in Science & Technology*, 29(3), 69-75.
- Brittian, A. S., & Gray D. L. (2014). African American students' perceptions of differential treatment in learning environments: Examining the moderating role of peer support, connection to heritage, and discrimination efficacy. *Journal of Education*, 194(1), 1-9.
- Carnahan, S. (1994). Preventing school failure and dropout. In R. J. Simeonsson (Ed.), *Risk resilience, and prevention: Promoting the well-being of all children*. Baltimore: Paul H Brooks.
- Catalano, R.F. & Hawkins, J.D. (1996). *The social development model: A theory of antisocial behavior: Current Theories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Chabra, S., & Kumari, L. (2011). Effect of parental encouragement on achievement motivation of adolescents. *International Journal of Education & Allied Sciences*, 3(2), 73-78.
- Cooper, S., Brown, C., Metzger, I., Clinton, Y., & Guthrie, B. (2013). Racial discrimination and African American adolescents' adjustment: Gender variation in family and community social support, promotive and protective factors. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 22(1), 15-29.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Durham, J. I. (2012). Examining the achievement gap with a psychodynamic lens: Implications for practice. *Journal of Infant, Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 11(3), 217-228.

- Franklin, W. (1995). *Risk and resilience in African American adolescents: The role of protective and compensatory factors*. (Order No. 9602882, Stanford University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 127-127 p. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304216780?accountid=12085>. (304216780).
- Fraser, M. W., & Fraser, M. W. (Ed.) (2004). *Risk and Resilience in Childhood: An Ecological Perspective*. (2nd ed.) Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Friend, C., Hunter, A., & Fletcher, A. (2011). Parental racial socialization and the academic achievement of African American children: A cultural-ecological approach. *Journal of African American Studies*, 15(1), 40-57
- Hayes, D. (2012). Parental involvement and achievement outcomes in African American adolescents. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 43(4), 567-582.
- Hines, E. M., & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2013). Parental characteristics, ecological factors, and the academic achievement of African American males. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(1), 68-77.
- Hines, D. C., Hine, C. H., & Harrold, S. (2010) *African Americans: A concise history*, third edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Press.
- Irvin, M. J. (2012). Role of student engagement in the resilience of African American adolescents from low-income rural communities. *Psychology in The Schools*, 49(2), 176-193.
- Jeynes, W. (2013). The assessment of various dimensions of religious faith based on four meta-analyses. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research On Religion*, 91-23.
- Labelle, M. (2011). Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms: Why race and culture matter in schools. *Journal of Education*, 191(2), 70-74.

- Myers, L. (2013). Substance use among rural African American adolescents: Identifying risk and protective factors. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 30(1), 79-93.
- Neblett, E. W., Rivas-Drake, D., & Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2012). The promise of racial and ethnic protective factors in promoting ethnic minority youth development. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(3), 295-303.
- Petty, R. D. (2008). *Factors related to parental school involvement of African American parents of students with above average academic achievement: A qualitative case study*. (Order No. 3310720, Capella University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. 132. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/230702858?accountid=12085>. (230702858).
- Rowley, R. L., & Wright, D. W. (2011). No "white" child left behind: The academic achievement gap between black and white students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 80(2), 93-107.
- Rust, J. P., Jackson, M. A., Ponterotto, J. G., & Blumberg, F. C. (2011). Biculturalism and academic achievement of African American high school students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, 39(3), 130-140.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Shepard, J., Salina, C., Girtz, S., Cox, J., Davenport, N., & Hillard, T.L. (2012). Student success: Stories that inform high school change. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 21(2), 48-53.
- Stake, Robert E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications
- Stoddard, S. A., Zimmerman, M. A., & Bauermeister, J. A. (2012). A longitudinal analysis of cumulative risks, cumulative promotive factors, and adolescent violent behavior. *Journal of Research On Adolescence (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 22(3), 542-555.

- Stull, J. C. (2013). Family socioeconomic status, parent expectations, and a child's achievement. *Research in Education*, (90), 53-67.
- U.S. Department of Education: Office of Vocational and Adult Education. (2002). *Closing the achievement gap: Lessons from successful schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wallace, M. (2013). High school teachers and African American parents: A (not so) collaborative effort to increase student success. *High School Journal*, 96(3), 195-208.
- Yin, R. K. (2011) *Case study research: Design and methods*. Washington, DC: Sage.
- Young, C. Y., Austin N, S. M., & Gowe, R. (2013). Defining parental involvement: Perception of school administrators. *Education*, 133(3), 291-297.

APPENDICES**Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 4, 2016

Raymond Christian

IRB Approval 2636.100416: The Characteristics of African American Parental Influence on Academic Success in a Rural School District: A Collective Case Study

Dear Raymond Christian,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix B: CONSENT FORM

Rural African American Parental Impact on Academic Success: A Collective Case Study

Raymond Christian

Liberty University

Education

You are invited to be in a research study of how the behavior of African American parents regarding the importance of school influences their children's future academic success. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of the population of people under study, an African American student who graduated from Watauga High School between the years of 2010-2015 or the parent of one of these students. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. I, Raymond Christian, am a doctoral candidate in the department of Education at Liberty University and will be conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this case study is to discover the characteristics of African American parental behavior regarding the importance of school and its impact on their student's high school children's academic success in a rural school district.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- 1.) Participate in an open ended interview
- 2.) Participate as a member of a focus group

3.) Provide high school transcript (student participant only)
Both the interview and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed for later analysis and should take approximately 90 minutes each. All data collected will remain anonymous and confidential. While the data collected will be known to the researcher any identifying information will not be disclosed.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved in this study are minimal and no more than those that participants would encounter in everyday life. The benefits to participation in this study are not direct but will contribute to further understand of risk and resilience theory in education research.

Compensation:

You will receive a gift card/certificate valued at \$10-\$15. If a variety of options are available, you will be allowed to choose.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Interview and focus group recordings and transcripts will be kept in separate envelopes and maintained inside a locked cabinet when not be used by the researcher. On the completion of the project all recordings will be erased. While the researcher will maintain individual privacy and confidentiality participants of focus groups cannot be guaranteed that all members of the focus group will maintain confidentiality and privacy

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw:

If you no longer wish to participate in the study, please contact the researcher to cancel your interview/focus group appointment. If you have already participated in the interview, it will be deleted. If you have already participated in the focus group, your comments will be deleted from the transcript as completely as voice recognition from the recording allows.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Raymond Christian. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (828) 729-2374 and raychristian@charter.net. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. James Swezey at jaswezey@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Date:

Participant Name:

Address:

Dear Participant

My name is Raymond Christian, I am a doctoral student in the department of Education at Liberty University conducting research to better understand how African American parents' behavior regarding the importance of school, may impact their children's future academic success. Both one parent and student/child will be required for the study. I am writing to you at this time, to invite you to participate.

If you are 18 years of age or older and are willing to participate you will be asked to, participate in an open ended interview, participate as a member of a focus group, provide a copy of your, high school transcript and college acceptance letter. The interview and focus group should take approximately 90 minutes each. General participation in the study will be known by the parent and child participants, otherwise your participation will be completely anonymous, and no identifying information will be required.

To participate complete and return the consent document after contacting me to schedule an interview.

A consent document will be attached with this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Raymond Christian

Appendix D: Follow up Recruitment Letter

Date:

Participant

Address:

Dear:

This is a reminder of the research project I previously communicated with you about, that invited you to participate in a research study. This follow-up message is being sent to remind you to get in contact with me if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is TBD.

Sincerely,

Raymond Christian