Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
DigitalCommons@PCOM

PCOM Psychology Dissertations   Student Dissertations, Theses and Papers

2013

The African American Family's Influence on Academic Achievement of Urban Secondary Students

Frank A. Edwards
Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, franked@pcom.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.pcom.edu/psychology_dissertations

Part of the Developmental Psychology Commons, Multicultural Psychology Commons, and the School Psychology Commons

Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Psychology

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY'S INFLUENCE ON

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF URBAN SECONDARY STUDENTS

By FRANK A. EDWARDS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology

October, 2013

PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dissertation Approval

This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by Frank Edwards

on the 29th day of May, 2013, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is acceptable in both scholarship and

literary quality.

Committee Members' Signatures:

Yuma Tomes, PhD, Chairperson

George McCloskey, PhD

Andrew Savicky, PhD

Robert A DiTomasso, PhD, ABPP, Chair, Department of Psychology

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First giving honor to God for he has blessed me with an amazing support system that provided a listening ear when I needed someone to talk to, a shoulder to cry on when things got too rough and encouraging words when I needed that extra push.

I am truly blessed and thankful to have a beautiful, strong, intelligent mother who dedicated her life to the betterment of her family. Dorothy A. Edwards inspired me to love hard, live life to the fullest, and laugh often. She taught me the importance of education and has always encouraged me to follow my dreams. As such, I dedicate this dissertation to Dorothy A. Edwards for she was my inspiration from the planning stages to the completion of this document.

The completion of my doctoral studies would not have been possible if not for my beautiful wife, Stacey L. Edwards. I am thankful for her patience, support and encouraging words on those nights when I began to lose sight of my goal and questioned my fortitude to complete my journey. Stacey, I am truly appreciative of you taking on the role of both parents while I spent long nights and endless weekends in the library pursuing my degree. To my sons, Xavier A. Edwards and Frank N. Edwards, thank you for continually inspiring me to be the best man and father I can be.

Thank you to my dissertation committee: Drs. Yuma Tomes, Andrew Savicky, and George McCloskey for all your time, effort and encouragement throughout the dissertation process. I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Tomes for bestowing guidance, patience and wisdom as I worked tireless to the finish line. Dr. Tomes, you were a very integral part throughout my doctoral studies because you expecting nothing but my best and did not allowing me to give anything less. Thank you for raising the bar!

ABSTRACT

        One of the most unyielding challenges of the American Educational System to

date has been determining the unique factors that African American families have on the

academic achievement of urban high school students. The purpose of this qualitative

study was to determine: (1) what effect does the African American Family's influence

have on urban secondary students achievement; (2) what impact does academic

achievement have on the life of an urban African-American student; and (3) what

contributing factors stimulate academic achievement in urban secondary students. The

African-American family and its influence on student achievement included the

following themes: family and familial membership beliefs on the importance of

education, parental roles and parenting styles. Themes that encompassed the factors

leading to positive student achievement included: academic journey from elementary

school to the current placement in the secondary level; students recognizing the

importance of education; and teacher's impact on student achievement. Themes

concerning student resiliency factors were also discussed. Factors contributing to student

internal locus of control themes included: influential persons relating to student

achievement, student motivation towards academic achievement, student perception of

success, stereotypes of urban students, and African American history of educational

inequality and segregation. Finally, themes related to the influence of urban community

on student academic achievement included: the urban neighborhood, overcoming

negative experience impact of participating in extracurricular activities, and influence of

religion or spirituality practices. The findings from this study suggests that despite being

exposed to insurmountable risk from urban living, students are able to achieve

academically with the assistance, support, and guidance of their families. In addition,

students having experienced teachers who are caring, and who have high expectations

promote high academic achievement. Moreover, student thoughts and beliefs regarding

their ability to achieve also play a role in their academic success. Student who are

resilient and/or have an internal locus of control are able to cope with stressful situations.

This ability to deal with stressful situations as a result of an internal locus of control

manifests itself in learning experiences and/or motivation to achieve.

Table of Contents

Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

It appears as though one of the most unyielding challenges of the American Educational System to date has been determining the unique factors that African-American families bring to the academic achievement of urban high school students. The solution to the problem continues to remain elusive for many researchers, due in part to academically successful, urban, African-American children, despite risk factors such as: lack of resources, living in poverty, negative peer pressure, living in non-traditional single parent homes, and being subjected to educational inequality (Gutman & McLoyde, 2000). However, the question remains of how some urban African-American adolescents rise above seemingly insurmountable odds experienced on a day-to-day basis and achieve academic excellence while peers with similar experiences do not.

Literature surrounding this topic mentions a host of protective factors, whereby family influence appears to be one of the major contributors to student achievement. However, the term family can be defined in many ways depending on individual circumstances and perspectives such as two parents, single parent, and extended family. The traditional Western model of the term family is defined as two married parents and their children (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2010). However, Baca, Zinn, and Eitzen (1999) argue that only 10 percent of the families in the United States adequately mirror the western model of family demographics. Kammerman & Kahn (1988) indicates more than 25 percent of all American families are composed either of a single mother or a single father. Regardless of family constellation, child births to single women comprise

28 percent of all births by single women; 11 percent of all single Asian-American women, 20 percent of all single Caucasian women, 37 percent of all single Hispanic women, and 67 percent of all single women African-American births (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1991).

Historically, African-American cultures have utilized the "extended family" approach, which includes relatives, neighbors, fictitious relatives (i.e., play cousins, ex-paramours that are called "uncle"), and churches to aid mothers in rearing their children. Literature on family structure illustrates the fact that growing up in a single-parent family will not in itself predict negative outcomes for African-American children (Ensminger, 1990). Rather, it's the students' determinations to succeed coupled with circumstances of the single parent family (i.e. economic difficulties and low educational levels) that shape most negative outcomes (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1996).

McLoyd (1990) points out that disadvantages relating to single parent, African-American homes are the result of an absentee parent and the poverty in which single-mother families often live. In addition, economic difficulties and low educational levels, in turn, create situations that often compromise single mothers' parenting practices (McLoyd, 1990). These disadvantages tend to increase further the disparities between children raised in single-parent family homes versus two-parent family homes (Hetherington & Henderson, 1997). Brody et al., (2001) argue that because a greater proportion of African-American children are raised in impoverished single-mother families, as compared with other ethnic groups, African-American children are at particular risk for unsuccessful academic achievement.

For decades, minority students have experienced a great deal of poverty, opposition and inequality; however, these insurmountable circumstances have not proven to be an absolute determinant of student success or failure. Tienda and Kao (1994) found that high-achieving, impoverished African-American adolescents have parents who are more highly involved in their education both within the home and at school. Reynolds (1989) conducted a study of low SES minority students and found that parental involvement had significant effects on the educational attainment of first-grade students. This study suggests that the greater degree to which parents are involved and engaged with their children, the more often their children will achieve academically. Clark (1993) points out that the parents' actions not only reinforces the importance of schooling, but also encourage adolescents to do their best in school. Ultimately, African-American families are the major contributory factors that aid in the successful achievements of their children's educational endeavors.

Baldwin & Cole (1990) argue that in African-American cultures, parents implement their socialization goals as well as enforce rules and standards on their children, using a mix between Authoritarian and Authoritative as a method to ensure that their children are safe while living in urban settings which may be infested with drugs and crime. Researchers have found that African-American parents react to stressors associated with urban living by restricting their children's behavior (i.e. not allowing to play outside, early curfew, not allowing new friends to enter the home without parents being present, etc.), thereby, limiting their exposure to negative social and economic issues (i.e. negative peers associations, "street hustlers", and homicides) (McLoyd, 1990; Sampson & Laub, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, & Dornsbusch, 1991).

Because of this, social scientists have recognized the importance of family socioeconomic status (SES) and the impact of this family status on the academic achievement of children since the mid 1960s (Coleman et al., 1966). Students who are impoverished tend to live in areas where they are plagued by excessively high jobless rates, serious crime, community violence, teen pregnancy, and drug usage (Wilson, 1990). Moreover, a disproportionate number of children living in poverty are from minority groups: three times as many African-American and Hispanic families are living in families below the U.S. poverty line, when compared with Caucasian American families (Brook-Gunn et al., 1996). The disparity in education based on social economic level and/or social class has had a ripple effect on African-American students and their families for generations (Brook-Gunn et al., 1996). Many researchers argue that the likelihood of students who attend urban schools being more susceptible to achieving lower levels of academic success during their adolescent school years limits their chances of achieving higher education and being gainfully employed adults (Markowitz, Garcia, & Eichelberger, 1997; J. M. Patton, 1998).

Reaching high school is a major milestone for adolescents living in urban communities. It represents the culmination of elementary and secondary schooling; it also marks a fundamental crossroads, wherein students begin to make serious decisions about their future. These decisions, moreover, can be influenced and constrained by a host of factors, including educational expectations, available financial resources, and quality of academic preparation. Although high school completion is undoubtedly one of the most important predictors for future economic success in children; it also represents a crucial indicator of performance for educational systems.

The national graduation rate for students is at 68 percent; approximately one-third of all public high school students fail to graduate (Swanson, 2003). Students who are from historically disadvantaged minority groups such as African-Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians are said to have a fifty-fifty chance of finishing high school with a diploma (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003). However, the graduation rates for other groups are significantly higher; Caucasian Americans are at 75 percent and Asian Americans are at 77 percent nationally (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003).

Due to the importance that education plays in the future endeavors of student achievement, it is absolutely imperative that researchers understand the current problems surrounding academic achievement within the African-American community. However, researchers must first begin to examine the history of American Education Systems as it relates to the African-American culture. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), educational inequalities of the past were not merely imposed by ignorant masses that were prejudiced and racist. She argued that the major leaders of the nation endorsed ideas about the inferiority of Black, Latino, and Native people.

Donovan & Cross (2002) pointed out that African-Americans constitute only 17 percent of the student population in schools nationally. Yet African-American students constitute 41 percent of all special education placements in schools nationally (Grant, 1992). Many researchers, therefore, (Davis, 2005; Noguera, 2005; Patton, 1998) have noted that demographic variables are contributing factors to the overrepresentation of African-American student in special education programs outside the general classroom setting.

Erwin et al., (2010) argues that public schools are among the most important institutions where students from different backgrounds are able to work together towards the common goal of being educated (Erwin et al., 2010). However, many studies of urban education fail to consider how the production and maintenance of segregated, urban poverty is highly connected to the continuance of under-resourced urban schools (Anyon, 1997). Ford (2005) found that basic material resources such as desks, chalk boards, literature, and textbooks are severely lacking in urban settings. School buildings are dilapidated and the quality of availability classroom equipment is subpar.

Ford (2005) goes on to note that classrooms are overcrowded, thereby affecting teacher instruction and individual time for students from teachers, as well as the level of student concentration in class. Ford (2005) further argued the point that schools with the highest percentages of minority and low income students are more likely to hire new teachers that are not certified or else have an emergency certificate rather than hiring veteran teachers or certified teachers. More often than not, teachers who are hired to work in urban settings are not highly qualified instructors.

Statement of the Problem

Despite decades of underachievement by urban students and the overabundance of research available on the parental impact of student achievement, researchers continue to appear baffled when defining the single most important factor that influences secondary academic achievement in urban school setting. This problem continues to be a challenge due to the complexity and overabundance of insurmountable risk factors faced by this group of students including, but not limited to, systematic influences, lack of quality education, impoverished home environments, limited community and educational

resources, lower social economic status, exposure to daily trauma, negative peer

pressures, and high levels of family stressors. This point is best argued when stated:

> No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds and
>
> hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless,
>
> pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment,
>
> against privileged victimizers, and then reasonably expect
>
> the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow.
>
> Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch.
>
> (Randall & Robinson, 2000, p.74)

Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed at adding to the literature of family influence on academic

achievement among secondary students in an urban setting. It is the goal of the

investigator to determine the meaning of "family" from the student's perspective, as well

as to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between a family's involvement in

education and the actualized results that have evolved in student's education over the

years leading up to the secondary level. Moreover, the goal of this study is to gather

unique nuances of information regarding specific practices and strategies used by both

families and students to achieve academically, despite insurmountable risk factors.

Through qualitative inquiries, the goal of this study seeks to illustrate contextually the

interworking of African-American urban students and their families' journeys from early

childhood to the pivotal moments in and/or during their high school years.

There are many factors that are inherently impacting the achievement of minority students such as socioeconomic status, limited resources, policy makers, teachers and schools, and student self-efficacy. However, Nygreen (2006) argues the point that problems of urban school failure and minority underachievement are rooted in misguided or ineffective policies, and if researchers continue to focus on identifying and treating these problems locally such as in districts, schools, and classrooms, minority students will remain segregated, inequitably educated, and impoverished.   On the other hand, when parents begin to get involved and challenge economic practices and federal policies that maintain segregated and concentrated urban poverty, their children will begin to receive equitable education, equal resources, and thus succeed academically in school.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

For years, researchers (Mau, 1997) have attempted to measure the influence of family involvement on the educational outcomes of secondary school children. Families have been recognized as a key component of national educational policies and early childhood programs. As such, schools are urged to promote partnerships between educators and parents by the National Education Goal Panel (1997) to increase parental involvement and participation in supporting the social, emotional, and academic development of students. Parent involvement in student education is especially important when considering substantial risk factors that children face daily while living in poverty (NRC, 2001).

Moreover, it has been suggested (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) that the closest and most influential system in a child's beginning stages of learning are connected to the family system. Hara (1998) substantiates this frame of thought by noting parental involvement as the primary driving force to raise student academic achievement. It is also said by Christenson and Sheridan (2001) and colleagues that the connection between home and school are of great importance to emerging student skills necessary for positive educational outcomes. Bauch and Goldring (1995) argue that in urban areas, in particular, parental involvement is particularly important due to increasing family dissolution rates, environmental pressures, declining educational outcomes for students, and limited economic resources.

Family

The term "family" in the traditional Western model describes two parents and their children. However, Baca, Zinn, and Eitzen (1999) found that in the United States, only 10 percent of the population fit the ideal two-parent family. Anderson (2002) points out that in the African-American community, 50 percent of children are born outside of marriage and/or have lived without both parents during their childhood. The U.S. Bureau of Census (1991) notes that births to single women constitute 28 percent of all births. Moreover, of these single parent child births, 11 percent were Asian American; 20 percent were Caucasian; 37 percent were of the Hispanic descent, and African-American single mothers were the highest, with a staggering 67 percent. Kammerman & Kahn (1988), determined that upward of 25 percent of all American families are headed by a single-parent: mother or a father.

Table 1. Birth Rates of Single Women
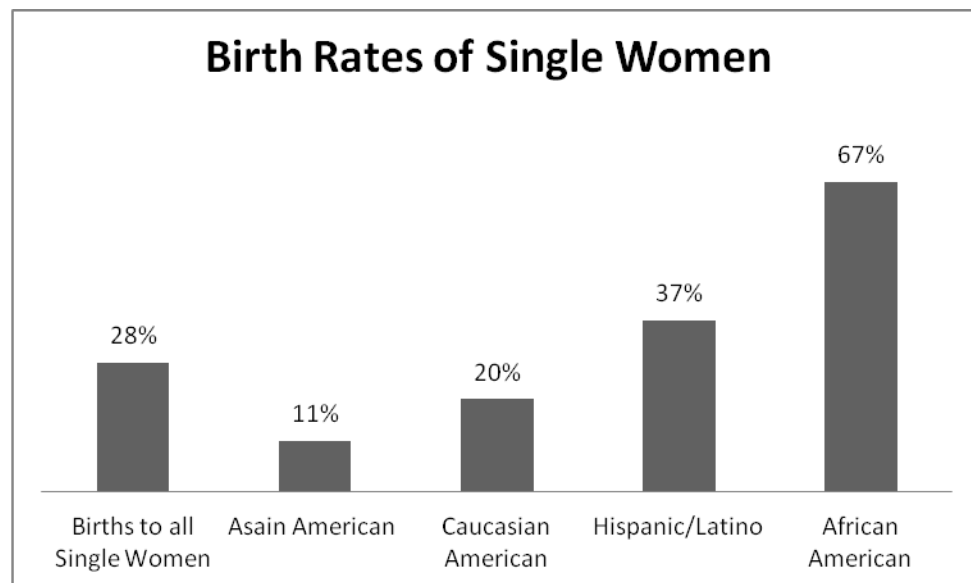
Although the traditional American family is seldom depicted by a two-parent structure in the African-American communities, there are growing concerns surrounding the effects of single minority parents rearing their children, as it relates to student achievement. Ensminger (1990) proposes that African-American children being raised in a single parent family does not inherently predict negative outcomes.   Rather, economic hardships and limited educational levels which are common among single family systems are suggestive of less favorable outcomes (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Rowley & Bowman (2009), points out that those African-American families that experience a disruption among their members systematically place their children at-risk for a distinctive pattern of psychosocial stressors and school related difficulties such as (Walsh & Betz, 1990) fighting, lying, depression, temper tantrums, academic problems, cheating, gang-related activities, and adolescent pregnancy. Furthermore, family disruptions inherently impact student well-being, but they also play a major role in the level of stress single parents are exposed to.

Family well-being/stressor

Stressful events are considered factors that have the potential for causing a disparity between environmental demands and an individual's access to resources for dealing with them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cronkite and Moos (1984) indicated that minority groups are heavily exposed both to discrete and to chronic stressors. Moreover, Durlak (1997) suggested that specific socio-demographic environments have an increase predisposition to stress which is likely to cause maladjustment in children and families. Interestingly, Attare et al. (1994) found that the presence of one type of stressor alone is unlike to cause significant maladjustment; however, exposure to a combination of

stressors can have a serious impact on the development of emotional and behavioral

problems in both children, and parents.

Many African-American families in today's society are exposed to a variety of

significant stressors (Garmezy, 1981). Single-mother families typically encounter

economic hardships and stress due to various factors such as family disruption and

limited education. High levels of family disruption in the African-American family have

been linked with low self-esteem among mothers in single-parent and in two-parent

families (Taylor et al., 1997). Economic stress has been found to create additional

difficulties that negatively impact the family processes even further (Brody & Flor,

1997). Studies investigating risk and resilience have attempted to document the effects of

stress, as well as the protective factors that shape outcomes as the family relates to stress

(Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1993). Sterling et al. (1985) found that chronic and multiple

exposure to stressful life events and circumstances increased the likelihood of negative

life effects such as depression, anxiety, family disruption, school drop-out, violence, and

decreased academic achievement.

Cowen et al. (1996) investigated the most widely studied attributes of resilient

children and found that a child's own personal traits and his or her family environment

are the two greatest influential aspects when combating stress. According to Holmes et al.

(1999), the family environment is the best and earliest social environment that children

experience. Holmes and colleagues also pointed out that the quality of family

environment and the relationships within it can have direct and indirect effects on

children's behaviors and abilities (Holmes, Frentz, and & Yu, 1999). Positive parent-

child relationships with warm, knowledgeable parents who are involved in their

children's lives and who provide guidance to their children also play an important role in

controlling the effects of stress for children by providing protection and reducing

negative outcomes under conditions of high stress (Gribble et al., 1993). Conversely, a

negative family environment that is high in conflict and/or neglect can cause stress for

children, which is likely to exacerbate family stress (Wyman et al., 1992). Therefore, it

can be said that the family environment can serve either as a protective factor in children,

or it can increase the likelihood of negative outcomes if stressors are not controlled.

Grandparent's Protective Factor

Historically, African-American families have relied on extended family networks

such as relatives, neighbors, fictitious relatives, and churches to assist in parenting their

children from generation to generation (Franklin & Boyd, 1985). Wilson (1986) defines

this type of childrearing as a "collective task" that is shared by the community. Hill

(1995) suggests that because the African-American family system is considered

multidimensional, African-American family membership encompasses a more complex

definition because it is not limited to the Western family model, a single household, or

biological relatives.

Hunter (1997) postulates that African-American family heritage dictates that

single parent mothers receive parenting support from their mother as a means to sustain

family cohesiveness. The purpose of grandmothers within the family system is to

provide another available adult to lessen the burden of the single parent, increase

availability for parental interaction with the child, and to consult for assistance in

resolving child rearing problems (Stevens, 1988). Wilson's (1986) investigation of the

African-American extended family added to the literature by providing a contextual

understanding of how single African-American mothers perceive social support from their families. In this study, Wilson (1986) found that single mothers who were living with the maternal grandmothers often viewed them as supportive and actively engaged in co-parenting, but also as demanding and controlling.

Gordon and colleagues (1997) studied the perceptions held by single African-American mothers while living in an environment with limited family resources, economically challenged neighborhood environments, and childrearing expectations. Gordon et al. (1997) found that single mothers with fewer personal and neighborhood resources were more likely to live with their own mothers. However, single African-American mothers living independently were associated with grandmothers who provided increased positive support and advice during the early stages of their grandchildren's lives.

Church Protective Factor

The Black Church has also played a significant role in the provision of social support and resources for African-American communities (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Moreover, religiosity and spirituality have always been prominent elements of the African-American culture (Gonnerman, Lutz, Yehieli &Meisinger, 2008). Historically, African-American involvement in religious practices provided support and hope during times of great adversities such as slavery, Jim Crow, discrimination, racism, and even periods of economic hardships (Newlin et al., 2002). Hale-Benson (1987) described the spirituality of African-Americans as a key factor in coping with stressful events.

Although spirituality is a part of the African-American culture, it is also prominent in the lives of other ethnicities as well. Werner (1990) investigated children from a variety of socioeconomic levels and ethnicities to determine if their religious beliefs helped them cope with stressful situations and if it gave meaning to their lives. Werner's (1990) study found that children from various backgrounds, ethnicities, or community affiliations who maintain spiritual belief in times of hardship exhibited common characteristics of resilience.

For African-American families, the Black church was and continues to be a source of inspiration, information, and resource (Holt, Kyles, Wiehagen, & Casey, 2003). From generation to generation, African-American family systems have passed down rich religious traditions of community and belief in God's mighty power; thus they were able to use these values and beliefs as sources of guidance and peace when stress became unbearable and their hearts heavy with burdens. Cooper-Lewter and Mitchell (1986) proposed that the elders in the Black church followed a set of core religious beliefs that aided them to survive and adapt through slavery, oppression, and hardship.

Today, impoverished urban African-American families continue to follow the same core religious beliefs: God is all seeing and knowing, God is forgiving and merciful, God has a plan for all his children, God is just and fair, and God will not burden his children with more than they can bear. It is these spiritual beliefs that allow African-American families to continue to trudge through an uphill battle for equality in education, resources, and economic relief.

Parent Involvement

Parent Roles

Parental involvement in student education is believed to be a major component of primary and secondary school reforms (Comer, 1996), and also in early childhood programs (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). The term "parent involvement", operationally defined, includes several different forms of participation in education within the home and in schools. Parent involvement includes attending school functions, responding to school obligations such as parent-teacher conferences, monitoring homework, providing encouragement, ensuring that their student utilizes appropriate study time and space, modeling desired educationally based behavior (i.e., reading for pleasure), tutoring their children and advocating for the student in school (Stevenson and Baker, 1987).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1994), all schools are expected to promote partnerships with families, increasing parental involvement and participation as a means of promoting positive social, emotional, and academic growth in children. Several studies of families with diverse demographic characteristics have linked parental involvement in student education with a variety of positive academic outcomes for children and adolescents (Tienda and Kao, 1994). Moreover, studies have shown that parental involvement increasingly varies by ethnicity and income and therefore may help explain differential achievement levels (Reynolds, 1989). Hickman et al., (1995) suggests that family socioeconomic status (SES) is likely associated with the academic success of children in school. As a disproportionate number of minorities live in impoverished conditions, minorities are often assumed to have lower SES, placing them

at an educational disadvantage when compared with other families (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000).

Moreover, Marcon (1998) argues that the amount of parent involvement is often linked to a family's socioeconomic status. Low income families are perceived as being uninvolved in their children's education, whereas high income families from advantaged backgrounds are assumed to be immensely involved (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000). Conversely, Scott-Jones (1984) argues that impoverished urban parents are in fact very much involved in their children's education in many positive ways. Tienda and Kao (1994) found that high-achieving, impoverished, African-American adolescents have parents who are very much involved in their education both within the home and at school. However, there are various risk factors that inherently bar low income families from participating in their children's schooling, including limited child care resources, demanding work schedules and limited availability during school hours (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992).

In impoverished urban communities, these risk factors are present even during the beginning stages of a student's education. Subsequently, Early Intervention Programs attempt to reduce the impact of these barriers and at the same time increase parent involvement within schools by providing services for families that encourage active school participation, such as innovative methods for parent teacher communication, providing flexible parent conference time periods, and creating home and school resource personnel (Reynolds, Mavrogenes, Bezruczko, & Hagemann, 1996). Clark (1993) noted that when parents initiate contact with their children's teachers and school, Parents' actions, aid in strengthening student identification with teachers.

Klimes-Dougan et al., (1992) found that a parent's participation as early as Kindergarten is likely to promote positive school adjustment through their educational careers. Moreover, Marcon (1998) found that parents who are more involved in their children's kindergarten experiences have led to fewer special education placements and grade retentions for students in sixth and seventh grade. Parents who are able to monitor their students' academic performances and are available to talk with teachers are more likely to know if their children are having difficulty in school (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000). As such, involved parents may intervene before a problem metastasizes into special education placement or grade retention. Moreover, when parents monitor their children's school attendance, academic achievement is likely to increase as a result (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000).

Clark (1993), pointed out that the parents not only reinforce the importance of schooling, but can also encourage adolescents to do their best in school. Bronfenbrenner (1974) suggests that the absence of parent involvement will likely result in a student's, long term lack of achievement in school. Therefore, parents are critical ingredients in effective education. Trivette (1995) argued that parents provide a unique frame of thought for their children; from them, the student learns how to succeed. Thus, students often perceive their worth, ability, and future accomplishments based on parent teachings and perceptions (Felson, 1989). Students gain parental acceptance and approval of their actions in their earlier years. However, as a student matures and moves into the adolescent stage, less parental support is required and more autonomy is desired.

Parenting Styles

Research on parenting behaviors in African-American families emphasizes considerable differences in their style and/or approach to various situations and topics. According to Baumrind (1973), there are three general parenting styles: authoritative, permissive and authoritarian. The authoritarian parents are characterized by high demands, control and low verbal interactions with their children (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, &Fraleigh, 1987). In contrast, Baumrind (1973) defined permissive parenting as being tolerant of a child's impulses, providing little punishment and few demands for mature behavior in the child. The laissez-faire style of permissive parenting promotes self-regulation by the child. Both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles have been found to produce children with lower academic achievement and lower cognitive competencies. However, the authoritative parenting style has been associated with children that have high cognitive competences and achievement (Baumrind, 1973). Authoritative parents tend to expect mature behavior from the child, firmly enforce their rules and standards and encourage independence and communication with their child. Authoritative parents recognize their rights to voice opinions and dislikes as well as the rights of the child (Dornbusch et al., 1987).

According to a study by Dornbusch et al., (1987), students whose parents adopted an authoritative parenting style performed better in school than students whose parents assumed other parenting styles. Recent studies regarding the effects of authoritative parenting styles have been compared across ethnic groups. The findings suggest that authoritative parenting is most strongly associated with academic achievement among Caucasian American students (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, &Fraleigh, 1987;

Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, &Dornbusch, 1991). In Asian cultures, the authoritative and permissive parenting styles are not linked with achievement and the impact of authoritarian styles seems to be less negative (Dornbusch et al., 1987). In Hispanic cultures, the authoritarian parenting style was not related to male child achievement, but had a significant negative association with female child achievement (Dornbusch& Ritter, 1993).

Studies have shown that among African-American children whose parents implement firm control within an affectively positive parent child relationship is likely to predict positive outcomes such as self-regulation, social competence, good mental health, and school success, (Taylor, 2000). Clark's (1983) study of school performance among impoverished African-American students revealed distinct parenting patterns among families of high achievers. Parents in this study made continuous attempts to build emotionally supportive home environments, in addition to providing reassurance when the children encountered failure (Clark, 1983). Moreover, student education was seen by the parents as being an important activity and, more importantly, reminded the children that academic achievement can be accomplished through regular practice and work. Clark (1983) concluded that parents in these homes were able to accept various learning strategies as well as provide their own wealth of knowledge gained throughout life.

In some studies, African-American parenting behavior mirrors an authoritative style (Abell & Clawson, 1996), whereas others suggests that African-American parents adapt child rearing practices which reflect the situations as a means to lower their children's likelihood of involvement in high risk behaviors (Mason et al., 1996). Brody et al., (1999) termed this practice, "no nonsense parenting," which is a style that Young

(1974) identified during his study on parenting practices among economically stressed

African-American mothers in the rural South. No nonsense parenting is indicative of

higher levels of warmth than are typically associated with authoritarian parenting, and

higher levels of monitoring, control, and attentiveness than are typically representative of

the authoritative style. Allen (1981) and colleagues found that African-American

mothers raising children in urban, impoverished environments believe that such parenting

practices protect their children from involvement in antisocial behaviors and at the same

time promote the children's development of self-regulatory competence (Lamborn,

Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1996).

Mason et al., (1996) also concludes that African-American parents who are aware

of the challenges of raising children in situations in which disobedience to rules can have

grave consequences, they adapt their parenting practices to fit the context, especially in

dangerous neighborhoods. African-American parents, therefore, may achieve their goals

by using stringent child management techniques such as restriction of privileges and

spankings (Kelley et al, 1992). It is for this reason that many researchers misinterpreted

African-American parenting behaviors. Taylor et al., (1993) found that authoritative

parenting predicted higher levels of self-reliance, resulting in lower levels of problem

behaviors among adolescents in urban single-parent families. The influence that

parenting and neighborhood peer behaviors have on adolescents has shown that varying

levels of maternal control impact adolescent problem behaviors, as well as academic

achievement outcomes (Taylor et al., 1993).

Researchers have found that African-American parents react to stressors

associated with urban life by restricting their children's behavior, thereby limiting their

exposure to negative peer associations, "street hustlers," and homicides (McLoyd, 1990; Sampson &Laub, 1994); Steinberg, Brown, & Dornsbusch, 1991). Baldwin and Cole (1990) concluded that in African-American cultures, parents implement their socialization goals as well as enforce rules and standards on their children using a mix between Authoritarian and Authoritative styles as a method to ensure that their children are safe while living in urban settings that are infested with drugs and crime. It has been found that achievement gains have been the greatest when parents are involved at all levels of school life including general support of schools' academic and social goals and active participation in daily activities in and out of school, as well as in school planning and management (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Parent Education

The literature suggests that parent educational levels can directly (Jimerson, Egeland, &Teo, 1999) and indirectly influence student achievement because parent's beliefs and behaviors regarding the importance of education are modeled through their actions (Eccles, 1993). Studies of home environments have concluded that environments with high levels of encouragement, verbal guidance, complex language use, participation in meal-time conversation, and verbal interactions are often times associated with academic achievements and high verbal skills (Snow, 1983). Jones (1972) noted that children with high verbal ability have parents who make conscious efforts to provide language opportunities for them. When parents model reading in the home, children demonstrate higher levels of reading achievement in school and show greater interest in literature (Hess et al., 1982). Halle et al., (1997) investigated the influence of parent expectation and belief, using a sample of low-income minority families. The study

concluded that mothers with higher education presented higher expectations for their

children's academic achievement, which subsequently related to greater performance by

the students in math and reading (Halle et al., 1997). Halle and colleagues (1997) also

found that the positive beliefs and expectations of the parent created a ripple effect

regarding academically based behaviors in the home for for the parents and for the

students.

     According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication

Disorders (2010), the most important period of speech and language development in

children is within the first three years of life. It is during this time that exposure to adults

and to a variety of sounds and sights makes a big difference in future language and verbal

development (NIDCD, 2010). According to Furstenberg (1976) and Marecek (1979),

language delays are often seen as a result of the limited or the lack of reciprocal

communication between children and their parenting mothers.   Verbal interactions

between parent and students within the home are crucial to academic achievement (Jones,

1972). Walberg, Bole, and Waxman (1980) conducted a study with parents and teachers

of inner-city students on providing a home environment that is conducive to studying,

discussing school work daily, recognizing the student's progress, and emphasizing

reading in the home. The authors found that inner-city children can make increased

progress if educators work cooperatively with families in pursuit of common academic

goals.

Parent Influence on Peer Interactions

As students enter into their adolescent stages, peer influence is a major factor that can affect achievement-related goals. Just as preadolescents mimic persons of interest within their surroundings, adolescent students will often do the same; however, it is usually a peer with whom they have made a connection that will determine how the individual students will view the importance of education (Brown & Dornsbusch, 1991).

Students are faced with the pressures of peer influence throughout their developmental stages. However, as children move from their preadolescent stage to the adolescent stage, peer influence becomes a major factor; this is the time when the power of parental influence decreases and peer influence increase (Sampson &Laub, 1994). Steinberg et al. (1991), point out that even when African-American students have parents who are supportive of academic success, these youngsters find it difficult to join a peer group that encourages the same goal. Often in urban settings, students that excel become ostracized by their peers because they appear different and they choose to learn in class.

Steinberg et al., (1991) argue that peer support for academic success is sometimes so limited that many successful African-American students avoid contact with other African-American students and affiliate primarily with students from other ethnic groups. When this happens, these student are considered "sell outs" and are called "uncle-tom's" by their lower achieving African-American peers. The African-American students that are living in urban, poor settings receive continued backlash by their peers, often having to choose between performing well in school and being popular among their peers (Steinberg et al., 1991). Randall (1998) concludes that African-American students who do experience this form of peer rejection often begin to withdraw socially, become

depressed, develop low self-esteem, purposefully avoid school, underachieve in

education, and exhibit negative behaviors towards other peers and teachers.   It is during

this time that African-American youngsters seek the refuge of their authoritative parent to

offer support and encouragement in order to offset the lack of peer support for their

enjoyment of academic excellence (Steinberg et al., 1991).

       Another form of peer influence can be found in gangs. Those students who lack

guidance from loving, yet firm parents and family support systems rely on the "streets"

for the support not given in the home. Vigil and Long (1990) points out children

typically look to join gangs when they feel unsupported and alone. The gang provides

family-like relationships for adolescents who feel isolated and alienated (Vigil and Long,

1990). The futures of children who become parts of gangs are considered bleak. Violence

is rarely planned within these groups; however, it generally occurs spontaneous and

frequent in response to a wide variety of situation (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996).

Community Impact on Student well-being

       As African-American students explore and grow, environmental conditions often

influence approaches to their learning. Noguera (2003) argues that families and schools

have integral influences in a student's life; however, neighborhoods are also a macro-

structural force crucial to the academic achievement in African-American students. A

significant public health problem among minority youth has been the disproportionality

of violence in urban, impoverished comminutes; nevertheless, no effective prevention

method has been found either by governmental policy makers or by law enforcement

officials (Koop & Lundberg, 1992).

Impoverishment in urban poverty communities is a multidimensional phenomenon. Urban poor families live with many deprivations. Baharoglu and Kessides (2004) pointed out that impoverished people experience daily challenges such as limited access to employment opportunities and income, inadequate and insecure housing and services, violent and unhealthy environments, little or no social protection mechanisms, and limited access to adequate health and education opportunities. Urban poverty is not merely a collection of characteristics, but rather a unique condition of vulnerability or susceptibility to risks. Impoverished conditions are often the cause of or contributor to other dimensions of poverty (Baharoglu and Kessides, 2004). Consequently, urban poverty is a monster with many heads that limits the possibilities available to many other urban communities.

Therefore, the epidemic of deaths by race is suggestive of social factors associated with poverty and unemployment (Whitaker & Bastian, 1991). The lack of opportunity within these communities have produced neighborhoods that resemble "urban war zones" where persons young and old are carrying guns, selling and using drugs, and committing high levels of violence against one another (Garbarino et al., 1992; Garbarino, 1995). In these communities, homicide is the foremost cause of death among young African-American men, 15-19 years of age; homicide occurs at a rate nine times that of young suburban men the same age (Prothrow-Stith & Weissman, 1991). Young African-American women living in urban, impoverished communities are being killed at a rate 3.5 times higher than same age female suburban adolescents (Guyer, 1992).

Research has shown that many children and adolescents are continuously exposed to high levels of violence throughout their lives in urban environments, resulting in significant socialization effects that increase violent behavior (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). Continued exposure to violent urban communities has been shown to have negative effects on student achievement and consequently, their school outcomes (Freeman et al., 1993). Bowen and Bowen investigated the effects of community violence exposure on middle and high school students living in urban settings. The findings of the study suggested that witnessing or experiencing a robbery or being threatened with a weapon was associated with a decrease in school attendance and school grades (Bowen & Bowen, 1999). Chronic exposure to violence or threatening acts can create stress and anxiety among children, which is likely to affect a student's ability to concentrate and focus on learning.

Healthcare in Urban Communities

The health and welfare of urban minority families and their children are considerably compromised with increased exposure to impoverished environmental conditions. In addition to continued exposure to acts of violence, families in urban communities are receiving inadequate nutrition and substandard prenatal care. Escalona (1984) and colleagues investigated the relationship between birth status and SES-poverty and found that economically disadvantaged children are provided fewer social, educational, and material resources that safeguard negative effects of perinatal complications (Sameroff,1986; Werner & Smith, 1982). Moreover, deficient physical health at birth and limited access to resources due to low socioeconomic status pose major complication to a child's cognitive development during their younger years.

Bradely et al. (1994) argue that low socioeconomic conditions contribute to an overrepresentation of premature gestation and cognitive deficits in young children; however, family influence and expectation surrounding achievement serve as protective factor that promote well-developed cognition in children.

Lead poisoning is another significant component that is frequently seen in impoverished, urban communities.   Disadvantaged children who are living in inner-city areas are at a higher risk of being exposed to lead due to living in older homes that contain lead paint and lead soldered pipes.   Crooks (1995) points out that lead poisoning is more prevalent among African-American children as a result of the long-standing housing discrimination that has charged a disproportionate number of impoverished African-Americans to live in urban neighborhoods where inadequate housing is in abundance. Moreover, researchers have found that elevated levels of lead in the blood are linked with cognitive deficits, lower school achievement, and long-term impairment of neurological function (Needleman, Schell, Bellinger, Leviton, & Allred, 1990).

Socioeconomic Impact in Urban Communities

Poverty for children in specific ethnic and racial minority groups is epidemic in America. According the U.S. Bureau of Census (1996), income below the poverty line was at 22 percent for African-American families. For some time, poverty appears to have become more geographically centered in urban neighborhoods. Student who are impoverished tend to live in areas where they are plagued by joblessness, crime, violence, teen pregnancy, and drugs (Wilson, 1990). A disproportionate number of children living in poverty are from minority groups with three times as many African-American and Hispanic families living below the U.S. poverty line when compared with Caucasian

American families (Brook-Gunn et al., 1996). These family groups have to contend with

various stressors because of limited resources, as well as the social pressure that often

accompanies minority status, such as racism and discrimination.

Social scientists, since the mid 1960s, have recognized the importance of family

socioeconomic status (SES) and how it has impacted the academic achievement of

children (Coleman et al., 1966). Different from poverty statues, SES denotes a ranking on

a hierarchical system that denies or allows specific groups of people access to or control

over a combination of valued commodities such as wealth, power, and social status

(Muller & Parcel, 1981). Colman and Wolfe (1995), therefore, point out that

impoverished individuals and/or children in the category of lower SES typically perform

with significantly less success on measures of academic achievement such as

achievement test scores and high school graduation rates, due to a lack of access to and

control of resources. However, impoverished and lower SES students are more prominent

in the areas of grade retentions, course failures, placement in special education, and high

school dropouts, when compared with well to do, higher SES students (Conman &

Wolfe, 1995). Zill et al., (1995) found that for every year a child lives in impoverished

conditions, there will be a likely increase of 2-3 percent chance that the student will be

retained in grades or placed in special education each school year.

Ducan et al., (1998) suggests that children who experience poverty during the first

five years of life are less likely to complete school than those students who experience

poverty during later developmental years into adolescence. Many researchers argue that

the likelihood of students who attend urban schools are more susceptible to earning lower

levels of academic achievement during their adolescent school years, thereby limiting

their chances of achieving higher education and being gainfully employed adults (Markowitz, Garcia, &Eichelberger, 1997; J. M. Patton, 1998). Quanes and Rankin (1998) found that the length of time during which children live in an economically stressed area predicted affiliation with antisocial peers who held negative attitudes toward school and deemphasized academic success.

Shernoff and Schidmt (2008), noted that students from higher socioeconomic status attain higher achievements than the students from lower socioeconomic status. Orfeild et al., 2009), pointed out that 70.2 percent of the nation's African-American students attend schools where minority enrollment is over 50 percent. More than a third of the nation's African-American students (36.5 percent) attend schools with a minority enrollment of 90-100 percent (Orfeild et al., 2009). Caucasians, however, most often attend schools where approximately 80 percent of the students are of a similar race and ethnicity, and less than 20 percent of the students are from other racial and ethnic groups. The disparity in education based on social economic level and/or social class has had a ripple effect on African-American students and their families for generations (Brook-Gunn et al., 1996).

Impact of Teacher and School in Urban Communities

Districts that serve minority, impoverished, urban students that fail to provide a supportive school climate is categorized as a major risk factor for children, thereby creating and maintaining low academic expectations. The delivery of inadequate educational resources, coupled with the academic risks associated with like-thinking individuals may be suggestive of a potential disjointedness between the culture of low income, minority families and that of mainstream school environments expectations

(Taylor, 1991). Wang et al., (1995) and other colleagues point out that limited resources in communities and schools may prevent students from achieving positive outcomes (Masten, 1994). Moreover, Wang et al., (1995) found that students who attend schools with high concentrations of underachieving, impoverished minority peers will inherently be exposed to an increasingly higher risk of academic failure due to environmental exposures.

Although teachers have no control over out-of-school conditions, they can nevertheless provide classroom environments that offer situational engagement, nurture student interest, and promote the development of internal motivational resources (Deci, 1995; Hidi& Harackiewicz, 2000; Reeve, 1996; Sansome& Morgan, 1992). Studies have shown that when teachers support their student interests, children are more likely to view education as being important and are less likely to dropout (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992; Vallerand, Frortier, &Guay, 1997). Additionally, studies focusing on the achievement of poor, minority children have also highlighted the importance of creating supportive teacher-student relationships as well as school environments that promote a sense of belonging (Steele, 1992). In addition, studies have emphasized the importance of having concerned, caring teachers who give students special attention and take time to work with them (Comer, 1980). Cauce et al. (1992) found that the effects of school support used as defense of life stress were most noticeable for those adolescents with an internal locus of control for success. This is the reason why, for decades, parents have sought to get their children in good schools with great teachers. Perry (2011) points out that teaching is an art, a God given talent. Good teachers live for the adrenaline rush that comes when a student having behavioral and/or

academic difficulties looks up from the back of a classroom, yelling out of turn, "I get it." According to Perry (2011), good teacher chase those fleeting moments. Perry (2011) also points out, that in addition to increased levels of instructional time that a student receives in the home and school, it is the teachers who are an integral part of improved student performance.

Students are losing their fire for education because schools/teachers have made no fundamental changes to the ways in which districts have operated for generations (Perry, 2011). Through years of experience in the educational field, it is evident that when students are in the right academic setting, studying what inspires them, it is an awesome thing to witness. It is unfortunate that public education has devolved into classrooms where student learning is based on passing the state testing requirements. Although high stakes testing is an integral part of state mandated guidelines within the No Child Left Behind initiative (NCLB, 2002), schools and teachers should not disregard using imaginative methods of instructing that pique student interest in subjects areas. Flores-Gonzales (2002) concludes that all teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity or gender, who care about, mentor, and guide their students are likely to have a big impact on student educational outcomes, despite tremendous barriers related to poverty, racism, and other social problems.

Urban Education

Impact of Governmental Influence in Urban Communities

Studies investigating urban education typically implicate the students, parents, communities, teachers, or under resourced schools as causes of school failure; however, in fact, there are many systematic influences that contribute to the underachievement of student within the African-American community (Verenne and McDermott, 1999). Kretovics and Nussel (1994) suggest that education is essentially rooted in and shaped by political processes; therefore, education change will continue to be a political struggle on the part of parents.

For decades, urban education research has concentrated on the question of reasons why patterns of school success and failure persist year after year, generation after generation, despite implementation of various acts (Payne, 1984). Subsequently, incomprehensible findings from various studies over the years have failed to note privileged and powerful groups or the economic practices, federal policies, and political structures that produce and maintain privilege also play a role in the producing and maintaining urban school failure. Gregory (1998) argues that without a clear and historical examination of urban school failure, it can appear as though minority groups bring the problems of poverty on themselves.

Laws Shaping African-American Education

In order to understand current day problems surrounding academic achievement within the African-American student population, it is necessary initially to understand the history and/or the beginning stages of the American Education Systems for urban students. Within the evolution of education there has been documented proof regarding

inherent educational inequalities of African-American students. For African-Americans,

education was initially forbidden during the period of slavery. It was not until after the

Emancipation Proclamation, "the abolishment of slavery," that public education was

provided to African-American students. The Freedmen's Schools were the first

segregated educational institutions that introduced and provided African-Americans with

basic reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography instruction (Finkelman, 2006).

According to Ladson-Billings (2006), educational inequalities of the past were not

merely imposed by ignorant masses that were prejudiced and racist, but by major leaders

of the nation who endorsed ideas about the inferiority of Black, Latino, and Native

people. Ladson-Billings pointed out that Thomas Jefferson in 1816 advocated for the

education of the American citizen; however, in the same breath, he criticized the notion

that Blacks were capable of being educated. Ladson-Billing (2006) also pointed out that

George Washington, although supposedly against slavery, owned numbers of slaves and

gave no thought to educating the enslaved children. One of the many ironies noted

within the archives of African-American Education is that African-Americans were

enslaved and prohibited from schooling; however, the product of their labor, which was

"cotton," was used to profit Northern industrialists who already had the benefits of

education (Farrow, Lang, & Frank, 2005).

The blood, sweat, and tears of many African-Americans continued to make a way

for the majority population while their dreams of educational equality were ignored, until

the case of Plessy v. Ferguson, in which African-Americans challenged the notion of

segregation. The Plessy v. Ferguson decision made people of color believe that it was

right to have separate restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and public schools, as long as the

separate facilities were equal. Plessy argued that government officials violated his

Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments when he was found guilty for not subjecting

himself to conditions that were not similar to the majority population. According to

Davis (2012) Plessy's political stance against the judicial system stimulated society to

acknowledge the constitutional rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, which

states that all persons born in the United States are citizens of the United States and that

no state can deny citizens of the United States equal protection of the laws. This case was

the spring board from which many cases thereafter followed suit such as Brown v. Board

of Education.

        The Brown v. Board of Education case significantly shaped the educational

advancement of all African-American students. This case challenge the notion of

separate but equal for students with disabilities and/or those of ethnic, poor, and minority

(Blanchett et al., 2005). The Brown v. Board of Education case gave rise to parents,

guardians, and persons of interest having the ability to legally defend the educational

disparities that student of the minority group experienced throughout history. From the

Brown case came many other court cases regarding the unequal treatment of student such

as PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Mills v. the District of Columbia.

These new laws regulated the unification of schools for students who are identified with a

disability with students who are non-disabled (Blanchett et al., 2005). It was also the

PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Mills v. the District of Columbia cases

that afforded students with disabilities specific rights and privileges regarding their

education and instruction. These rights and privileges were enacted into a law called

Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Today this law is called, Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Identification and Delivery of Services for Minorities

As researchers continue to examine academic achievement, generational

prosperity, employability, and higher learning so do policy makers and people of power

continue to learn more sophisticated methods of controlling, separating, and miseducating

minorities.   Educational inequality has grown into a system that not only separates

students that are different from the majority population, but now, under the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) these students are also classified as having a

disability. If students are not given the opportunity and exposure to specific academic

instruction, is it fair to consider them "different" or having a "disability?" No; however,

African-American students have been placed in this category for years. Blanchett (2009)

points out that students identified as having disabilities, the poor, minorities, and those of

an ethnic heritages attending urban schools are not afforded free, appropriate public

education, as promised by the American Education system.

Blanchett & Shealey (2005) argues that special education originally was never

intended to be a placement or special classroom, but rather a service delivery structure.

Furthermore, they argued that students receiving specialized instruction under the IDEA

should not receive services during their entire educational careers. Ultimately, the

services of special education were intended to provide appropriate strategies and

modifications to students that would allow them the opportunity to progress

academically, and then return to the general education setting (Blanchett & Shealey,

2005).   However, in prior years and still today, the actual implementation of the theory

of special education has gone awry. Moreover, classified students continue to remain identified, requiring specialized instruction throughout their academic careers after being initially classified disabled (Blanchett &Shealey, 2005).

To remediate the problems of segregated or separate learning programs in schools, (IDEA), as amended in 2004, introduced the inclusion program. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2005), the term inclusion is defined as children with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment that meets their unique needs." The theory behind inclusion was intended to reform special education back to its initial theory of it's being a service structure, rather than a placement or location (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Despite IDEA's attempt to educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom setting through the inclusion model, African-American students continue to be more likely than any other group of students to be segregated and/or placed in self-contained classrooms, when compared with other races and nationalities identified as having a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).   There have been significant changes in special education service delivery throughout its history due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; however, these changes to special education have not been equally beneficial to all students (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

Special Education among Minorities

Studies have shown that African-American students are being provided less exposure to general education curricula, as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Dunn (1968) argues that prior to the implementation of special education services under the original Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975; students of color were

overrepresented within the cognitively-impaired classroom placements. Harry & Klinger

(2006) found that the constellations of students classified as requiring special education

are black, male, and poor.   According to Donovan & Cross (2002), African-Americans

constitute only 17 percent of the student population in schools nationally. However,

African-American students constitute 41 percent of all special education placements in

school nationally (Grant, 1992).

The U.S. Department of Education (2005) noted that African-American students

with disabilities were more likely to be educated in a self-contained classroom for most

of the school day, which constituted 38.6 percent of instructional time. However, their

Caucasian counterparts with disabilities were more likely to be educated in the regular

education classroom for most of the school day, which constituted 54.7 percent of

instructional time. Dunn (1968) and Mercer (1973) examined poor, inner city students in

New York and California in relation to the identification and/or classification of African-

American students.   Their research concurred to some degree with that of Donovan and

Cross (2002), who found that African-American students' representation in special

education programs across the boroughs of New York exceeded rates that would be

expected, when compared with the number of African-American students in the general

population of school-aged children. Dunn and Mercer's research also revealed that

African-American children were labeled as mildly mentally retarded and their Caucasian

peers were not labeled at all, despite the fact that the Caucasian students displayed more

outward signs of disabilities than did the African-American students.

Therefore, it can be argued that special education is not the end result of a student

having a disability and requiring intervention, but rather an end result of a student's

racial, gender and socioeconomic classifications (Cooper, 1996; Cooper & Jordan, 2003;

Noguera, 2005). Therefore many researchers (Davis, 2005; Noguera, 2005; Patton, 1998)

have noted that demographic variables are contributing factors to the overrepresentation

of African-American students in special education programs outside the general

classroom setting. Patton (1998) suggested that overrepresentation of African-American

students in special education programs should be considered a form of educational

malpractice due to overt signs of racial discrimination and violations of these students'

civil rights.

Impact of Limited Resources in Urban Communities

Public education embodies one of the largest and most influential institutions in

America. Public schools are among the most important institutions in the nation, where

people from different backgrounds are able to work together towards the common goal of

being educated (Erwin et al., 2010). However, many studies of urban education fail to

consider how the production and maintenance of segregated urban poverty is highly

connected to continued under-resourced urban schools (Anyon, 1997). Ford (2005)

found that basic material resource such as desks, chalk boards, literature, and textbooks,

are severely lacking in urban settings. School buildings are dilapidated and the quality of

available classroom equipment is subpar.

Ford (2005) goes on to note that classrooms are overcrowded, thereby, affecting

teacher instruction and individual time from teachers for students, as well as the levels of

student concentration in class. Ford (2005) further argued the point that schools with the

highest percentages of minority and low income students are more likely to hire new

teachers that are not certified or teachers who have emergency certificates rather than

veteran teachers or certified teachers. More often than not, teachers who are hired to

work in urban settings are not highly qualified instructors. Ford (2005) found that urban

teachers are less likely to be prepared in their content areas and tend to score lower on the

literacy skills portion of the national teacher examination. Consequently, urban African-

American students are likely to receive suboptimal education that is likely to affect future

goals and aspiration of higher education and employability.

      According to De Leon et al, (2010), not all public schools or school districts are

as challenged or as problematic as many urban schools. Household wealth is often

reflected in the unequal resources and quality of education provided by public schools.

De Leon et al., (2010), found that in affluent communities, schools receives resources

from the communities' higher school tax, supplemented by donations that provide

programs and amenities rarely available in less affluent school districts. Nonetheless,

students in these urban schools are held accountable, compared with their rural and

suburban peers (Losen & Orfeild, 2002; Kozol, 1992).

This point is best stated (Rendall and Robin, 2000):

      No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds and

      hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless,

      pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment,

      against privileged victimizers, and then reasonably expect

      the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow.

      Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch.

      (Randall & Robinson, 2000, p.74)

According to a study by Kozol (2005), comparing school spending between various urban and suburban school across the country, he determined that Chicago public schools spent about $8, 482 annually per student, but the nearby Highland Park spent $ 17, 291 per student. Within the Chicago public schools, 87 percent of the students are of African-American and Hispanic heritage; Highland Park has a 90 percent Caucasian population. In Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia public school districts spend approximately $9,299 per student for the city's 79 percent African-American and Hispanic population, whereas, across City Line Avenue in Lower Merion (Montgomery County), the per student expenditure is $17,214 for a 91 percent Caucasian population. In New York City, the public schools districts spend $11,627 per student for a student population that is 72 percent African-American and Hispanic, yet suburban Manhasset spends $22,311 for a student population that is 91 percent Caucasian.

Table 2. Urban and Suburban Spending

Urban vs. Suburban Spending

	Chicago	Pennsylvania	New York
Urban Spending per Student	$8,482	$9,299	$11,627
Suburban Spending per Student	$17,291	$17,214	$22,311
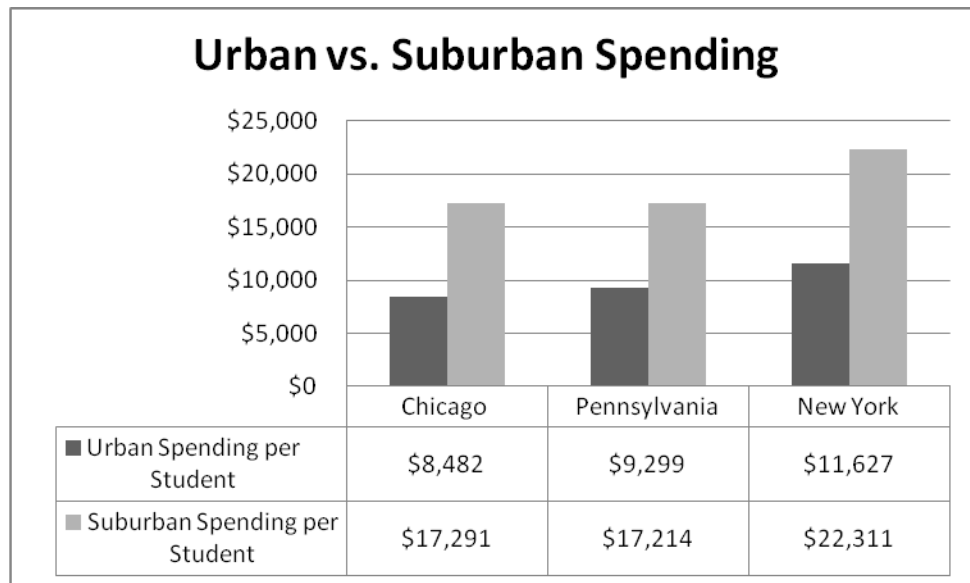
One could argue that correlation does not prove causation. However, Ladson-Billing (2006) points out that minority groups should question the reasons why the funding inequalities point so well to the racial and ethnic realities of the schools. Although it would be very hard to prove that schools are poorly funded because minority students attend them, it can be speculated that the amount of funding rises with the increase in Caucasian student attendance.   For many of the minority populations, schooling was nonexistent during the early parts of our nation's history and clearly, state and government officials continue to allocate, inappropriately and unequally, fiscal resources.

The Effects of No Child Left Behind in Urban Communities

IDEA has proven to segregate, over populate, and continue the achievement gap between minority and majority students, and public education policy makers have enacted yet another attempt to reform education and continue the inequality towards impoverished, minority students. In 2001, George W. Bush, president of the United States endorsed the No Child Left Behind Act, which is the modern day iteration of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB, 2002). Like the ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act aimed to decrease the achievement gap between the minority and majority groups by providing new educational options to parents whose children attend low achieving schools, often referred as, "Title 1 schools" (Abernathy, 2007).   As part of this act, parents were given the option and opportunity to transfer their children to another school in the district that has not been identified as Title 1 (NCLB, 2002). Another option for parents under the NCLB act was the opportunity to enroll their children in supplemental education services such as tutoring, remediation, or other

academic instruction, in addition to instruction provided during the school day (NCLB, 2002). Although these opportunities have been offered and/or continue to be offered, studies have shown that only 29 percent of affected districts notified parents about the Title 1 school choice option (Stullich et al,, 2006). Stullich et al, (2006) found that districts were not providing timely, useful, and easy to understand information about the options to eligible parents.

  According to the National Assessment of Title 1, parents that were aware of the options of using school choice moved from schools with below-average achievement levels to school with above-average achievement levels (NCLB, 2002).   Researchers examined the results of school choice moves, and found that higher-performing schools began declines in their own proficiency levels as the number of students who transferred under the Title 1 school choice provision increased (NCLB, 2002).   Frankenberg and Lee (2003) argued that parental choice would increase the diversity of schools by race and ethnicity, but Howell and Peterson (2002) pointed out that school choice had the potential to reduce such diversity depending on the area or district.   The National Assessment of Title I pointed out that African-Americans and Hispanic students, who constituted the two largest demographic groups of movers across districts, tended to move to school with lower concentrations of their own groups (NCLB, 2002). Caucasian students who represented a much smaller group of movers, generally moved to schools with higher concentrations of other Caucasian students (NCLB, 2002).

  The No Child Left Behind act has come under fire and continues to even today, by many persons for various reasons; however, the option of school choice has come against the greatest opposition as result of diversification of schools(Burke ,2012).

Moreover, parents of students who attend high performing schools are concerned that their schools will become a Title 1 school and possible lose federal funding (NCLB, 2002). As with acts prior to NCLD, public outcry and continued scrutiny has triggered yet another call for change. According to Burke (2012), the House Education and the Workforce Committee introduced a draft of the Student Success Act as part of a piecemeal strategy to rewrite No Child Left Behind (NCLB).   The Student Success Act aims to reform the provision of NCLB, providing funding flexibility to states and local school districts, and limited federal intervention into local school policy as well as a host of other changes.

In spite of decades of educational research that noted many school reforms such IDEA and NCLB provide only some benefit for failing urban schools and poor urban youth. However, these reforms cannot and will not make up for existing inequalities or come close to equalizing opportunity and achievement (Kretovics and Nussel, 1994). Reforms and programs are only a small part of the puzzle with regard to student achievement among urban populations.

Urban Student Achievement

Student Resilience Protective Factor

Minority students have experienced a great deal of opposition and inequality throughout history; however, these insurmountable circumstances are not considered an absolute determinant of student success or failure. There are urban African-American children who experience academic success despite a lack of resources, living in poverty, negative peer pressure, and being subjected to educational inequality (Gutman & McLoyde, 2000).   How do these students rise above the many obstacles they face

throughout their lives and achieve academic excellence, yet other students with similar backgrounds fall short?

Researchers have suggested that psychological characteristics such as problem-solving skills, cognitive skills, confidence in one's competence, and feelings of efficacy are crucial components of an African-American student's ability to manage stressful situations and achieve academically (Lord, Eccles, and McCarthy, 1994). Spencer et al., (1993) found that academic self-efficacy was the most salient predictor of academic performance for both males and females. Hall (2003), however, postulates that students who are autonomous develop skills to achieve and have parents that believe in their child's ability to achieve, and in turn the students believe that they will achieve. Masten (2001) with her colleague, Dass-Brailsford (2005) attributed a student's ability to adapt and achieve in the face of adversity as being resilient. According to Luther et al., (2000) resilience refers to a process by which children assimilate positive adaptation within the situation of significant adversity. Wang (1995) implied in his study on academic resilience among inner city youth that the role of the family in nurturing resilience is crucial. A child who grows up in a supportive environment where his or her parents set limits and are caring stimulates student resilience (Wang, 1995).

The literature also stressed the importance of African-American students having an internal locus of control in order to be successful academically (Lefcourt, 1992). Finn and Rock (1997) investigated the psychological characteristics and school participatory behaviors of both African-American and Hispanic groups. In this comparison, it was concluded that students who were academically successfully exhibited high levels of self-esteem, internal locus of control, and high levels of academic engagement such as

attending school and/or class on time, coming to class prepared, not disturbing the class instruction. The study also found that personal qualities related to dependability, individual discipline, and progressive work habits explained achievement in spite of adversity. Holly (1987) found that, in fact, self-esteem is related to achievement measures and school grades. However, Ekstrom et al., (1986), investigated data on high school sophomores and found no difference in general self-esteem between dropouts and students who remained in school until graduation.

Urban High School Students and Public Education

Student's motivational influence of completing high school versus dropping out of school suggests that self-determination theory is critical to understanding the underlying premise (Deci& Ryan, 1985; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Ryan &Deci, 2000, Vallerand et al., 1997). Self-determination theory, as it relates to the educational field, suggests that by creating an interest in learning, as students, children are more prone to valuing education and increasing confidence in their personal capabilities (Deci et al., 1991). In staying with this frame of reference, students who become actively engaged in learning activities are reaffirmed about their competencies through classroom accomplishments, which then proves to them that their interests are related to positive academic achievement.

A student's need for competence and self-determination dictates their underlying motivational source of becoming interested in education and internalizing school related values. The term competence suggests the need for seeking out ideal challenges, and perceiving oneself as successful in mastering those challenges. Conversely, self-determination represents the need for students to experience choice in the initiation and

regulation of their behavior, so that it is the student's choice in determining his or her

actions, rather than environmental dictates (Deci& Ryan, 1985; Ryan &Deci, 2000).

School environments that support student needs for competence and self-determination

create autonomy-supportive settings, whereas school environments that neglect the need

for competence and self-determination are considered controlling environments (Deci&

Ryan, 1987; Reeve, Bolt, &Cai, 1999). Students that experience supportive teachers who

promote individualism and free expression of thoughts often exhibit high levels of self-

determination and competence, which translates to valuing school and increased positive

academic performance (Deci, Schwartz, Scheinman, & Ryan, 1981; Deci, Speigel, Ryan,

Koestner, & Kauffman, 1982). These motivational resources provide students with the

intrinsic foundation they need to become highly engaged in school and committed to

graduating (Vallerand et al., 1997).

Reaching high school is a major milestone for adolescents living in urban

communities. It represents the culmination of elementary and secondary schooling; it also

marks a fundamental crossroads, wherein students begin to make serious decisions about

their future. These decisions, moreover, can be influenced and constrained by a host of

factors, including educational expectations, available financial resources, and quality of

academic preparation. In elementary grades, students' ability to remain attentive and

responsive to teachers' directives are said to definitely affect school performance (Perry,

Guidubaldi, &Kehle, 1979). Moreover, student achievement has been found to correlate

positively with consistent completion of additional work beyond what is required in class

and home, as well as initiating discussions with the teacher about school subjects

(Fincham, Hokoda, & Sanders, 1989). However, noncompliant behaviors exhibited by students have the opposite effect.

Moreover, Laffey (1982) investigated school engagement behaviors in a sample of urban high school sophomores. The findings within this study implied that a multitude of behaviors were considerably related to academic achievement including lack of absenteeism, classroom participation, and the timely manner in which assignments were completed. Although high school completion is undoubtedly one of the most important predictors for future economic success in children, it also represents a crucial indicator of performance for educational systems. Nevertheless, graduation rates were not a major focus of reports involving educational statistics in past years (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003). Conversely, over the past couple of years, both governmental policy systems and educators alike have given attention to high school dropouts and high school completion; therefore, states and large districts around the country have rolled out new educational accountability systems (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003).   Specifically, there is new federal educational legislation authorized in the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires all high schools to take completion rates and achievement scores into account when measuring district performance levels and the progress made towards reaching long-term performance goals (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003).

The national graduation rate for students is at 68 percent, with approximately one-third of all public high school students failing to graduate (Swanson, 2003).   Students who are from historically disadvantaged minority groups such as African-Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians are said to have a fifty-fifty chance of finishing high school with a diploma (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003).   However, the graduation rates for

other groups are significantly higher; Caucasian Americans are at 75 percent and Asian Americans are at 77 percent nationally (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003).

Research shows that the lowest academically performing states tend to serve predominantly minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged student populations (Swanson, 2001). Important implications can be deduced by the sheer fact that states with the most challenging educational conditions and challenging student populations are so far behind the rest of the nation (Swanson, 2001). In a period of performance based accountability, failure to make adequate progress towards educational standards conveys serious consequences for struggling schools (Swanson, 2001). Swanson (2001) also suggests that disadvantaged and impoverished states are not only starting from behind, but they face a particularly difficult uphill battle in the race to achieve educational excellence (Swanson, 2001).

Need for Study

The identification and placement of students in special education among low-income, minority students are increasingly high in public schools. The overrepresentation of this population and continued inability to effectively increase academic achievement of disadvantaged students cannot be solved by educational reforms alone. There are many facets that are inherently impacting the achievement of minority students such as socioeconomic status, limited resource, policy makers, teacher and schools, and student self-efficacy. However, Nygreen (2006) argues the point that problems of urban school failure and minority underachievement are rooted in misguided or ineffective policies and if researchers continue to focus on identifying and treating these problems locally such as in districts, schools, and classroom, minority student will remain segregated, inequitably

educated, and impoverished. On the other hand, when parents begin to challenge economic practices and federal policies that maintain segregated and concentrated urban poverty, their children will begin to receive equitable education, equal resources, and close the achievement gap (Nygreen, 2006). In order to obtain meaningful change in educational outcomes and opportunities for poor urban students, parents need to be at the forefront advocating for their children.

Despite decades of urban student underachievement there are fewer studies available that focus on parent involvement within urban, inner-city schools for low-income families (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Moreover, research on parent involvement that measured the effects of the parent involvement component on children's later development was also limited in scope and in the number of studies. Researchers alike appear baffled when defining the single most important factors that influence high school academic achievement in urban school setting. This problem continues to be a challenge due to the complexity and overabundance of insurmountable risk factors faced by this group of students.

In the current study, the goal is to gather specific information regarding the unique practices and strategies used both by families and by students to achieve academic success, despite insurmountable risk factors. From this study, a greater understanding of what it takes to rise above insurmountable obstacles from an African-American perspective will be uncovered. The study will measure academic achievement by analyzing reports cards, state and district wide test scores, academic achievement awards, teacher input, attendance records, school cumulative file, and student/ parent input. The

proposed study will expand on current literature of family influence on academic achievement among urban secondary students, using a qualitative, phenomenological approach. It is the goal of the investigator to determine the meaning of "family" from the student's perspective, as well as to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between a family's involvement in education and the actualized results that evolved in students' education over the years. Through qualitative inquiries, this study will seek to illustrate, contextually, the inner working of African-American, urban students and their family's journey from early childhood to the pivotal moments in and/or during their high school years.

Chapter 3

Methods

Overview of Research Design

The foundation of qualitative methodological research is derived from social sciences. The goal of utilizing a qualitative research methodology is to understand, deduce, analyze, and illustrate the phenomenon of interest through contextual descriptors – the richness of words. Qualitative methodology seeks to capture the true essence of an experience. Creswell (1998) suggests that investigators utilize a qualitative methodology when seeking to present a detailed view of a specific topic from the perspective of the participants being studied. Yin (1994) also points out that using a qualitative approach is appropriate when prior theory guides data collection and analysis, as well as when researchers attempt to represent and describe contextual conditions.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence that family involvement has on academic achievement of urban, secondary students. Specifically, understanding the relationship between parental influence and student achievement is necessary to this approach. By gaining greater insight into this connection, future researchers will have information readily available to address the academic problems that urban, secondary students face on a daily basis.

A thematic analysis is a method of investigation that allows researchers to scrutinize data for emerging patterns of themes that reoccur. The stimulated patterns and themes offer a basis for additional interpretation and hypothesis development. Rubin & Rubin (1995) suggest that themes assist in building a comprehensive description of an overarching theory. The procedure for conducting a qualitative study encompasses

investigators composing research questions that explore participants' experiences that evoke meaning about the topic at hand (Creswell, 1998).   The investigator then collects data by interviewing participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The procedure used for analyzing the data obtained from the participants' interviews includes: organizing the data, posing continued questions to reach saturation of the material, generating categories and themes from the data, coding the data, and proposing reasonable interpretations of the materials. By using a thematic analysis approach, the investigator hoped to bring meaning and coherence to the stratified themes and categories.

As a means to gain a greater understanding of the influence that African-American families have on academic achievement in urban secondary students, school records were reviewed, starting from preschool until the current secondary level. This provided a window of information that depicts how this relationship changed or evolved; it will also identify patterns of interaction that would lead to varied results in student achievement. Moreover, the investigator attempted to identify specific, progressive instances or issues of greatest concern that were monumental in the development of the student's current academic achievement. By identifying these experiences, it will begin to uncover how students cope with stressful situation and what motivated them to achieve academically, in spite of possible barriers.

Participants

The participants in this study are African-American parents/guardians and their adolescent children who attend an urban secondary schools. Several exclusionary and inclusionary factors are implemented in the selection process of participants. To

participate in this study: a) subjects were required to be African-American, b) the primary

caregiver of an adolescent (ages 14 to 21), and c) the student had to attend an urban

secondary school (i.e., high school).   The guardian was required to have resided with the

student for at least the last six consecutive years of his/her schooling. Perspective

participants who met the selection criteria were not limited based on socioeconomic

status, religion, or marital status. For the purpose of this study, students were defined as

achieving academically by demonstrating an overall 3.0 grade point average and/or

earning proficient to advanced scores on state or district testing measures at the

secondary level. Student potential was determined by a review of school transcripts,

report cards, and state or district testing scores.

　　　　To recruit participants, the investigator solicited assistance from two educational

institutions that service secondary students. The participants were families residing

within metropolitan areas of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. These states were chosen to

solicit possible participants for this study, based on their high composition of minorities.

　　　　A total of 100 letters (see Appendix A) describing the study were sent to

secondary level multidisciplinary teams for distribution to parents/caregivers. The

multidisciplinary teams consisted of principals, guidance counselors, school

psychologists, social workers, and learning consultants.   Members of each team

reviewed, and then discussed the letters with the prospective parents. Families who were

interested in participating in the study were directed to contact the responsible

investigator to enroll in the study.

Research Methods

Prospective participants were directed to contact the responsible investigator by phone at the number listed on the letter. The initial phone conversation consisted of the investigator conducting a brief screening interview (see Appendix C) with the parent/guardian to verify the student and parent met the stated selection criteria, as well as to obtain permission from the guardian to interview his/her student.   The researcher then explained to the parent that the student interview would be audiotaped, transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the responsible investigator. In addition, the parent was informed that the eligible student would be asked to complete a 1-hour in-person interview with the researcher.   The researcher also explained that students would receive a copy of the transcribed interview, and that a follow-up telephone conversation would be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time to review and validate the information obtained during the in-person interview. Lastly, the researcher explained to both the student and parent that anonymity would be ensured throughout the study by assigning each interview case with a fictitious name, so that the parents' and child's actual names would not be disclosed throughout the entire investigation process.

At the end of the phone conversation, parents/guardians were given two options: agree to participate in the study or not participate. If the parent/guardian agreed to participate, the investigator would then schedule a face-to-face interview. If the parent/guardian did not agree to participate, the investigator thanked them for the time and discontinued the phone conversation.

A total of 20 families responded to the letters sent to the school districts. After the phone interview, four families were excluded because they did not meet the selection

criteria. An additional six families were excluded because of an unwillingness to be

audiotaped. The remaining 10 families that met the selection criteria and agreed to the

terms of the study were interviewed face-to face, until the saturation point was reached.

Creswell (1998) operationally defined the term saturation as the point at which data

provided by participants becomes repetitive; thereby, adding limited new information to

the understanding of emerging themes.

The participants in the study consisted of six single-mother families and four

families with two parents (see Table 1 for demographic data). The median age of the

single-mother families was between 36-40 years, and their children were between the

ages of 14 and 17 years. Three of the six single-mother headed families resided in

Camden, New Jersey; two single-mother headed families resided in Philadelphia; and the

remaining single-parent family resided in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The two-parent

families were composed of a mother and father, ages 36 and older. Their children's ages

ranged from 14-17 years. Two of the two-parent families resided in Camden, New

Jersey, and the remaining two families lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Informed Consent

The prospective families were required to sign a consent form prior to study

participation. The consent form included a section stating that parents and students had

the right to discontinue their participation in the study, and that all information discussed

would be kept confidential (see Appendix F). The consent form reviewed the purpose of

the study, procedures, benefits, potential liabilities, length of audiotaped interview, and

length of the follow-up telephone conversation. The consent form was signed in person

before the in-person interview portion took place. Participants were informed, and then

reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were also

informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to

answer any question presented throughout the interview process.

Measures

   The design chosen for this study required two varying instruments. The first

measure was a brief over-the-phone questionnaire that collected demographic

information from the parents (see Appendix E). The second measure was a semi-

structured in-person interview questionnaire used to elicit key experiences and themes

pertaining to research questions. This semi-structured questionnaire was designed by the

researcher and researcher's dissertation committee, "Urban Secondary Level Student

Interview Protocol" (Appendix F). Interview questions consisted of 10 broad, open-

ended questions, with clarifying probes as needed. Questions were based essentially on a

review of the literature related to the African-American family influence on the academic

achievement of urban secondary students.

Procedure

   Prior to participating in an in-person interview, potential participants completed a

brief phone questionnaire, disclosing demographic information (Appendix D) as part of

the selection criteria. Based on the participants responses, students were asked to

complete in-person interviews or the interview process was discontinued.

   A list of in-person interview protocol questions was collaboratively developed by

the investigator and dissertation committee based on the review of the literature.   The list

of interview questions was held constant with regard to wording and order for all

potential participants (Appendix E). Potential participants were interviewed in-person by

the responsible investigator. Each participant was reminded that the interviews would be audiotaped, and permission to tape the interview was secured. The researcher met with each student for approximately 30 to 45 minutes in a quiet, low-traffic area within the participant's residence. An audio recording device was placed between the investigator and participant to record the interview process. Potential participants responded to the in-person interview questions that focused on their academic experiences and how those experiences were shaped and/or had evolved by each family's influence and how the students combated risk factors in the process.

As part of the in-person interview process, each participant was allowed to ask questions or express concerns regarding the study. In addition, students were queried for possible feelings of discomfort or distress as a result of the interview. Participants were reassured of their rights to not answer a question at any time if they did not feel comfortable. Participants were reassured of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time. At the conclusion of the in-person interview, participants were reminded that all information provided would remain confidential and their actual names would not be included in the study. Participants were informed that the investigator's dissertation committee would have access to the data; however, again, their actual names would not be disclosed.

At the conclusion of the in-person interview, each participant scheduled a follow-up telephone interview with the investigator. During the follow-up telephone interview, the investigator reviewed the participant's response to each question and asked clarifying questions as needed. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to summarize and validate the information that was provided during the in-person interview. Potential

participants were offered a summary of the results after the study was completed. The

data collected by the investigator of each participant were stored in a locked file cabinet

when not in use in order to ensure confidentiality. Potential participant responses were

transcribed by the responsible investigator following each scheduled interview. Potential

participants were provided with a copy of their transcribed interview to validate for

accuracy. These transcriptions were then analyzed by the researcher and dissertation

committee to interpret the data and determine results of the study.   If any discrepancies

were found between the written transcription and the participants' recollections, the

responses were immediately remediated.

Plan of Analysis

As part of the thematic analysis, the responsible investigator transcribed each

participant's responses that were provided throughout the interview process. The

following process was utilized by the responsible investigator to capture major themes:

1. Each transcribed interview was read several times by the responsible
   investigator.

2. Each participant's transcribed interview was read from start to finish.

3. During the second reading, the responsible investigator identified
   remarkable statements such as phrases, sentences, and paragraphs.

4. Noteworthy statements were then converted into meaning units that
   reflected the experience.

5. Meaning units were then grouped into themes using a color-coded system,
   and a summary of themes was written for each interview protocol.

6. Each interview protocol of collected of themes was then compared by the responsible investigator. During this process, the investigator looked for themes that were common across protocols, as well as for specific variations. These themes were then translated into one overall description, which was called the general structure.

Validity Process

As part of the validation process, the responsible investigator sent each participating student a copy of his or her transcript. The responsible investigator also contacted participating students by phone to summarize and clarify their responses. If there was any discrepancy between the written transcription and the student's recollection, it was noted and changed immediately. The themes that were identified within this qualitative process will be identified in the Discussion section of this document.

Chapter 4

Results

Through the perspectives of African-American, urban, secondary students, this study attempted to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between a family's involvement in their child's education and the actualized results of a family's influence over the years. The purpose of this study was to determine: the meaning of family; the African-American family's influence on academic achievement; gather specific information regarding the unique practices and strategies used both by families and by students to achieve academic success, and what it takes for students to rise above insurmountable obstacles and achieve success academically while attending an urban public school.

There were two different instruments utilized throughout this study. The first instrument was a questionnaire that gathered demographic information from parents (Appendix D). The second instrument of data collection was a semi-structured interview protocol designed by the researcher and the researcher's dissertation committee, "African-American Family Influence on Urban Academic Achievement of Secondary Students Interview Protocol" (Appendix E). The questions were developed through research surrounding family, education, community/neighborhood, and internal locus of control. The audiotaped interviews lasted for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews took place in schools, churches, and the student's place of residence. The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed by the researcher. A follow-up total interview was conducted with each participant to summarize and validate the information obtained during the first interview session.

The following is a reiteration of the ten interviews, completed as part of this study. To protect confidentiality, the subjects have been assigned a pseudo name.

Jacob

Jacob is an 11th grade male, African-American student with a 3.0 or greater GPA who attends a public high school located in Camden City, New Jersey. Jacob is between the ages of 17-18 years old. He lives in a two parent home with his mother and father. Both his parents are over the age of 46.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked who or what influenced his academic achievement, Jacob noted the following: "For me it would be my mom.. and I would say my dad as well because they've helped me a lot. I would also say mostly everybody in my family like…. my grandmother."

When asked what does the term "family" mean to him, Jacob responded by saying: "To me family means.. like the people who helps you out a lot to help you succeed. My family is made up of my parents and my sisters and brothers."

According to Jacob, his parents play a major role in his academic achievement. Jacob described the manner in which his parents beliefs regarding education have influenced his academic achievement by saying: "Education is very important. They talk about what they went through in their lives, like how it was back then when they struggled and then started succeeding after continuing their education, so they encourage me to do it as well." Jacob went on to say: "They tell me to always do my best and keep up the good work because education is the best thing you could do for your life in order to obtain future career goals."

Jacob talked about how his parents help him with his academics, "They study with me, help with math problems when I can't figure problems out, and talk to me about the different subjects in school."

When asked about his parents style of parenting, Jacob said, "My parents do a lot for me. They take good care of me. My parents are really strict on me. My parents being strict can be positive and negative at the same time though. They also give me some independence to do things, more as I've gotten older."

Student Academic History

According to Jacob, academic excellence has always come somewhat easy to him. When asked about his academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Jacob said, "I had a little trouble in elementary school, but my parents worked with me. In middle school, I did really well every marking period. Now, I'm in honors classes and still doing well."

As Jacob reflected on his academic history, he talked about the time when he realized the importance of education, he stated, "Oh it really started in first grade because I knew that it was always important to get good grades and do well on tests and stuff." This researcher reframed the question, by inquiring if his thoughts at such a young age were that of his parents. Jacob replied, "I would say my parents' thoughts I'm guessing." Jacob then said, "Well then I guess it was like my freshmen year, ninth grade when I realized it. But I always thought education was important." Jacob continued his thoughts about his educational career by saying, "After graduating high school I'm going to attend college and become a doctor."

Jacob mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high level. When that happens Jacob said, "My mom helps me through my frustrations in the house and some of the students here help me out in school." While continuing the conversation regarding education, Jacob was asked to talk about his teachers' influence on his academic achievement. Jacob mentioned the following: "When my grades are down they encourage me to do better. They do that because they care. They also talk to me. They are there to help me succeed."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in his daily life or parent's home, Jacob mentioned, "Religion is not really happening in the house." When Jacob was asked if he turned to a spiritual connection during troubled times and/or good times, he responded, "Yeah, but I usually talk to people who I can trust all the time like my parents instead."

In discussing inner city living and his perception of the neighborhood where he resides, Jacob said, "I live on 34th street. It's a very quiet neighborhood so there's not really much going on. There is nothing really like bad to say about my neighborhood. I've heard gun shots, but that wasn't in my neighborhood, it was like somewhere else close to it." When asked if he ventures out and/or hangs outside in his neighborhood, Jacob responded, "Yeah I go outside, but I don't like hang out far away in the neighborhood. I just like am in one spot, at my house."

When Jacob was asked if he participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence his academic achievement, he responded by saying, "Yeah, I'm involved in like the programs at Rutgers University, which is a

college prep program. That helps me with SAT stuff and things related to school stuff

like math and reading."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools,

there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that

may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates him to do well in

school, Jacob noted, "My parents motivate me because they always be on me. They

always help me out for everything regarding school." When Jacob was asked about his

perception of success in life and/or school, he responded by saying, "I would say

education, getting good grades and participating in other activities."

When Jacob was asked to talk about his reactions to the negative perceptions

and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, he

responded by saying, "I don't really think about it, but it does motivate me to do well."

Jacob was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational

inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on his view of education and

academic achievement. He noted the following: "So education back then wasn't like it is

today. Like I'm allowed by law to get an education, and I have to go to school.

However, back in the day for African-Americans, we as a people were not allowed to get

an education. We weren't privileged to education. So now they gave us a chance to get

an education. It motivated me to take advantage of education today."

Recommendation for Educators

Jacob was asked to offer thoughts to educators regarding his experience as a

student attending an urban public school system. Jacob noted the following: "I would like

to tell them that they should do more to help our schools to improve. I would also like to say that there should be more programs for kids to help with subject that they struggle with."

Sierra

Sierra is a 10th grade African-American female student with a 3.0 cumulative GPA who attends a public high school located in Camden City, New Jersey. Sierra is between the ages of 15-16 years old. She lives in a two parent home with her mother and father. Both her parents are over the age of 46 years old. She considers herself to be a leader because she's merely 4'11', but people look up to her.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked who or what influenced her academic achievement, Sierra noted, "My parent's, my teachers and just being encouraged by everybody. Like my friends they get straight A's, they encourage me, so I get straight A's. I don't hang out with people who get grades lower than a 'B' because I feel like why be the smartest in a group when I could be with a bunch of smart people."

When asked what the term "family" means to her, Sierra responded by saying, "Family means a home with order, that's what it is. If you have a home with order that means you have a good family. In my family, we all sit at the dinner table; we all interact and talk about our day. Family is not when you stay up in your room all day and don't talk to anybody in the house. We speak to each other every day. When asked who makes up her family, Sierra responded, "My mom and my dad, and my two brothers are my family."

According to Sierra, her parents play a major role in her academic achievement. Sierra described the manner in which her parent's beliefs regarding education has influence her academic achievement by saying, "Well, both of my parents are teachers, so I should be a good student! So basically, because they are educators they talk to me, tell me everything I need to do to get good grades and stuff. Sierra went on to say, "Just them being in my life influences me because not a lot of people have a mom and dad, a biological father in their life, but I do. And my oldest brother, he graduated from college last year from Rutgers, and my second brother, he is a sophomore at Rutgers. So everybody is successful in the family which makes me want to be successful. I don't feel forced though."

When asked about her parents style of parenting, Sierra said, "I think just because my mom was born in Camden and she has always lived in Camden, even when she was younger, it wasn't as crazy as it was now, but she is overprotective. I don't really go across the street to the store, but my neighborhood isn't that bad that I know of. But my dad, he tells me like, "Just do whatever you have in your mind, just go for it," and my mom is hesitant for me to do things outside the house. They are very protective. They give me whatever they think I need to be successful; they provide me with anything."

Student Academic History

According to Sierra, academic excellence has always come somewhat easily to her. When asked about her academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Sierra said, "I definitely have gained more organization skills over the years, and the teachers aren't as lenient as they were in elementary or middle school. Sierra went on to explain, "My grades didn't change over the years. I've always earned

good grades.   When asked the steps her parents take to ensure she achieve academically, Sierra responded by saying, "My mom is here checking my grades and everything all the time, so if you have somebody just showing up to school all the time, you going to do your best."

As Sierra reflected on her academic history, she talked about the time when she realized the importance of education: "Freshman year! It was the third marking period because first and second, I got C's and stuff, so the third marking period I was like, "Oh, no, this is not happening anymore" because I would get an average of three C's every market period, and then it's just like I can't get that anymore. So my third marking period, I got on honor roll and I was good after that."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Sierra was asked to talk about her teachers influence on her academic achievement. Sierra mentioned the following, "So me and the teachers have always had a bond because my brothers have gone here before me, so they always know my parents, so they care for me. They also encourage me. They want me to excel and achieve. They expect more from me because they know the type of family I come from. My teachers are just like, 'You can do it! Just keep your head up and just study." That's all they say to me, "Study, study, study."

When asked how she was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Sierra replied, "Well, nothing has happened to me. I stay in my house most of the time because the girls my age want to be fresh, and that irks me. Then the boys, they just want to be fresh too, so it's like, why should I go outside?"

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussing surrounding inner city living, Sierra was asked to describe her neighborhood. Sierra noted, "So I live in Cramer Hill which is on the other side of Camden, and I don't really know much because I only go out in the summer. Once I went to a party around my way on Halloween, my friend told me, "Backup"; he just shot in the air with a gun. I was thinking like, "Why does a 16-year-old have a gun with him. He got issues! But it was just like to scare people and nobody got shot or anything. He is not from Cramer Hill; he is from the other side of Camden. But my neighborhood is okay, even though shooting is going on it's not as much in my area."

When Sierra was asked if she participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence her academic achievement; she responded by saying, "Well, I play tennis outside of school, I go to Cooper's for different classes, which prepares me for my future. And I also take SAT classes. According to Sierra, she must achieve a minimum GPA of 2.5 to participate in tennis. "If my grades aren't good, I can't play tennis. So that just makes me want to do better in school because I am not going to stop playing tennis at all."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in her daily life, Sierra mentioned, "Okay, so I am Christian. My mom has always been into church. I wasn't going like that, but I changed, so now I'm going to church and everything. Every morning before school my mom prays the prayer of salvation, and she does another prayer too, but I'm not sure of the name. Her prayers motivate me to do better and also pray."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools, there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experiences that may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates Sierra to do well in school, she noted, "I want to get out of here, so I need to get my education in order to go."

When Sierra was asked about her perception of success in life and/or school she responded by saying, "Graduating from your grade level school, going to college, getting the degree, four-year college, then going for the higher achievement like the bachelors, masters, all that stuff, then going to medical school. Sierra went on to say, "I think for my area, just overcoming the negative stereotype, that's successful. If you can overcome that, then you are good."

When Sierra was asked to talk about her reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement; she responded by saying, "Well, I hear a lot of things about Camden so I am going to do everything to make people feel like, "Oh, I shouldn't have said negative things about them because I don't want to be under the stereotype that everyone is poor, drug dealing, uneducated, and just unsuccessful."

Sierra was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has had an influence on her view of education and academic achievement. She noted the following: "Well, it just makes me want to do more because like back then, they were limited, and now I can do anything I

want. Even though people are still prejudiced and stuff; I don't care because now I can get as much education as I want."

Recommendations for Educators

Sierra was asked to provide a message to educators regarding her experiences as a student attending an urban public school system. Sierra noted the following: "It's not what you know, it's who you know. You can know everything in the world, but if you don't have connections, then you are not going to be able to get what you set out to get."

C.A.M.

C.A.M. is an 11th grade African-American male student with a 4.0 cumulative GPA who attends a public high school located in Camden City New Jersey. CAM is between the ages of 15-16 years old. He lives in a single parent home with his mother. His mother is in the age range of 36-40 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked who or what influenced his academic achievement, C.A.M. noted the following: "I guess one thing is to be the first person in my family to go to college. I'm not really sure how to describe it. I just want to better myself where I can make something of my life. Another influence is my whole entire family."

When asked what the term "family" means to him, C.A.M. responded by saying, "It's my mom, grandma, aunts, uncles. I have seven siblings and then friends that are family of course, because I think friends matter in family too. I mean, family doesn't just have to be blood related. I describe family as people who are always going to be there no matter what your choices are in life because they love you unconditionally."

According to C.A.M., his family plays a major role in his academic achievement. C.A.M. described the manner in which his family's beliefs regarding education have influenced his academic achievement by saying, "Well, my dad's in my life, but he's not really in my life. My mom takes care of me the majority of the time. And so, she believes education is really important. She believes academics come before a lot of things. So, she wants to make sure I get through college and stuff like that. I think one major step that she's doing to make sure I achieve my educational goal is allowing me to make my own choices. Out there in the world she's not going to always be able to tell me, "Do this," "Do that," what's right from wrong. I have to make those decisions on my own. She's always given some type of freedom, but more freedom to make choices came along as I grew older."

C.A.M. mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens, C.A.M. noted, "I guess if it comes down to it, I could always talk to my mom about anything or my Aunt Renee. But usually I may go to friends. I don't know. I guess it's easier to talk to them a little bit more because I'm around them more. I'm in school with them; I'm out of school with them. So, I guess it's kind of easier to talk to them a little bit more. But if I ever have to, I can always go to my mom."

When asked about his mother's style of parenting, C.A.M. said, "Honestly, I can say there's nothing I dislike about my mom's parenting style. I mean, she's a mom. She does what she has to do and that's about it. I mean, she does what she has to do for us to keep a roof over our head. She always puts me and my siblings first. Before she does anything to makes sure we have what we need to be comfortable in life. She yells and screams at times, but I mean, I think every parent yells and screams once in a while

because I would think every kid makes their mom or dad mad. But I mean, she's cool with a lot of things. Some things she'll tell me her true opinion about and I'll really have to sit down and think about it in her point of view. Other than that, I mean she's good. She's not hard on me. No, not at all. She lets me make my own choices and she lets me learn from my mistakes. I love my relationship with my mom. I mean, I don't think I could ask for a better one."

Student Academic History

When asked about his academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, C.A.M. replied, "I've always received A's and B's in my academics. The only thing I ever got a C in was my conduct and that was in elementary school. I just liked to talk. I couldn't be quiet. I was a real talkative little kid. By middles school I was okay. School comes easy to me, honestly, as long as I sit there and actually listen to the teacher and ask questions. The one thing I can say my grandma always taught me, that I will never forget in life is always ask questions. If I don't understand something even if it's a stupid question to somebody else I will still ask it. Even if they just said it and I'm not sure what they just said I will ask again. I will always ask questions."

As C.A.M. reflected on his academic history, he talked about when he realized the importance of education, "I think I realized the importance of education when I was given the application for the Rutgers Future Scholars program in seventh grade. And then after that I realized that this is really time to start focusing on what I want to do with my future and stuff like that. Being given the opportunity to participate in this program is considered an honor."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, C.A.M. was asked to talk about his teachers influence on his academic achievement. C.A.M. mentioned the following: "I mean, I think all the teachers just want to get through to the children and see them succeed. Honestly, I don't think no teacher wants to fail a child."

When asked how he was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, C.A.M. replied, "I mean, in Camden you have a lot of good and bad experiences. Honestly, people say Camden is bad, but living in Camden allows you to experience things that somebody else may not experience. I guess I know what's right from wrong and when I make decisions I look at it in the long run."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussion surrounding inner city living, C.A.M. was asked to describe his neighborhood. C.A.M. noted the following, "I mean, every neighborhood has their bad and good parts. I think Camden probably has more bad than good parts, but you just have to role with the punches that you're dealt with. The cards you're dealt you've just got to roll with it and stuff like that. I mean, I live in downtown Camden, but I live in the good part of downtown. I live in the Cooper Hospital Historical Homes. So I mean, not much goes on there because they take care of their facilities and stuff. I've never witnessed anybody being shot. Although, I can say I've heard gunshots and stuff like that. But I never witnessed anybody being shot."

When C.A.M. was asked if he participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence his academic achievement, he responded by saying, "I'm part of something called Rutgers Future Scholars and they do a lot of

mentoring with us. And they show us some life examples towards a person that made it out of college and how easy it was for them to make it farther in life. And they showed us another successful person in life by how hard it was on that person to make it without their high school diploma or their college degree. When it comes down to Rutgers Future Scholars, they do try to get us involved in community activities. If I have the time, if school is not occupying me, I will try to get involved with other activities. I mean a part of Rutgers Scholar program sometimes makes it a little bit harder because certain Saturdays we have workshops and stuff. So, I have to wake up early and I don't get to sleep a lot like I would necessarily do on a typical Saturday. But I understand it'll pay off in the long run. Being a part of the program gives me an advantage because it makes me realize what's really out there and what I really want to do in life and academically."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in his daily life, C.A.M. stated, "I mean, my mom is a Baptist, but she's not really big on religion. She never really said, "Oh, you've got to go to church." Honestly, we don't go to church. Sometimes I think maybe that's a bad thing, but also I'll be like I do good in life…. Religion wise I do believe in God, but I'm not sure what religion I am. Honestly I do think I'm a Baptist like my mom because basically I am my mom's child. I act like my mom. I do talk to God. If I'm in my room alone sometimes and I'm not listening to music or nothing, I may just talk out loud to God. When I'm frustrated and stuff like that I talk to Him. But it doesn't even have to be when I'm frustrated or nothing like that."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates C.A.M. to do well in school, he noted, "I guess because I know without education it's going to be really hard to accomplish my career goals. It's going to be even harder to do what I want to do which is become a veterinarian. Honestly, I want to be a chef, and I want to own my own restaurant as well. And I know I need a lot of skills to do all three of those things. So, I know education has to be a big part of that. Honestly, I think it's just a mindset. I'm not really sure I know how to put it. I mean, I just know that I want to do well in school. I just know it's right. It's the right thing to do. You know when you do something that just feels right? It's the right thing to do. Coming from Camden is also part of it because that motivates me to do well too. You hear so many bad things about Camden, but once you actually live in Camden it's not all that bad. I mean, yeah of course there's a lot of deaths and stuff. But you also have good parts in Camden."

When C.A.M. was asked about his perception of success in life and/or school he responded by saying, "I think success is when you feel comfortable where you are in life. It doesn't necessarily mean what somebody else wants for you. It's what you want for yourself. I feel like success in the education field is pretty head-on. You have to get out of high school. Today you're not really going to make it in life without a high school diploma or your college degree."

When C.A.M. was asked to talk about his reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, he

responded by saying, "I can say it does make my blood boil when people always say, 'Camden children need to be fenced in or they're not going to make it anywhere', when you already have people who grew up in Camden who made it far in life. Honestly, it motivates me because once I get my education and make it somewhere in life I can actually look back like, "I proved those people wrong. When I go out of state or out of the community, people do look and be like, "Wow" I didn't know kids in Camden are capable of having this type of intelligence."

        C.A.M. was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on his view of education and academic achievement. He stated the following, "When I'm learning about African-American history it really shocks me that they weren't able to have what I have now. They weren't able to go to the schools that are diverse and actually learn. They had to learn in secrecy. So, I actually do take that into consideration sometimes and I don't take it for granted. I look at it as a gift because back then they didn't have this opportunity, so I try to take advantage of it as much as I can."

   Recommendations for Educators

        C.A.M. was asked to provide a message to educators regarding his experiences as a student attending an urban public school system. C.A.M. noted the following: "I guess I could say it's really opened up my eyes to a lot of things that I probably wouldn't have experienced in another school. I would send my kids to a public school. But if I realized that it's hurting them, I think I would have to take them out because they're there to learn and if they can't get their education, then what's the point of them even being in that school!"

Dorothy

Dorothy is a 9th grade African-American female student with a 3.0 GPA or greater who attends a public high school located in the Philadelphia School District, PA. Dorothy is between the ages of 14-15 years old. She lives in a two parent home with her mother and father. Her mother's age is between 36-40 years old and Dorothy's fathers' age is between 41-45 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When she was asked who or what influenced her academic achievement, Dorothy stated the following, "My parents, me not liking to fail, and seeing other people succeed."

When asked what the term "family" means to her, Dorothy responded by saying, "Well, my family is my mom, my dad, my brother and my sister. And family means to me people that you can go to when you have problems, people that you can be yourself around and people that will be there when you have nobody else but God."

According to Dorothy, her family plays a major role in her academic achievement. Dorothy described the manner in which her family's beliefs regarding education have influenced her academic achievement by saying: "Well, they think that education is really important." When asked what steps her parents are taking to ensure she achieves academically, Dorothy replied, "I know that if I come home with bad grades, I won't have TV, my phone, my iPad, won't have anything, and can't go with my friends who I know. If I don't get good grades, then I just can't do anything until my grades get better."

Dorothy mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such high levels. When that happens Dorothy claimed the following, "Well, I can say my friend is

one person in my life that if I have a problem and I need to talk, I can talk to her. And

my grandma will always be that one person that I know if I am really, really deep in

trouble and I really have to talk to somebody, I can talk to her. But I mean I can talk to

my parents too if I have a problem."

When asked about her parent's style of parenting, Dorothy said, "I like that my

parents work together, but then that's also what I don't like. I say I don't like that

because if me and dad are in a conversation and he is reprimanding me for something that

I did, my mom would jump in and then I have to hear both of them, and it's just me. My

mom can be very protective. I know they want what's best for me, but at times they can

be to protective and controlling. So I guess what I like about them is what I also don't

like about them."

Student Academic History

When asked about her academic performance from elementary school until the

current school year, Dorothy replied, "I was really smart when I was younger, and then as

the years progressed, it became really hard. I got one C in 2nd grade, it was a 79 and I

will always remember that C. My grades were slipping to mostly B's then, but then as I

got older they have gotten better to all A's and like maybe one or two B's. School comes

easy to me. I don't study that much, but it's like once I hear my teacher talk about it, I

remember a lot of things. If I don't remember, then I have to study pretty hard but

school, you can say it comes easy to me."

As Dorothy reflected on her academic history, she talked about the time when she

realized the importance of education: "I think I thought school was important in 7th grade

because I knew that was the year the high school looked at, that was the year that my

PSSA scores were looked at. I think because 6th grade, I cared, I really did care but it was just like I knew the school came a little easy to me so I didn't try my hardest. But my 7th grade, that's when I really realized."

        While continuing the conversation regarding education, Dorothy was asked to talk about her teachers' influence on her academic achievement. Dorothy mentioned the following: "My teachers, they do push me because they know I am a good student. There are a couple give or take that just don't care what grades I get, they act like… "you get what you get, you study how you study, if you don't do well you just don't do well." They treat you like you are a college student. Overall, most of my teachers are motivating and most of them help me."

        When asked how she was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Dorothy replied, "The barriers I have had in school aren't really the work, they have been like the people, like the girls. But it never really interfered with my work because I knew there was a time and place for everything."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

        In continuing the discussing surrounding inner city living, Dorothy was asked to describe her neighborhood. Dorothy noted the following: "My neighborhood is Temple's campus. So when I am walking to school in the morning time, I walk the back streets because it's faster. But the back streets, they are not that bad because there are mostly Temple kids. So it's not that bad as it could be but it's still in North Philly and it's right up the street from neighborhoods that always have killings and shoot-outs and things like that so it's bittersweet."

When Dorothy was asked if she participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence her academic achievement, she responded by saying, "Well, I cheer for Enon and I do the missionary work. And I am in Red Cross, oh that's in my school but I did get my Red Cross baby-sitting certification and CPR, and I have done some community service outside of school. You don't have to have a GPA just to participate, so it really doesn't affect how I perform in school."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in her daily life, Dorothy shared the following: "I have been a Christian all my life, and I know if I wasn't, a Christian, some things that have been put in my path, I know I wouldn't have done. My parents always raised me to a God-fearing child. So I know even if my friends want to go and do something, I don't have to follow them because I know right from wrong. So they have put that in me. And a lot of things wouldn't be done today if He didn't die for us, if Jesus didn't die for us."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates Dorothy to do well in school, she noted, "The fact that I don't like to fail...like I am a student that works hard, and even if I get a C on something, that really bothers me because I know I can do better."

When Dorothy was asked about her perception of success in life and/or in school, she responded by saying, "Success means that you are working your hardest. You can be successful but that doesn't mean you have success. Success to me means that you did

your best and you tried your best and you know that you pushed yourself to the hardest

that you can be and you have done all you can. Success for me in school is getting

straight A's, that's success to me. Going to college is being successful. I want to go to

college. I don't want to go anywhere in state. I want to go away, see different things."

When Dorothy was asked to talk about her reactions to the negative perceptions

and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, she

responded by saying, "Well it does motivate me because when you tell me I can't do

anything, it forces me to try even harder to do it."

Dorothy was then asked to think about the history of African-American

educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on her view of

education and academic achievement. She noted the following: "It just made me feel

bad; it made me want to try a little bit harder because I have opportunities that they didn't

have."

Recommendations for Educators

Dorothy was asked to provide a message to educators regarding her experiences

as a student attending school in an urban public school system. Dorothy noted the

following: "Public education, it will never be fair in my opinion because I think as time

progresses, there is new technologies and new things being published, new things coming

out, and we are still stuck in the old textbooks like 15-16 years ago."

Xavier

Xavier is a 9ᵗʰ grade African-American male student with a 3.0 or greater cumulative GPA who attends a public high school located in the Lancaster City School District, Pa. Xavier is between the ages of 13-14 years old. He lives in a single parent home with his mother. His mother is in the age range of 36-40 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked who or what influenced his academic achievement, Xavier said the following: "I would say that my mom definitely. She helped with school work, she would clarify it, kind of help me by explaining it, giving better details even if she didn't completely understand it. Other family members like my aunt, and people in the Church."

When asked what the term "family" means to him, Xavier responded by saying, "I would say my mom, my sister, my aun,t and my uncles, my grandparents. Family doesn't exactly mean who's related to you by genes and stuff, because I have several family members that aren't actually related to me but they've been accepted into the family. And so I think family would be somebody that you're very close to or at least you know them and they're like close to someone you know and they're kind of reliable that you can trust them with some things. And when things get tough they are there to help you out or you're there to help them out."

According to Xavier, his family plays a major role in his academic achievement. Xavier described the manner in which his mother's beliefs regarding education has influence his academic achievement by saying, "Education is very important to my mom. She would explain things to us, she would give us extra help with different subjects outside of school. She would give us these workbooks that would explain math equations

to get better at it. We were asked to read all the time. Over summer, she would give us workbooks so we would do maybe two or three pages of school work each day."

Xavier mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens Xavier noted the following: "When I was getting upset my mom would kind of talk to me. Now I'm able to get my ideas out a lot easier than before. I still have struggles, but she still helps me out now."

When asked about his mother's style of parenting, Xavier said, "I like that she's very supportive, but forgets things. And I remember when I was younger, me and my sister would get into trouble and we would get spankings and stuff.   It wasn't really much of a big deal, we would be a little sad and stuff, but it definitely helped.   We would learn from our mistakes because we knew that we would probably get a spanking again if it happened again and we seriously didn't want that. I definitely have a deep relationship with my mom. She supports me and I support her. When she's tired and stuff, I'm able to help her around the house and get things done. It's definitely a nice relationship. She definitely took the role of the single parent because she's very independent. She doesn't like getting help from other people. So she doesn't like relying on other people that's the only bad thing about my mom. But she definitely is a good parent."

Student Academic History

According to Xavier, academic excellence has always come somewhat easy to him. When asked about his academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Xavier replied, "I've always performed well in school. Throughout the years it was definitely that I was able to stay inside the gifted program even sometimes I went out of it I was able to go back into it pretty easily. And several times

I've gotten awards for getting good grades. In 9th grade the work it's kind of easy but also definitely complicated and I usually put some effort into it. For my personality, I don't like working, but once I work, I get it done."

As Xavier reflected on his academic history, he talked about the time when he realized the importance of education, "It was maybe 6th, 7th, or 6th, I think it was 6th, but it was when I first gotten a D in gym. I didn't put effort into gym because I'm not a physical person, but there I really didn't put any effort into gym and I really didn't like doing gym. Then after that like my grades went right back up because I didn't want to have to have that on my records. I knew that if I didn't have good grades it would probably affect me later. So I pushed them right back up and I ended up getting a B maybe B+ in the class."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Xavier was asked to talk about his teachers influence on his academic achievement. Xavier mentioned the following: "It definitely helped that teachers were supportive, if they saw me struggling they would help me. They would ask if I needed help or if I needed tutoring or if anything was happening outside of school."

When asked how he was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Xavier replied, "I haven't had too many difficulties concerning that. I know there were like several occasions that happened in like the last year or two I had to move three times and it was very stressful because I would always have to pack everything up, even if I made friends we would have to leave them and go to the next school, or go to the next neighborhood, and we would have to leave family members and move out. It was

stressful because we could not talk to people, we had to leave our family behind and lose

connections. And also there was my mom's surgery; she was in the hospital for three

weeks. She had to go back for another week or two and she's now still recovering from

it.   So it was very stressful! We had to leave our dog at the pound because of my living

situation. That was very stressful, and I know I definitely had to rely on my family

members, my friends to support me. I'm prayed to God and I know if I hadn't done that I

would not be sane right now or focus on my school work."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussing surrounding inner city living, Xavier was asked to

describe his neighborhood. Xavier noted the following, "I would describe it as being all

right near the bad part of town. There is definitely a mixture of the suburb people and of

people that are troublemakers and getting into trouble, fighting, getting bad grades and

stuff like that. There are kids that get into fights, they're in gangs, or they've been in a

gang or they've gotten into trouble before. Like every once in a while there's a fire or

something like that, or some kind of trouble happens, but basically it's a lot more

peaceful than other neighborhoods."

When Xavier was asked if he participated in activities outside of school in the

community and if so, how does that influence his academic achievement, he responded

by saying, "I'm in the youth group and the choir. Those things are not related to school

work, so it definitely doesn't have impact on my school work."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual

practices in his daily life, Xavier noted the following, "My grandparents are both pastors

and assistant pastors and they preach and stuff like that, so, yes, it definitely does. I kind

of rely a lot on God because I know that for me it gets really stressful. I pray every night; I keep praying that my family stays safe. My mom definitely raised me to be part of the church.   We grew up in a church family, we grew up going to church and like we definitely branched out of there. Our grandparents go to church, they like to be in church all the time, but my mom changed that and she likes to be her own person, so we do go to church but we also live our lives that aren't completely involved in church like our grandparents."

Student Resiliency

When asked what motivates Xavier to do well in school, he noted, "I think it's definitely my future plans after graduating, the fear of getting bad grades, and having to repeat things. And a lot of the motivation is my family. I come from a successful family, they've done a lot. My grandparents own a restaurant together, even when they didn't have the restaurant they were hard workers. My mom was a nurse, a counselor, and a teacher. My aunt and uncle are both doctors. I do my best so that I can carry on the family legacy. So I definitely want to keep that going and stuff."

When Xavier was asked about his perception of success in life and/or school he responded by saying, "Success to me is having a good job, steady income, a good home; not an over the top home that's very expensive, but a decent home that you're able to pay the rent and afford food and pay the bills and stuff like that. School success I think it would be getting good grades. It is like keeping your grades good, keeping good social skills in class, like you're not getting into trouble, and you're friends with people."

When Xavier was asked to talk about his reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, he

responded by saying, "I have definitely set out to change that stereotype that when you live in the city you might not achieve stuff and you might end up getting a bad life. I definitely want to change that stereotype and keep away from it, because there are bad people out there because they may have bad lives, but it doesn't mean that they are exactly bad."

Xavier was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on his view of education and academic achievement. He noted the following: "It definitely shows me that education is definitely needed. I would definitely say it was unfair for them because they had to sneak a book just to read a story out of it, and now we have that advantage because we are able to read books. So I definitely say we should definitely take the initiative and learn how to read and write and to go to school and all that stuff."

Recommendations for Educators

Xavier was asked to provide a message to educators regarding his experiences as a student attending an urban public school system. Xavier shared the following, "I would have to say take the initiative and take the advantage of what we're able to do."

Gabrielle

Gabrielle is a 12th grade female African-American student with a 3.0 GPA or greater, who attends a public high school located in the Camden City, New Jersey. Gabrielle is between the ages of 17-18 years old. She lives in a single parent home with her mother. Her mother's age is over 46 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked what the term "family" means to her, Gabrielle responded by saying, "For me it is my parents, my brothers, my nieces and my nephews and my grandma. Family I guess… I don't know that's such a hard question. I think sticking together and being the ones that you know, who's going to tell you right from wrong and is going to help you along the way especially like close family, not like you know, the cousins and all that but like the immediate family."

When asked who or what influenced her academic achievement, Gabrielle noted the following, "Rutgers of course with the 'Future Scholars Program,' myself and the economy. I named Rutgers because I wasn't really thinking about college because when I was graduating from middle school, it still seemed so far away so I'm like… I'm not worrying about it right now but when I got to the program, they introduced me to a lot of stuff that I didn't know like it's good to do plan earlier so that helped me focus more on college, like I knew I was going to college but I'm like "Oh it's far away, I don't have to worry about it" but it opened me to worry about it now instead of waiting at the last minute because I just want the best for myself. It's always like how your parents say "I want you to have more than what I had." I want my kids to have more than what I have, so I have to do what I have to do to make that happen. I have to focus on myself and not the things around me. I always wanted to be a doctor but at first it was kind of like not a good reason to be a doctor. It was the money at first, but as I grew older I got more interested in it.. I'm always watching doctor shows and trying to figure out cases as they're doing them, so I just know like we are always going to need a doctor, so that's just a good place to be. I didn't mention my family or mom as one of the contributing

factors or one of those three. Because I don't know. I'm not the type of person that really… like I listen to other people but I don't let them put too much into what I want to do so I don't really say like my parents or my family or teacher or anything like that because they're going to tell you things like that anyway. They're going to tell you "You should do this because such and such, such and such" but it's like I have to feel it. I don't want to just be told it so… plus that is their role or their responsibility as family. But they do influence me a lot because I want to go farther than what they did and show them that I can do it."

Gabrielle described the manner in which her family's beliefs regarding education has influenced her academic achievement by saying, "It influenced me a lot because for one, my mother was a foster child so her being jumped around, she didn't get the education that she really, really needed. So I help my mom… like certain stuff that she needs help with. My mom did finish school and so did my dad. My dad is more educated on his own. Like he educated himself like he just sat in the library and did what he had to do because he wanted to… My dad teaches me a lot like there's stuff in textbooks that my dad will say and I'm just like "How do you know that?" and there's stuff that's outside the textbook that they don't put in there and he knows. My mom was always on top of me, asking me about my homework? Did I do this? Did you hand in your project? My dad, we just… me and my dad have a close bond so we're always talking about anything like… so he always says, "You know you have to do this Gabrielle. You have two strikes against you, you're a woman and you're African-American so you got to work twice as hard" so we always have this talk faithfully, always."

Gabrielle mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens Gabrielle noted the following: "Sometimes I just want to give up. I'm just like.. "This is not working." "I'm tired of studying" and all that but I just always remember like I'm supposed to be the one to go to college. Like out of my family, I'm the one whose head is on straight, so I need to obtain it. So I just always tell myself you can do this... like you can do it, just keep going. There's a time that I just give up. I literally just give up, like I'm just like… I'm not doing this, but I get myself thinking and calm down, just keep going. When I get to that points when I'm frustrated I talk to my mom also."

When asked about her parent's style of parenting, Gabrielle said, "I don't like when my mom is always on top of me. It's so annoying. It's like I'm responsible enough to know what I'm doing. I don't need someone on top of me 24/7. I want her to pay attention to me because I don't like it if she doesn't pay attention to me, but I don't want her to be on top of me about every little thing.   I'm thinking, "I'm older now, so just give me that space." My dad, he just always want to talk about something, it's just like "Okay dad, I know. I'm just letting you know" and we'll have the same conversation like three weeks later. What I do like is that they are on top of me because sometimes I do get a little unfocused. I want to relax, I want to do nothing. Like I'll be like… like I have a project and I'm like "Oh I'll just wait until weekend come" or "I'll wait till next weekend" and my mom is like "No, you need to do it. You need to do it" so it's a plus and a downside at the same time. Even though I say she's always on top of me, Me and my mom are close. I'm closer to my dad because my dad can talk to me more than my

mom. My mom kind of makes me frustrated so we talk but not as deep as how me and my dad do."

Student Academic History

According to Gabrielle, academic excellence has always come somewhat easy to her. When asked about her academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Gabrielle replied, "Okay. In elementary I always had A's and B's. I remember second grade, I had straight A's the whole entire year and I was the only African-American who ever did that in my school. Middle school, same thing, I always had A's and B's. I had one C from social studies. Social studies was terrible but I got it back up. I remember I got my first D in biology freshmen year, but like my teacher was making it seem like we were fine, but then like the whole class failed and he was just like oh well… my parent came in like "Where was the progressive report?" He said, "I don't have to send out progress reports unless it's an F." My mom was like, "Even if you don't have to, why wouldn't you?" But I got that back up. Now I'm in AP classes, but I'm so struggling with them. I mean overall my grades are always good. I never brought home a bad grade like that. Honestly I don't know. I'm going to be honest because sometimes I don't pay attention in class. I rarely study. I just… when I did focus, I knew it like I can get it so it was like those moments "Oh I get it. I'm not going to pay attention now", so I just… and I just had those parents, if you come home with it a bad grade, you might as well not even come home. Just don't, just stay at school, so it's kind of in my nature to just do well."

As Gabrielle reflected on her academic history, she talked about the time when she realized the importance of education: "I'm going to say high school because when I

was younger I always knew good grades is what you're supposed to get, but I never really knew why. Like I could sit there and learn everything and not do the work, but I would still know it, but I would get a bad grade if you didn't do the work. So high school kind of opened my eyes up because like this is what colleges look at; it's not senior year; it's all the other years so that kind of you know, made me focus more, and you know, that I need to do what I had to do."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Gabrielle was asked to talk about her teachers' influence on her academic achievement. Gabrielle mentioned the following: "Since elementary school, I went to a school where my mom worked at. The teachers were always on top of me to do good because they knew my mom. So it was like… "Well do you want me to call your mom, she's right downstairs?" So I was just like "Okay." So they were always on top of me like, '(Erica) Gabrielle, you know you got to do this. You know you got to do that.' I'm like, 'I know.' So they're good. I mean you always have that one teacher who's just like "Yeah you're on your own" but for the most part. Teachers push me, tear me down sometimes. And they are tearing me down because they're pushing me."

When asked how she was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Gabrielle replied, "I want to get out of Camden. It's not that I don't like it… I'm not saying I want to run away from Camden, but I do want to get out of Camden."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussing surrounding inner city living, Gabrielle was asked to describe her neighborhood. Gabrielle noted the following: "Well growing up in Camden

has been… I mean people think that Camden just… just real rough like everything is just rough but for me it's not, like it's just a city. It's just a city that I live in and I treat it like any other city like, just this is where I come from, where I'm born and no different. I haven't ever experienced anything bad in Camden."

When Gabrielle was asked if she participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence her academic achievement, she responded by saying, "Actually not kind of good because it took my focus off of school, like I remember freshmen year I did track and right after school we had practice until like 7:00 to 8:00. In freshman year… I'm a freshman like transitioning from middle school to high school. During that time period I was like I need to focus, so I wound up stop running track so I could focus on school. I wanted to get straight A's… I do attend the Rutgers Future Scholar program, but right now my main focus is education."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in her daily life, Gabrielle noted the following, "Yeah, it did a lot. I live with my mom and I was under her religion, but my dad practices a different form of religion. I always went to church, so religion plays a role a lot. It makes me more connected with God in knowing that he didn't put me here to see me fail. He put me here for a purpose so I'm going to make that purpose good and I'm not going to let anybody down… so when I do have my downs, I sit there and I talk to God."

Student Resiliency

Like many student living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates Gabrielle to do well

in school, she noted, "I just want to… I really want to be the first one to finish college. Like my brother went to college, he went to like five different colleges and never finished. My parents didn't go to college, so I want to be the one to say, "I went to college and I finished and achieved what I want to be."

When Gabrielle was asked about her perception of success in life and/or in school, she responded by saying, "Success is being on top and just being your best. Of course money and just having all your goals whether it's a job, house, car, family, any of that…School success is learning and being able to intake everything, understand it and apply it."

When Gabrielle was asked to talk about her reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, she responded by saying, "People always think everybody in Camden is bad or ghetto or uneducated which is not true. I remember going up north and they were like "Oh where are you from?" and I was like "Camden" and they got kind of quiet. It's like "Okay" that doesn't mean anything just because I'm from there. So I guess it kind of helps at the same time because they know like "Oh this student is from Camden" where they think it's a bad place but she's trying to do something, so maybe she's is different."

Gabrielle was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on her view of education and academic achievement. She noted the following: "That it's important. We need to take everything and any opportunity that we get. We need to take full advantage

of it because it wasn't given back then, but now that it is, we need to use every resource

that we can. I try to just take advantage of every opportunity that I can get."

Recommendations for Educators

Gabrielle was asked to provide a message to educators regarding her experiences

as a student attending an urban public school system. Gabrielle noted the following:

"Look at me as me and not a percentage. Look at Camden students individually instead

of just a number."

Emmanuel

Emmanuel is an 11th grade African-American male student with a 3.0 or greater

cumulative GPA who attends a public high school located in the Philadelphia School

District, PA. Emmanuel is between the ages of 15-16 years old. He lives in a single

parent home with his mother. His mother is in the age range of 41-45 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked who or what influenced his academic achievement, Emmanuel noted

the following, "It would be my mother kinda like beatin' academics into me and bein'

very strict about academics. I would also say bettering myself to achieve good academics

and having high standards with academics. Also so I wouldn't be like somebody that's

on the street just not doin' nothin' with my live like sellin' drugs or in jail or livin' in my

mom's basement or not actually have a house or just not wealthy or not makin' it in life."

When asked what the term "family" means to him, Emmanuel responded by

saying, "My family is mother, father, grandmother, uncle, aunt, brother, my stepmom,

and my cousins. Family means like you know the backbone of a person 'cause they want

the best for you and they would want to give you everything that they can and basically just try and push you to your highest ability so that you can probably meet 'em or surpass them or whatever."

According to Emmanuel, his family plays a major role in his academic achievement. Emmanuel described the manner in which his mother's beliefs regarding education has influenced his academic achievement by saying, "By telling me I'm not going to become just any random person on the street, I'm going to have a career, a family be financially set and stuff. They put me in programs for like extra curriculum stuff, so I won't just be doin' nothin' with my life. They try to keep me in a nice neighborhood around a good environment and try to open my eyes to what life is about."

Emmanuel mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens Emmanuel stated the following, "My mom 'cause she just tells me just don't overwhelm yourself or don't take too much out on yourself. And just try your best and just do what you can do and the rest will fall into place."

When asked about his mother's style of parenting, Emmanuel said, "I like how my mother stresses education and stays on top of me so I can do my best. I also like that she just forces me to reach the highest levels of education for myself. I dislike that she can be sometimes overwhelming by pushed so much, wanting me to achieve so much and bein' the best at everything."

Student Academic History

According to Emmanuel, academic excellence has always come somewhat easy to him. When asked about his academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Emmanuel replied, "Like from elementary school to eighth grade it

just came easy and I just flew through it. But as I started gettin' into High School it didn't come so easy. It became difficult in ninth grade, I wasn't excellin' or I wasn't doin' as well as I usually did. I had to strap down and actually focus really hard. I started studying and reading more for extra practice."

As Emmanuel reflected on his academic history, he talked about when he realized the importance of education, "I actually realized the importance of education in the ninth grade."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Emmanuel was asked to talk about his teachers influence on his academic achievement. Emmanuel mentioned the following: "They helped me achieve when I came to them for extra help.   They would explain things that I didn't understand and they would take however long I would need to understand it fully. Personally, I think that they were there to help me."

When asked how he was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Emmanuel replied, "Never really had any life changing or experiences to that type of sort."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussion surrounding inner city living, Emmanuel was asked to describe his neighborhood. Emmanuel noted the following, "It's a very safe environment and like everybody knows each other and we interact with each other very well and it's mostly non-violent and it's a good neighborhood. I go outside mostly every day."

When Emmanuel was asked if he participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence his academic achievement, he responded by saying, "It influenced me because you need a certain Grade Point Average to actually participate in athletics. Although my education is number one to me and the athletics come second to it."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in his daily life, Emmanuel noted the following, "Religion influenced me by believing that anything is possible or I could do anything that I could set my mind to. My parents raised me very spiritual. I believe that if I pray for something and work for it then I will achieve what I want."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates Emmanuel to do well in school, he noted, "My motivation to do well in school is the future that I would like to have. I wanna have a very good future with options in life. I don't won't to be stuck in a dead-end job all my life. I want to be able to move up or make a certain amount of money without struggling throughout life with finances."

When Emmanuel was asked about his perception of success in life and/or school he responded by saying, "I consider success as having a nice home, livin' in a good neighborhood, havin' the best for my kids, wife, and not struggling or having to worry about my well-being or safety. School success means job success… that I could get a

great job and just like excel in life .In order to be successful I plan on goin' to four year

university."

When Emmanuel was asked to talk about his reactions to the negative perceptions

and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, he

responded by saying, "I think that's very untrue because not everybody is into sellin'

drugs or bein' bad. There's a lot of kids out here that's tryin' to succeed in life and bein'

good in classes and getting good grades. And it's just crazy how they portray us just

because a few people do somethin' bad here and there then they just think that it's the

whole African-American inner city community. That drives me more to become that

person that didn't do badly in school or that wasn't the stereotype that everybody

portrayed African-Americans as. Inner city kids can make it in life and not just only be

drug dealers, they can be educated and good academically and behavior and be athletes or

whatever."

Emmanuel was then asked to think about the history of African-American

educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on his view of

education and academic achievement. He noted the following, "It influenced my view as

to I should take every chance I get for higher education because they weren't offered as

much education as I'm offered now. Back then they weren't offered the chances to be

highly educated, so I have to take the rights that I'm given and excel in my own area

because they fought and suffered to try and get us educated."

Recommendations for Educators

Emmanuel was asked to provide a message to educators regarding his experiences

as a student attending an urban public school system. Emmanuel shared the following,

"My view on school is that standardized tests and like SAT's and PSAT's and Keystone's shouldn't be the way that people are associated with how they learn or if they didn't learn or how much they learned or how much they didn't learn. Some people don't test very well and or probably couldn't answer it right because of all the pressure that they put on these types of tests."

Stacey

Stacey is a 12th grade African-American female student with a 3.0 GPA or greater who attends a public high school located in the Philadelphia, PA School District. Stacey is between the ages of 17-18 years old. She plans to attend West Chester University in the fall. She's majoring either in respiratory therapy or psychology. Stacey lives in a single parent home with her mother. Her mother's age is between 36-40 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked what the term "family" means to her, Stacey responded by saying, "My mom, my siblings, my aunts, my great-aunt and my great great grand mom are my family. They're the ones that are closest to me. To me family is like the foundation of my life so it means a lot. I think without my family I wouldn't be able to accomplish what I have accomplished or what I know that I can accomplish. Yeah, family, that's basically my foundation my structure for everything that I do."

When asked who or what influenced her academic achievement, Stacey noted the following, "The thought of success. I like education; I like learning so therefore I do well in school. My mom, she motivates me. And my little siblings also motivate me because I want to be able to be a good role model in their lives also."

Stacey described the manner in which her family's beliefs regarding education have influenced her academic achievement by saying: "Well my mom always told me to do better then what she did. So she always pushed me and made sure I strived to do better. Since I was little my mom believed education is my key to any open door or opportunity I want to go into."

Stacey mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens, Stacey noted the following, "My mom is my support. My mom is there for me mentally, emotionally. If I'm stressing over school she's there. If I need help, she's there for me. So my mom is there 100 percent when it has to do with education."

When asked about her parent's style of parenting, Stacey said, "My mom pushes me to excel in education. My mom wants me to do everything her way though. So that's kind of a dislike. She planned my life for me. Although my mom is a single parent and I'm her oldest, she and I are really close. I mean of course now that I'm a teenager, we have our moments, but if it comes down to anything that happened, like I said before, my mom is there for me. "

Student Academic History

According to Stacey, academic excellence has always come somewhat easy to her. When asked about her academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Stacey replied, "Uh-hum kindergarten I went to Catholic School. That helped me out because once I went to public school I was skipped to the first grade. Fifth grade I was accepted to Hillford Middle School, it's a blue ribbon school. There I

did well, but I became this very loud student. I wanted a lot of attention and when it came time to apply for high school's they didn't like my discipline although I had straight A's and B's. From there I learned a lesson because I was sent to King, which I didn't like. I was thinking, "I can't," so since ninth grade I only had one C. I had all A's or a couple of B's here and there. And that's it."

As Stacey reflected on her academic history, she talked about when she realized the importance of education: "In middle school. I started getting C's. I even had a D. I'm like "What is going on?" I never did this in my life. Like "What am I doing wrong?" And that's when I realized when I didn't get accepted to any of my high schools that I applied to. I'm like "un-un" no I gotta do something about this."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Stacey was asked to talk about her teachers' influence on her academic achievements. Stacey mentioned the following, "With good teachers I was able to get good grades. They were there to help me. They were there help me see my path. The counselor really helped me with college stuff. At my high school teachers wanted you to be successful."

When asked how she was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Stacey replied, "I don't let like negativity rub off on me."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussion surrounding inner city living, Stacey was asked to describe her neighborhood. Stacey noted the following, "I don't actually like going outside because I feel a little unsafe, especially at night. I don't like when strange boys

talk to me and they just look so out of this world, like they don't look like they're here, like they're intoxicated or something. I don't like that. It can be kind of scary"

When Stacey was asked if she participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence her academic achievement, she responded by saying, "I am a Junior Black Captain. And I'm involved in the church in something called 'Start Smart Stay Smart program.' It's in Germantown. And we give out free school supplies; book bags to all the children in Germantown. I think all my activities tie into the fact that you have to give kids a chance, but none of my stuff directly relates to my own academic achievement."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in her daily life, Stacey noted the following: "God is everything to me. I pray all the time. I prayed even before the interview started. Like seriously for some reason I can have long talks with God.   That's one person, the Lord, I can have long talks with and even though he not talking back to me I feel it and sometimes I answer my own questions. I believe I have to have faith in something, so I have my faith in God. I can say I learned it from close friends to the family because my mom she just started going to church regularly."

Student Resiliency

When asked what motivates Stacey to do well in school, she noted, "I would say making my mom proud and prove everybody else wrong that said I wouldn't be able to become successful."

When Stacey was asked about her perception of success in life and/or in school, she responded by saying, "To accomplish your goals and ambitions. If I do what I feel and what I love to do, that's success. Success to me is when you graduate, but I also think it's the knowledge that you gain from being in school. Not necessarily graduating because you can graduate without learning anything. To attain knowledge is success."

When Stacey was asked to talk about her reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, she responded by saying, "When people say that we're stupid and that we're criminals and put us all in one place that's not true. It's not like all inner city kids are dumb or stupid. Once you give them the opportunity and the tools, adequate supplies, and things of that nature; we all do well. I will stand out and to prove them wrong, that we can achieve and that we can do well."

Stacey was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on her view of education and academic achievement. She noted the following, "That it has progressed. I mean we now have a chance to have education. Back in the day we couldn't even read so the fact that we are given the chance even if it is inadequate, I mean it's progressed over time. But it could get better. I'm going to go above and beyond to make sure I take advantage of any opportunity I get. "

Recommendations for Educators

Stacey was asked to provide a message to educators regarding her experiences as a student attending an urban public school system. Stacey noted the following: "So I

would tell educators that to yeah just to make sure your students are learning something out of your classroom. Don't let them leave empty handed."

Nehemiah

Nehemiah is a 12th grade African-American male student with a 3.0 or greater cumulative GPA who attends a public high school located in the Camden City School District, New Jersey. Nehemiah is between the ages of 17-18 years old. He lives in a single parent home with his mother. His mother's age is in the range of 41-45 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked who or what influenced his academic achievement, Nehemiah noted the following, "My Rutgers Future Scholars Program, my mom, wanting to succeed. My mom keeps me motivated. She is a support factor, a great support factor. She believes in me, believes I can do great things with education. In this society, it's hard to move forward without education. With education, you are not limited to certain boundaries that people set for you. Growing up, my family wasn't as fortunate as they are now. When I was around five years old, my mom was working a bunch of dead-end jobs, so she decided to go back to school for her bachelor's degree in nursing. In 2004, she got her degree in nursing and things changed, and with her education I saw things change, so it motivated me."

When asked what the term "family" means to him, Nehemiah responded by saying: "My mom is a strong woman and plays a strong role within my family. My uncles, my grandma, and my dad play a strong role within my family too. I believe family is people that you can turn to in hard times, even in good times. I mean that's important if you just need to relieve stress off or if you need help."

According to Nehemiah, his family plays a major role in his academic achievement. Nehemiah described the manner in which his mother's beliefs regarding education has influence his academic achievement by saying, "For my mom, education is like the end all, be all. I don't know how to explain it, it's like-- she is for education, she is for education all the way. It's like when my mom sees me not living up to my full potential with my education for example, like missing my studies, performing below my ability on test, she's really hard on me, versus parents that are okay with their child getting a "C."   Getting "C" on a test to her is like an "F" because she knows my potential, she is not having it. I know that I have to live up to my full potential; it motivates me to do better. And I guess I can say that's why I am where I am today at 3.7 GPA, a great student, and well-rounded. My mom made sure I did my homework every night. She helped me with my homework. As I got older, she gave me that leeway, she trusted me more. So that tells me that I have to take care of my responsibilities; I have to live up to that trust that she has given me. My mom gives me some form of independence as I've have gotten older and have proven myself."

Nehemiah mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens Nehemiah noted the following: "I talk to my mom."

When asked about his mother's style of parenting, Nehemiah said, "My mom, I love my mom as a parent. She has like an old school style of parenting. She makes sure I am up on my game. I dislike the fact that she is always on me, but also believe it has been beneficial."

Student Academic History

When asked about his academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Nehemiah replied, "School, to be honest, it comes easy to me. I am a very open-minded student. Like I can be sitting in the classroom and the teacher put notes up on the board and just by looking at the notes and jotting down in my notebook, I can get it just like that, versus other students who have to really, really look and study the notes. When I was in 4th grades, I had this teacher, Ms. Alexandria, and back then I was kind of a troublesome student but I was smart, I had potential, and she saw that in me. I would get detention every day for running my mouth and I got my first "C". But one day I was in detention and she picked me up, like not picked me up, but stood me up, and she said, "Let me talk to you." So we went outside in the hallway and we were talking, and she said, "You have a lot of potential and this attitude that you are portraying is not getting by." So I looked her in her eye and I said, "I will never have detention again and I will never get a C again ever in my life." And I lived up to what I said. I have never had a C ever since that day or never received detention ever since that day."

As Nehemiah reflected on his academic history, he talked about when he realized the importance of education: "I am thinking back on when I was younger and when I was growing up, my mom had a high school diploma and my dad didn't. Neither of them had college degrees and it was hard to live and maintain. We lived in a house where we stayed in one bedroom, one queen-size bed, and no TV. We had no heat, it was cold, especially during the winter, and we were struggling. And I guess one day my mom picked herself up and said, "I need to go back to school, I need to make some more money," and that's what she did. I watched her along her process and I said she is a

strong woman, and with her education, she was able to provide for us. So I guess that's when I said education is important, it can take you somewhere. That was in middle school."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Nehemiah was asked to talk about his teachers influence on his academic achievement. Nehemiah mentioned, "My teachers were decent at Pyne Poynt. Ms. Taylor, my English Arts teacher, she really brought the potential out of me as a writer. I like to write, and I didn't realize that I was a good writer until her. Every day we would write an essay and I felt as though my essays were great but then I would give it to her and I would have a B on my essay but I thought I would have A. That just made me work two times as harder to receive that A. And my math teacher, she was a good teacher. I am not really a math type person, but she helped me get by. My teachers were somewhat of a positive influence. They were hard core! I guess they had to be because of the environment they taught in. But they also built me up as a person. They made me well-rounded; they prepared me for high school. So they were a positive influence."

When asked how he was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Nehemiah replied, "A lot of peer pressure. I was surrounded by lot of friends that were drug dealers and this gave off a lot of negative energy. To be honest, I was being drawn in a little bit, but one day my mom, she sat me down and she spoke to me. She told me, I am going on the wrong path, she was devastated by that, so I took a step back, thought what am I doing? I need to get back on the right path. And I got back on the right path and I was valedictorian of Pyne Poynt Middle School."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussing surrounding inner city living, Nehemiah was asked to describe his neighborhood. Nehemiah noted the following: "I live in Cramer Hill so there are a lot of Hispanics. I get along with lot of people in my neighborhood. I live in more of a quiet area of Camden compared to growing up in downtown, which was the more crazy area. My neighborhood is on the outer city so it's not like as violent as the inter-city. So it's more calm but it's still dangerous. Even still, I go outside in my neighborhood and hangout with my friends in the neighborhood."

When Nehemiah was asked if he participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence his academic achievement, he responded by saying, "I am involved with Rutgers Future Scholars Program. I work there as a program assistant within the office too. I play football for Woodrow Wilson High School. It's just extracurricular something like fun but it hasn't really influenced my academic achievement. You have to have a 2.5 or higher but I never think about it cause I know I'm never getting below a "B" on my report card."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in his daily life, Nehemiah noted the following: "Religion does play part in my life. I am Baptist. I believe that God has a plan for me. If He didn't, I wouldn't have been able to get over the hardships that I have gotten over. And I would say God puts me on the right path when I am falling off track... God kind of helps me…."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools, there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that

may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates Nehemiah to do well in school, he noted, "My motivation to do well in school is I want to have a career. In order to have a career, I have to have education. And without working hard in school, I can't receive that education, so it's basically a chain reaction; in order to do this I have to do that; in order to succeed, I have to have education. I want to go to a new environment, but I still want to be in arm's reach of Camden because I grew up here. And I want to be able to provide and help those people who didn't have the opportunity that I had growing up. I want to move away and experience a new place."

When Nehemiah was asked about his perception of success in life and/or school he responded by saying, "Success to me is not being limited to what you can do in life. That's success to me. I always have an open mind and always want to be able to provide for myself and for my family…. that is success. I am, like I said, I am a good student. I am recommended for a lot within the school by the principal, by my guidance counselor. I am acknowledged for my grades. To me that's also success, to be recognized by others."

When Nehemiah was asked to talk about his reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, he responded by saying, "I try to stay away from negativity that is put on our city. I just try my best to succeed and be there and not be that statistic of Camden."

Nehemiah was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on his view of education and academic achievement. He noted the following, "Well, back in those historic times, it was hard for African-Americans to get by. They were oppressed from

education, so it was hard for them to receive education. But I believe that the people who fought for our rights, they kind of gave us that pathway, set that pathway for us, so we can receive education, so we can succeed as African-Americans. I am not going to say they made things easier, but they gave us opportunity to do what we want with the education. I am taking advantage of it. They helped me realize that it must be that important if they were willing to fight for it, for our right for education, or for equality, it must be important so why not take advantage of it."

Recommendations for Educators

Nehemiah was asked to provide a message to educators regarding his experiences as a student attending a school in an urban public school system. Nehemiah noted the following: "Not all urban school students, not all of us lack the will to receive education. Some, yeah they do, they don't understand the importance of education so they don't attend school, they don't take it serious. But because I'm an open-minded, smart student, I realize that education is important. Outsiders should be more open to the fact that there are some good students out there within the urban school district."

Nicole

Nicole is a 12th grade African-American female student with a 3.0 GPA or greater who attends a public high school located in the Philadelphia, PA School District. Nicole is between the ages of 17-18 years old. She plans to pursue a dual major while attending college in order to become a "Pundit." Her degrees will be in communications and governmental politics. She lives in a two parent home with her mother and father. Both parents are between 36-40 years old.

African-American Family and their Influence on students

When asked what the term "family" means to her, Nicole responded by saying, "My mom, my dad and my two younger brothers are my family. I feel like my family is my foundation. They're also my support system. Whenever I need help, they're there. Whenever I have something… they're there. Whenever I come in with a certificate or an award they're right there applauding me."

When asked who or what influenced her academic achievement, Nicole noted the following, "My parents and wanting to become successful, so I can make my family proud. I'm also the oldest, so I have to set an example for my younger brothers."

Nicole described the manner in which her family's beliefs regarding education has influence her academic achievement by saying, "They both always tell me 'Yeah you can be whatever you want, but you need to be educated…'My mom always tell me "You could be the prettiest girl in the school and do whatever you want, but if you don't have nothing in your head…all that won't matter. I believe that in order to be as successful as I want, I have to always acquire more for myself and want a higher education. My parents usually say, "go to school, get your degrees, and then people will start respecting you." They're on me a lot. They really push me. My first AP class was last year. I took AP US History and I'm like …"Mom, take me out of that class, I don't want to be there, I hate that class…" "…I hate the teacher; I hate everybody." So she was like "No you're going to stay in that class, you're going to do your work you're going to pass." So I think when they're on me like that it helps me because I know that I'm not the only one who wants something for me."

Nicole mentioned getting frustrated at times from performing at such a high levels. When that happens Nicole noted the following: "I talk to my mom or father when I get to that point."

When asked about her parent's style of parenting, Nicole said, "I like that they let me explore different things for my own. I like that they will let me see things for myself before they pass a judgment. So it's not like "Oh don't do that because that is not good." They'll let me do it and then I'll see it and they'll be like "Okay." And then we can discuss what's going on as far as that situation goes or whatever the occurrence was. I like the amount of freedom that I get from them. They trust me. I do like that they allow me to make certain decisions on my own, but then sometimes I don't like it because I'll be like, "Oh when was y'all going to tell me this was going to happen."

Student Academic History

According to Nicole, academic excellence has always come somewhat easy to her. When asked about her academic performance from elementary school until the current school year, Nicole replied, "I think I've always had the same work ethic. Like I've always wanted to stand out and do more than the other children. I wanted to be the first who knew how to color in the lines or to write my letters without the little dots. I always wanted to be ahead of everyone else. Not so I can boost about being there, I just like the whole feeling of accomplishing things. I almost cry when I get a "B" on something. I don't like nothing less than "A's."

As Nicole reflected on her academic history, she talked about the time when she realized the importance of education: "The turning point was when they were coming to us about college in ninth grade."

While continuing the conversation regarding education, Nicole was asked to talk about her teachers' influence on her academic achievement. Nicole mentioned the following, "My teachers have helped me achieve. My teachers used constructive criticism very often, which motivated me to do better because I hated to hear things I wasn't doing right. I think that helped me because they weren't always praising me about everything that I did even though I wanted them to. It helped me to grow in mindset because now I have to understand the things that I could have done, so then next time I will improve and correct myself. I mean they helped me to think differently about how I do things in school and how they view me as a student"

When asked how she was able to achieve despite possible negative experiences or difficulty resulting from living in an inner city or attending an urban inner city public school, Nicole replied, "I really haven't experienced any major difficulties. I never really had something that was so much of a hindrance to what I was trying to do. Peer pressure and all that stuff… yeah, but nothing major. Not every group of friends that I have had had the same mindset as myself. So some of them are like "Yeah I'm going to this party. I'm going to do this, going with my friend out, going here and going there." And a lot of times that wasn't my thing because the same people that wanted to go out and party and stuff are the same people that when they get their report cards, our grades are significantly different."

Community/Neighborhood Influence

In continuing the discussing surrounding inner city living, Nicole was asked to describe her neighborhood. Nicole noted the following, "My neighborhood, I wouldn't say is bad because I've seen worse things or I've heard worse things from other places. But again nowhere is any more safe then the next. So I mean it's pretty comfortable because this is also where a lot of my family grew up. I have aunts and uncles all around this area. Although people in this neighborhood don't like to see other people have anything that they don't have. I'm just saying here because it's where I live. I use to get into a lot of stuff that was unnecessary, but I look at it as a learning experience."

When Nicole was asked if she participated in activities outside of school in the community and if so, how does that influence her academic achievement, she responded by saying, "I play badminton now and I was doing cheerleading. I was in a lot of things in my community and school. It helps me to want to achieve certain things because I want to stand out."

As the interview moved towards the influence of religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices in her daily life, Nicole noted the following, "Spirituality and religion has an influence on my life because without God there is nothing. And so I always base the things that I do and the way I feel and the way that I approach situations religiously. It was kind of taught to me at a young age. A lot of our family members are Baptist and a lot of our family members grew up in Church, so it didn't matter how old I was or whether I had the clothes for it or whether I was prepared to go, they would always take me and my other cousins to church with them. So you can say I kinda grew up in the church."

Student Resiliency

Like many students living in inner cities and/or attending urban public schools, there are unseen obstacles that can be viewed as a positive or negative experience that may influence academic achievement. When asked what motivates Nicole to do well in school, she noted, "I don't want to still be on 5921 when I get older. I want to have my own big house in Atlanta or something like that. So I think that helps me because I want more than these other people out here."

When Nicole was asked about her perception of success in life and/or in school, she responded by saying, "School success means a lot. I say it means a lot because I'm there throughout my whole childhood, my adolescent years, so it means a lot when I can say, "Yeah I did what I was supposed to do the whole 13 years of school."It's how I establish myself before the next step in my life, which is college, my own house and my own family."

When Nicole was asked to talk about her reactions to the negative perceptions and/or negative stereotypes of urban inner city students and academic achievement, she responded by saying, "All white schools have money which means they have better teachers; the teachers have a better degrees, so it's not fair that they kind of compare us or talk bad about us.   I feel some type of way because when I work so hard in school, I at least would like people to appreciate me for what I've done and not compare me to a white school or a white neighborhood. That hurts my feelings because I come to school and get these good grades to only be compared to someone else with a greater opportunity and advantage."

Nicole was then asked to think about the history of African-American educational inequality and segregation and how that era has an influence on her view of education and academic achievement. She noted the following, "Wow, I like that question. The things that African-Americans have went through in the years prior to mine it's made me look at education differently because back then you would get beat for just wanting to learn how to spell your name. And people weren't able to go to school and if they did they were tormented, harassed, beat and it makes me appreciate the privileges that I have now as an African-American. Because I can say "I'm going to school." A lot of times they couldn't say it. So it helps me to look at things differently.   Although we're still kind of oppressed. We do have a chance to at least come close to the white man."

Recommendations for Educators

Nicole was asked to provide a message to educators regarding her experiences as a student attending an urban public school system. Nicole noted the following: "I would want people to know that it is not easy when you're African-American, you're drowning in here say of negative statistics.   African-American should always require more for ourselves."

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate urban African-American, secondary students' perceptions of their families' influences on academic achievement. This study examined the influence of African-American families on secondary student achievement, history of student achievement, community/neighborhood influences, and student resiliency. A qualitative methodology approach using a semi-structured interview was used for the following research questions:

1.   What effect does the African-American family's influence have on urban secondary student achievement?

2.   What impact does academic achievement have on the life of an urban African-American student?

3.   What are contributing factors that stimulate academic achievement in urban, secondary students?

Ten secondary students who attend urban public schools were interviewed for this qualitative study. To participate in this study, the students had to be between the ages of 14-18, had to be African-American and had to attend a public, urban secondary school. The students were recruited through networking with professionals who work in urban, public high schools. This was done through flyers, letters, and youth-affiliated groups. This chapter reveals the themes identified during data analysis. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will also be discussed within this chapter.

Themes

From the data analysis, this researcher discovered central themes and sub-themes relating to the proposed research questions. The themes are organized according to four broad categories: (1) the African-American family and its influence on student achievement, (2) factors leading to positive student achievements (3) student resiliency factors and (4) influence of the urban community on student achievement.

The African-American family and their influence on student achievement

The term family in the traditional, western model describes two parents and two children. Within the African-American community, 50 % of children are born outside of marriage and/or have lived without both parents during their childhood (Anderson, 2002). As such, the African-American family system is considered multidimensional, because family membership encompasses a more complex definition, to the degree that it is not limited to the western family model, a single household, or biological relatives (Hill, 1995). Therefore, it is imperative that the quality of family environment and the relationships between parents and students are strong because this bond can have both direct and indirect effects on behaviors and abilities (Holmes, Frentz, and & Yu, 1999). Parents provide a unique frame of thought for their children; students learn how to succeed or how to fail (Trivette, 1995). Research suggests that high-achieving, impoverished African-American adolescents have parents who are more highly involved in their education both within the home and at school (Tienda& Kao, 1994). Moreover, African-American children whose parents implement firm control within an affectively positive parent-child relationship are likely to predict positive outcomes such as self-regulation, social competence, good mental health, and school success, (Taylor, 2000).

Researchers have deemed the term "no nonsense parenting" in relation to the African-American parenting practices (Brody et al., 1999). No nonsense parenting is indicative of higher levels of warmth than are typically associated with authoritarian parenting, and higher levels of monitoring, control, and attentiveness than are typically representative of the authoritative style.

Theme 1: Family

Students who participated in this research study resided in either single-parent or two-parent families. Students who resided in two-parent homes described the composition of their family as being their parents and sibling(s) residing within their household on a daily basis. For instance, Jacob took the term family to mean, "My family is made up of my parents and my sisters and brothers." Dorothy stated, "Well, my family is my mom, my dad, my brother and my sister." Nicole said, "My mom, my dad and my two younger brothers are my family." Sierra, referred to her family as, "My mom and my dad, and my two brothers are my family." Whereas, a significant number of students who resided in single-parent homes described the members of their family as those immediate members who live in the home as well as extended family and friends. For example, C.A.M. referred to his family as: "It's my mom, grandma, aunts, and uncles. I have seven siblings and then friends that are family of course, because I think friends matter in family too." Xavier noted, "I would say my mom, my sister, my aunt and my uncles, my grandparents." Gabrielle said, "For me it is my parents, my brothers, my nieces and my nephews and my grandma." The significance between two-parent and single-parent headed homes were that students in single-parent homes received increased support from extended family and friends. Thus, these additional individuals became

crucial members of the student life experiences. Because students reared in two-parent

homes had two adults to depend upon; therefore, extended family and friends were not as

highly involved in their life experiences.

(a)Meaning of family: A significant number of children from both single-parent

and two-parent homes indicated that families are their foundation and support system.

Within families, those persons demonstrate their support through love, guidance,

interaction, and helping with regard to the betterment the child's life experiences. For

instance, Jacob stated, "To me family means the people who help you to succeed."

Gabrielle responded by saying, "I don't know. That's such a hard question. I think

sticking together and being the ones that you know who's going to tell you right from

wrong and is going to help you along the way." C.A.M. noted, "I describe family as

people who are always going to be there no matter what your choices are in life because

they love you unconditionally." Dorothy stated, "Family means people who you can go to

when you have problems, people who you can be yourself around and people who will be

there when you have nobody else but God." Xavier said, "When things get tough they are

there to help you out or you're there to help them out." Emmanuel believes family means,

"They want the best for you, and they would want to give you everything that they can

and basically just try and push you to your highest ability." Stacey noted, "To me family

is like the foundation of my life." Nehemiah said, "Family is people that you can turn to

in hard time and in good times." Nicole reports that her family is her "foundation." She

went on to say, "They're also my support system. Whenever I need help, they're there.

Whenever I have something… they're there. Whenever I come in with a certificate or an

award they're right there applauding me." Student responses suggest that their families

are an important part of their lives, specifically as emotional support to daily experiences and interactions.

(b)<u>Family's beliefs regarding education</u>: A great number of the students from both single and two-parent homes discussed the importance their families' place within education, which has motivated them to strive for academic excellence. Sierra stated, "Since I was little, my mom always told me education is my key to open any door or opportunity I want to go into." Nehemiah noted, "For my mom, education is like the end all be all. I don't know how to explain it, it's like-- she is for education, she is for education all the way." Nicole said, "Both my parents always tell me, "Yeah you can be whatever you want, but you need to educated." C.A.M. says, "My mom believes education is really important. She believes academics come before a lot of things." Xavier noted, "Education is very important to my mom." Based on the student responses, conversations regarding the importance of education have been reverberated in the home of high-achieving students throughout their educational careers.

Theme 2: Parental Role

A significant number of the children's parents have been said they give additional work on academics in the home with their children and check school-related assignments for completion and accuracy. For instance, Jacob says, "They study with me, help with math problems, and talk to me about the different subjects in school." Xavier said, "My mom would explain things to my sister and me. She would help us with school subjects outside of school. She would give us these workbooks that would explain math equations, so we could get better at it. We were asked to read all the time. Over summer, she would give us workbooks, so we would do maybe two or three pages of school work

each day." Dorothy stated, "I know that if I come home with bad grades, I won't have TV, my phone, my iPad, won't have anything, and can't go with my friends. If I don't get good grades, then I just can't do anything until my grades get better." Nehemiah noted, "When my mom sees me not living up to my full potential with my education she's really hard on me. She knows my potential and she is not having it. My mom makes sure I do my homework every night. She also helps me with my homework, if needed." Student comments suggest that their parents' involvement has increased the students' academic efforts relating to education and pushed them to work to the best of their abilities.

(a) Student Support: Students who perform at high academic levels can often experience high levels of stress due in part from juggling school, work, extra-curricular activities, and home responsibilities. A significant number of students who participated in this study mentioned family members and close friends when asked about the people who help them through stressful situations. For instance, Nehemiah said, "I talk to my mom." Jacob said, "My mom helps me through my frustrations in the house and some of the students here help me out in school." C.A.M. said, "I could always talk to my mom about anything or my Aunt Renee, but I may go to friends. I guess it's easier to talk to them a little bit more because I'm around them more. I'm in school with them; I'm out of school with them. But if I ever have to, I can always go to my mom." Dorothy said, "Well, I can say my friend is one person in my life who if I have a problem and I need to talk, I can talk to her. And my grandma will always be that one person who I know if I am really, really deep in trouble and I really have to talk to somebody, I can talk to her. But, I mean, I can talk to my parents too if I have a problem." Students' responses

suggest that the accessibility of family and close friends to discuss stressful situations is a tremendous help to their continued success of attaining academic excellence.

Theme 3: Parenting Style

A number of parents who participated in this study were reported to be very tough on their children when it relates to academic achievement. Parents "push" their children to do their best. Students are expected to perform at high levels in school and parents are also said to be "on top of them all the time." Although the parents are said to be controlling and attentive to their children needs, students perceived their parents' behaviors as both positive and negative. For instance, Jacob mentioned, "My parents are really strict on me, but I guess my parents being strict can be positive and negative at the same time though. They also give me some independence to do things, more as I've gotten older." C.A.M. noted, "Honestly, I can say there's nothing I dislike about my mom's parenting style. I mean, she's a mom. She does what she has to do and that's about it. I mean, she does what she has to do for us to keep a roof over our head. She always puts me and my siblings first. Before she does anything to makes sure we have what we need to be comfortable in life. She yells and screams at times, but I mean, I think every parent yells and screams once in a while because I would think every kid makes their mom or dad mad. But I mean, she's cool with a lot of things." Gabrielle said, "I don't like when my mom is always on top of me. It's so annoying. It's like I'm responsible enough to know what I'm doing. I don't need someone on top of me 24/7. I want her to pay attention to me because I don't like it if she doesn't pay attention to me, but I don't want her to be on top of me about every little thing. Even though I say my mom is always on top of me, we are close. My dad, he just always wants to talk about

something, it's just like, 'Okay, dad, I know.' and then we'll have the same conversation like three weeks later."   Similar to Clark's (1983) and the Brody et al. (1999) studies on parenting styles for urban students, students who participated in this study revealed that their parents were controlling, yet understanding to their needs for independence.

Factors Leading to Positive Student Achievement

Reaching high school is a major milestone for adolescents living in urban communities, due in part, to insurmountable risk factors faced throughout their educational careers. It represents the culmination of elementary and secondary schooling; it also marks a fundamental crossroads, wherein students begin to make serious decisions about their futures. These decisions, moreover, can be influenced and constrained by a host of factors, including educational expectations, available financial resources, and quality of academic preparation. In elementary grades, students' ability to remain attentive and responsive to teachers' directives are said to definitely affect school performance (Perry, Guidubaldi & Kehle, 1979). Moreover, student achievement is found to correlate positively with consistent completion of additional work beyond what is required in class and home; it also correlates with initiating discussions with the teacher about school subjects (Fincham, Hokoda, & Sanders, 1989). Although teachers have no control of out-of-school conditions, they can provide classroom environments that offer situational engagement, nurture student interest, and promote the development of internal motivational resources (Deci, 1995; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Reeve, 1996; Sansome& Morgan, 1992).

Theme 1: Academic Journey from Elementary School to High School

Many of the students interviewed as part of this research study revealed that academics have come somewhat easy to them, until reaching high school. A significant number of students noted limited efforts put forth during instruction and/or education overall, but each of the students was able to earn good grades prior to reaching high school. Many students talked about studying more and putting more effort into their school work after reaching the secondary level. For instance, Nehemiah stated, "School, to be honest, it comes easy to me. I am a very open-minded student. Like, I can be sitting in the classroom and the teacher put notes up on the board and just by looking at the notes and jotting down in my notebook, I can get it just like that versus other students who have to really, really look and study the notes." Emmanuel noted, "Like from elementary school to eighth grade, it just came easy and I just flew through it. But as I started gettin' into high school it didn't come so easy. It became difficult in ninth grade, I wasn't excellin' or I wasn't doin' as well as I usually did. I had to strap down and actually focus really hard. I started studying and reading more for extra practice." Xavier noted, "I've always performed well in school. In 9th grade, the work definitely became a little more complicated and I had to put some more effort into it." Dorothy said, "I was really smart when I was younger, and then as the years progressed, it became really hard. I don't study that much, but it's like once I hear my teacher talk about it, I remember a lot of things. If I don't remember, then I have to study pretty hard, but school comes easy to me." Student responses suggest an innate intelligence, which increased their likelihood of academic achievement in school, despite being exposed to

various risks factors such as exposure to neighborhood violence, gangs, negative peer associations and teenage pregnancy.

Theme 2:   Students Recognizing the Importance of Education

Every student who participated in this research study understood the importance of education. A significant number also recognized the impact that education has on future academic and career goals, and on college acceptance. Students were able to pin-point the specific time, age, and/or grade at which they first realized the importance of education. For instance, Jacob noted, "Well then I guess it was like my freshmen year, ninth grade when I realized it. After graduating high school, I'm going to attend college and become a doctor." Sierra said, "Freshman year! It was the third marking period because first and second, I got C's and stuff, so the third marking period I was like, "Oh, no, this is not happening anymore." From then on I got on honor roll and I was good ever since." C.A.M. said, "I think I realized the importance of education when I was given the application for the Rutgers Future Scholars program in seventh grade. And then after that I realized that this is really time to start focusing on what I want to do with my future and stuff like that. Dorothy mentioned, "I think I thought school was important in seventh grade because I knew that was the year that high schools looked at for acceptance and that was the year that my PSSA scores were looked at for high school acceptance." Gabrielle stated, "I'm going to say high school because when I was younger I always knew good grades are what you're supposed to get. However I never really knew why! While in high school it kind of opened my eyes up because knew colleges look at your grades, so that kind of made me focus more, and do what I had to do." Overall, student responses suggest that their ability to understand the impact of academic achievement on

future goal attainment was cultivated by parents early in their educational development, which manifested into their own independent thoughts and ideals of the importance education.

Theme 3: Teacher's impact on Student Achievement

The students who participated in this research study indicated that teachers throughout their academic careers have been helpful in motivating and/or nurturing academic excellence. For instance, Sierra noted, "So me and the teachers have always had a bond, so they care for me. They also encourage me. They want me to excel and achieve. They expect more from me. My teachers are just like, "You can do it! Just keep your head up and just study." Nehemiah says, "My middle-school language arts teacher, Ms. Taylor, really brought the potential out in me as a writer. I like to write, but I didn't realize that I was a good writer until Ms. Taylor. My teachers were hard core! I guess they had to be because of the environment they taught in. They built me up as a person. They made me well-rounded. They prepared me for high school. They were a positive influence." Sierra noted, "With good teachers I was able to get good grades. They were there to help me. They helped me see my path. At my high school, teachers wanted you to be successful." Emmanuel said, "They helped me achieve when I came to them for extra help. They would explain things that I didn't understand and would take however long I would need to understand to work fully. Personally, I think they were there to help me." Similar to the findings of this study, Flores-Gonzales (2002) also found that all teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, who care about, mentor, and guide their students are likely to have a big impact on student educational outcomes, despite barriers related to poverty, racism, and other social problems. Moreover, studies have shown that

when teachers support their student interests, children are more likely to view education

as being important and less likely to dropout (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989;

Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992; Vallerand, Frortier, & Guay, 1997).

Student Resiliency Factors

Minority students have experienced a great deal of opposition and inequality

throughout history; however, these insurmountable circumstances are not considered an

absolute determinant of student success or failure. There are urban African-American

children who experience academic success, despite having a lack of resources, living in

poverty, have negative peer-pressure, and are being subjected to educational inequality

(Gutman & McLoyde, 2000). Cowen et al., (1996) investigated the attributes of resilient

children and found that a child's own personal traits and his or her family environment

are the two greatest influential aspects when combating stress. Moreover, it has been

suggested (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) that the closest and most influential system in a child's

beginning stages of learning are connected to the family system. Hara (1998)

substantiates this frame of thought by noting parental involvement as the primary driving

force to raise student academic achievement. Researchers have also suggested that

psychological characteristics such as problem-solving skills, cognitive skills, confidence

in one's competence, and feelings of efficacy are crucial components of an African-

American student's ability to manage stressful situations and achieve academically (Lord,

Eccles, and McCarthy, 1994). Whereas Hall (2003) postulates that students who are

autonomous develop skills to achieve and have parents who believe in their child's ability

for achievement; and, in turn, the students believe that they will achieve.

Theme 1: Influential Persons relating to student Achievement

A great number of students who participated in this research credited their families as being an influential factor that has help them academically as well as in the development of their views on education. Students also noted their drive and determination to succeed in life, to attend college, and to attain tangible things such as a nice house, car and family are attributed to their parent(s). For instance, Nehemiah said, "My mom keeps me motivated. She is a support factor, a great support factor. She believes in me. She believes I can do great things with education. When I was around five-years old, my mom was working a bunch of dead-end jobs, so she decided to go back to school for her bachelor's degree in nursing. In 2004, she got her degree in nursing and things changed, and with her education I saw things change, so it motivated me to get mine." Nicole noted, "My parents and wanting to become successful, so I can make my family proud. I'm the oldest, so I have to set an example for my younger brothers." Jacob replied, "For me it would be my mom and I would say my dad as well because they've helped me a lot. I would also say mostly everybody in my family like…. my grandmother." C.A.M. said, "I guess one thing is to be the first person in my family to go to college. I'm not really sure how to describe it. I just want to better myself where I can make something of my life. Another influence is my whole entire family." Clark (1993), pointed out that the parents' actions not only reinforce the importance of schooling, but also encourage adolescents to do their best in school. By the same token, students who participated in this study revealed similar findings, which suggest that

parents are influential in their students' direct achievements, as well as being indirectly

influential in what determines success and/or positive goal setting.

Theme 2: Student Motivation towards Academic Achievement

Students living in urban areas are often said to experience various barriers and

unforeseen situations relating to academic achievement. Thus, students who perform at

high academic levels must demonstrate a specific mindset in order to remain focused on

their educational grades and disregard negative factors. Therefore, a significant number

of students who participated in this study identified attainable goals that would increase

their likelihood of better living conditions, becoming financial stable, and maintaining

lucrative careers. For instance, Nicole said, "I don't want to still be on 5921 when I get

older. I want to have my own big house in Atlanta or something like that. So I think that

helps me because I want more than these other people out here." Emmanuel noted, "My

motivation to do well in school is the future that I would like to have. I want to have a

very good future with options in life. I don't wan't to be stuck in a dead-end job all my

life. I want to be able to move up or make a certain amount of money without struggling

throughout life with finances." Gabrielle stated, "I just want to… I really want to be the

first one to finish college. Like my brother went to college, he went to like five different

colleges and never finished. My parents didn't go to college, so I want to be the one to

say that I went to college, and I finished and achieved what I want to be." Nehemiah said,

"My motivation to do well in school is I want to have a career. In order to have a career,

I have to have education. And without working hard in school, I can't receive that

education, so it's basically a chain reaction, in order to do this I have to do that; in order

to succeed, I have to have education. I want to go to a new environment, but I still want

to be in arm's reach of Camden because I grew up here. And I want to be able to provide

and help those people who didn't have the opportunity that I had growing up. I want to

move away and experience a new place. "It's suggested by students who participated in

this study that there is an intrinsic value to attaining success such as experiencing feelings

of happiness and self-contentment.

(a)<u>Stereotypes of urban student:</u> In conversations with student participants

regarding various stereotypes associated with urban public education and the

advancement of student achievement, a significant number of students expressed

frustration and desire to prove negative stereotypes wrong. Students used the negative

perceptions of other as form of motivation to excel and achieve academically. For

instance, Nehemiah said, "I try to stay away from negativity that is put on our city. I just

try my best to succeed and be there, and not be that statistic of Camden." Nicole said,

"All white schools have money, which means they have a greater opportunity to get

better teachers with more advanced degrees. It's not fair that people compare us or talk

bad about us. I feel some type of way because when I work very hard in school. I would

like people to appreciate me for what I've done, and not compare me to a white school or

a white neighborhood. That hurts my feelings because I come to school and work hard,

get good grades to only be compared to someone else with a greater opportunity and

advantage. " Stacey says, "When people say that we're stupid and that we're criminals

and put us all in one place, that's not true. It's not like all inner city kids are dumb or

stupid. Once you give them the opportunity and the tools, adequate supplies, and things

of that nature; we all do well. I will stand out and to prove them wrong, that we can

achieve and that we can do well." Masten (2001), with her colleague Dass-Brailsford

(2005), attributed a student's ability to adapt and achieve in the face of adversity as being resilient. According to Luther et al., (2000), resilience refers to a process by which children assimilate positive adaptation within a situation of significant adversity. The students who participated in this study used adversity as means to promote higher achievement and create an internal locus of control.

(b) <u>African-American history of educational inequality and segregation:</u> Students were asked to discuss how the history African-American inequality and segregation in education has influenced their views of education and its importance today. Subsequently, a significant number of students expressed feelings of empathy for their ancestors as well as feeling empowered to take advantage of their equal rights to be educated. For instance, Stacey noted, "I mean, we now have a chance to have education. Back in the day we couldn't even read, so the fact that we are given the chance, even if it is inadequate, it's progressed over time although it could get better. I'm going to go above and beyond to make sure I take advantage of any opportunity I get." Gabrielle said, "We need to take everything and any opportunity that we get. We need to take full advantage of it because it wasn't given back then, but now that it is, we need to use every resource that we can. I try to just take advantage of every opportunity that I can get." C.A.M. said, "When I'm learning about African-American history, it really shocks me that they weren't able to have what I have now. They weren't able to go to the school that are diverse and actually learn. They had to learn in secrecy. So, I actually do take that into consideration sometimes, and I don't take it for granted. I look at it as a gift because back then they didn't have this opportunity, so I try to take advantage of it as much as I can." Student responses revealed that the lack of or the inferior education of

African-Americans throughout history evokes the need to continue what their ancestors

started before them, which is to better themselves for the cause of their people and dispite

the naysayers.

Influences of the Urban Community on Student Academic Achievement

As African-American students explore and grow, environmental conditions often

influence approaches to their learning. Students are faced with the pressures of peer

influence throughout their developmental stages. However, as children move from their

pre-adolescent stage to the adolescent stage, peer influence becomes a major factor; the

power of parental influence decreases and peer influence increases (Sampson &Laub,

1994). Noguera (2003) argues that families and schools have integral influences in a

student's life; however, neighborhoods are also a macro-structural force crucial to the

academic achievement in African-American students. Students who are impoverished

tend to live in areas where they are plagued by excessively high jobless rates, serious

crime, community violence, teen pregnancy, and drug usage (Wilson, 1990). African-

Americans have often turned to the spirituality as means to deal with community and/or

neighborhood stressors. Because of this, the black church has played a significant role in

the provision of social support and resources for African-American communities

(Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).   Hale-Benson (1987) described the spirituality of

African-Americans as a key factor in coping with stressful events. African-American

students also cope with urban living by submerging themselves in sports activities with

the hope of making big money and becoming nationally known sports athletes.

Theme 1: The Urban Neighborhood

Most, if not all of the students who participated in this study, described their neighborhoods as good areas, despite being located in an urban setting where gun shots can be heard in the distance, students are fighting in the streets, and the presence of gang is all around. The girls who participated in the study talked about not going out in their neighborhoods due to feeling unsafe; however, the boys often ventured out in the neighborhoods, although they didn't go too far from home. For instance, Nehemiah says, "I live in a quiet area of Camden when compared to downtown, which is the more crazy area. My neighborhood is on the outer rim of the city, so it's not like as violent as the inter-city. It's calmer, but it's still dangerous. Even still, I go outside in my neighborhood and hangout with my friends in the neighborhood." Stacey said, "I don't actually like going outside because I feel a little unsafe, especially at night. I don't like when strange boys talk to me and they just look so out of this world, like they don't look like they're here, like they're intoxicated or something. I don't like that. It can be kind of scary" Xavier said, "I would describe it as being are right near the bad part of town. There is definitely a mixture of the suburb people and of people that are troublemakers and getting into trouble, fighting, getting bad grades and stuff like that. There are kids that get into fights, they're in gangs, or they've been in a gang or they've gotten into trouble before. Like every once in a while there's a fire or something like that, or some kind of trouble happens, but basically it's a lot more peaceful than other neighborhoods." Dorothy said, "My neighborhood is on Temple's campus. So when I am walking to school in the morning time, I walk the back streets because it's faster. But the back streets, they are not that bad because there are mostly Temple kids. So, it's not that bad

as it could be, but it's still in North Philly and its right up the street from neighborhoods

that always have killings and shoot-outs and things like that so it's bittersweet." Student

responses suggests that their neighborhoods are unsafe at times; however, that is all they

know and its home to them.

Theme 2: Overcoming Negative Experiences

A good number of students mentioned being fortunate enough not to have

experienced life altering events or instances that would ultimately affect their academic

achievement. However, a significant number of students did mention instances in which

they were faced with negative peer interactions and/or pressures. For instance, Sierra

said, "Well, nothing has happened to me. I stay in my house most of the time because the

girls my age want to be fresh, and that irks me. Then the boys, they just want to be fresh

too, so it's like, why should I go outside." Dorothy said, "The barriers I have had in

school aren't really the work, they have been the people, like the girls. But, it never

really interfered with my work because I knew there was a time and place for

everything." Emmanuel said, "Never really had any life changing or experiences of that

type of sort." Nehemiah said, "A lot of peer pressure. I was surrounded by lot of friends

that were drug dealers, and this gave off a lot of negative energy. To be honest, I was

being drawn in a little bit, but one day my mom, she sat me down and she spoke to me.

She told me; I am going on the wrong path; she was devastated by that, so I took a step

back, thought, "What am I doing? I need to get back on the right path." And I got back

on the right path, and I was valedictorian of Pyne Poynt Middle School." Nicole said, "I

really haven't experienced any major difficulties. I never really had something that was

so much of a hindrance to affect what I was trying to do. Peer pressure and all that

stuff… yeah, but nothing major." Steinberg et al., (1991), point out that even when

African-American students have parents supportive of academic success, these

youngsters find it difficult to join a peer group that encourages the same goal. Often in

urban settings, students that excel become ostracized by their fellow peers because they

appear different and they chose to learn in class. However, the participants in this study

suggests that they did experience negative peer interactions; however, they were able

ignore negative peer behaviors, remain focused on their goals of achievement, and adhere

to their parents' counsel.

Theme 3: Impact of participating in extracurricular activities

Many of the student interviewees participated in extracurricular activities for fun

and enjoyment. Participating in these activities provided a form of self-fulfillment and an

outlet to excel in things not relating to academics. A significant number of students noted

their participation in activities had to tie into their academic achievement in school, even

if a specific GPA was required to participate. For instance, Nehemiah said, "I am

involved with Rutgers Future Scholars Program and I also play football for Woodrow

Wilson High School. It's just extracurricular something like fun, but it hasn't really

influenced my academic achievement. You have to have a 2.5 or higher, but I never think

about it cause I know I'm never getting below a 'B' on my report card." Nicole said, "I

play badminton now and I was doing cheerleading. I was in a lot of things in my

community and school. It helps me to want to achieve certain things because I want to

stand out." Stacey said, "I am a junior black captain. And I'm involved in the church in

something called 'Start Smart Stay Smart Program.' It's in Germantown. And we give

out free school supplies; book bags to all the children in Germantown. I think all my

activities ties into the fact that you have to give kids a chance, but none of my stuff directly relates to my own academic achievement." Xavier said, "I'm in the youth group and the choir. Those things are not related to school work, so it definitely doesn't have impact on my school work." The students who participated in this study suggests that their participation in extracurricular activities are merely for fun, yet when a specific GPA is required school, it's never given a second thought due to their own goal of higher learning and achievement.

Theme 4: Influence of Religion or Spiritual Practices

When students were asked about the influence that religion or spiritual practices had on their lives, a significant number of students mentioned that religion and/or "God" as a big part of their daily lives. For instance, Nicole said, "Spirituality and religion have influence on my life because without God there is nothing. And so I always base the things that I do and the way I feel and the way that I approach situations religiously. It was kind of taught to me at a young age. A lot of our family members are Baptist and a lot of our family members grew up in Church, so it didn't matter how old I was or whether I had the clothes for it or whether I was prepared to go, they would always take me and my other cousins to church with them. So you can say I kinda grew up in the church." Nehemiah said, "Religion does play part in my life. I am Baptist. I believe that God has a plan for me. If he didn't, I wouldn't have been able to get over the hardships that I have gotten over. And I would say God puts me on the right path when I am falling off track. God kind of helps me…." Stacey said, "God is everything to me. I pray all the time. I prayed even before the interview started. Like seriously for some reason I can have long talks with God. That's one person, the Lord, I can have long talks with and

even though he not talking back to me I feel it and I sometimes I answer my own

questions. I believe I have to have faith in something, so I have my faith in God. I can

say I learned it from close friends to the family because my mom she just started going to

church regularly. Werner's (1990) study found that children from various backgrounds,

ethnicities, or community affiliations who maintain spiritual beliefs in times of hardship

exhibited common resilience characteristics. This hold true in this study, for a significant

number of the students professed that spirituality is major part of their lives and it

provides strength and an ability to cope with stress and hardship.

Summary

Ten African-American students attending urban secondary public schools were

interviewed for this qualitative study. The research questions focused on three main

areas: the effect of the African-American family's influence on urban secondary students,

how academic achievement is represented among urban African-American students, and

factors that stimulate academic achievement in urban secondary students.

This chapter summarized the findings of this study and presented themes in the

areas of the African-American family and its influence on students, factors leading to

positive student achievement, student resiliency factors, and the influence of the urban

community on student achievement. Themes found relating to the African-American

family and its influence on student included: family, as it relates to defining the term and

its members' beliefs on the importance of education; parental roles while also discussing

the methods to which the family supports the student, and parenting styles. Themes that

encompassed the factors leading to positive student achievement included: academic

journey, describing student achievement from elementary school to the current placement

in the secondary level; students recognizing the importance of education, and teachers' impact on student achievement.

Themes concerning student resiliency factors were also discussed. Students reported high motivation to achieve academically in school due to family influence, attaining future goals, proving to others that inner city students are smart, wanting to take advantage of the privilege and right to be educated, making their family's proud, and for their own self-fulfillment. Factors contributing to student internal locus of control themes included: influential persons relating to student achievement, student motivation towards academic achievement, student perception of success, stereotypes of urban students, and African-American history that consisted of educational inequality and segregation. Finally, themes related to the influence of urban community on student academic achievement included: the urban neighborhood, overcoming negative experiences; the impact of participating in extracurricular activities, and the influence of religion or spirituality practices.

The findings from this study suggests that despite being exposed to insurmountable risk from urban living, students are able to achieve academically with the assistance, support, and guidance of their families. In addition, student reports having experienced teachers who are caring and have high expectations that promote high academic achievement. Moreover, students, thoughts and beliefs regarding their ability to achieve also play a role in their academic success. Students who are resilient and/or have an internal locus of control are able to cope with stressful situations. This ability to deal with stressful situations as a result of an internal locus of control manifests itself into learning experiences and/or motivation to achieve. Last, this study concluded that

students who are able to achieve academically in an urban school setting most often

possess an innate ability for academics that they themselves can't explain.

Implications and Recommendations for Educators

The results of this study indicated several possible actions that educators can take to increase and enhance the academic achievements of urban African-American secondary students receiving public education. First and foremost, as previous research has indicated, it is imperative that educators actively involve and engage families in the education of their children. Parents of the students participating in this study were directly involved in their children's education, which resulted in positive outcomes for their sons or daughters. Students who participated in this study sought out guidance and assistance from teachers and school staff when experiencing academic difficulty and sometimes they were met with disregard and an unwillingness to help on the part of educator, which left a feeling of distrust and abandonment.

Participants in this study were exposed to insurmountable risk factors on a daily basis such as family disruption, exposure to neighborhood violence, lack of scholarly resources, unhighly qualified teachers, negative peer pressure, financial hardships, and lack of positive African-American role models in their immediate communities, yet they made every effort to rise above their current situation and gain a competitive education. The students who participated in this study were able to recognize the importance of education as it relates to future goal attainment as result of continued, positive family guidance and direction; yet, there are students living in urban communities who do not have parents who are as involved. Therefore, these students may require a little more time, effort, patients and understanding before being judged and added the stereotype that inner city students are uneducable or less intelligent than their counterparts in more fortunate school districts.

Students who participated in this study made suggestions regarding ways that educators can offer support to urban public education and to students from minority backgrounds. One student suggested that educators should keep an open mind regarding the ability of urban African-American students because there are some good students out there. Another student suggested that educators should ensure that students who attend urban school districts graduate with some education and have learned something in the classroom; just don't let them leave empty handed. It was said that educators should recognize that standardized tests such as the SATs, PSATs and Keystone's should not define a student's intelligent or the level of his or her academic knowledge because some students do not test very well or do not do well on standardized tests due to all the pressure put on them. Educators are urged to recognize that students are individuals and not numbers or statistical equations. Students also suggested that educators should even the playing field and provide urban student with comparable, if not the same resources that affluent school districts receive such as ample allotment of monies to fund student educational needs, highly qualified teachers, safe school environments. Moreover, another student suggested that educators should attempt to connect with students and students will in turn produce academically at a higher rate and want to learn more. Lastly, provide more programs in urban public schools that offer tutoring and extracurricular activities.

Another area that educators must focus on is in bridging the gap between school and home. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1994), all schools are expected to promote partnerships with families that will increase parental involvement and participation as means to promoting positive social, emotional, and academic growth

of children. Educators often note that building a closer bond with families can be very difficult for various reasons. Often, parents are working during the day and/or at night to support their families, which make it difficult to attend meetings during regular school hours. Moreover, teachers do not communicate frequently or successfully with parents; however, when problems occur regarding a student, a parent is then notified. As a result, parents may become unwilling to work with the school due to a failed communication system and continued negative discussion concerns about their sons or daughters. Either way, educators must make this a priority for the advancement of African-American students attending urban public schools.

Another area that educators must focus on is educating and training parents and teachers on incorporating appropriate methods to manage student behaviors and increase academic achievement. The literature suggests that parent educational levels can directly (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999) and indirectly influence student achievement because parents' beliefs and behaviors regarding the importance of education are modeled by children through their actions (Eccles, 1993). Parents who are armed with information and research based strategies on how to parent their children effectively are more likely produce students with an increased willingness to learn and to behavior appropriately in the classroom. Teachers must be trained to be culturally sensitive and well equipped to manage large class sizes with varying intellectual abilities.

Limitations

One possible limitation of this study could be participation selection. Participants represent a convenience sample of secondary African-American students who attend an urban public school. It is possible that students who volunteered to participate in this research study may somehow differ from the general population of secondary African-American students attending an urban public school. All of the students who were interviewed in this study were highly intelligent, as evidenced by their report card grades, state testing scores, and teacher comments. These students were also internally motivated, knowledgeable about their future plans, and understood the process necessary to attain their academic goals. Each of the parents of the students was highly involved in his or her child's education, were knowledgeable about their child's strengths, weaknesses, and ability, and were active in the child's social activities. This may yield different experiences for other parents of urban African-American secondary students. Thus, their experiences and perceptions may not be representative of all African-American families with secondary student attending urban public schools.

Although every attempt was made to interview students from various urban school districts within the New Jersey and Pennsylvania area, more students from New Jersey, specifically Camden City, were interviewed. This may reflect student exposure to increasingly higher instances of potential risk factors as a result of city ordinances. In addition, the participant's family status and socioeconomic status were varied, with a majority of students being from single-parent homes with one income, as opposed to two-parent homes with two incomes. Although single-parent homes were included in this study, all the participating single-parent homes were headed by the mother, so no

information was gathered or obtained on students who were raised solely by a father or

male figure. Finally, all the students interviewed were raised by a biological parent, so no

information was gathered or obtained specifically on students who were raised by

grandparents or foster parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

Prior literature pertaining to African-American secondary students attending an urban public education institution focused on the underachievement of students; this study, however, attempted to highlight the achievements of urban African-American, urban secondary students. Specifically, this researcher was interested in providing a platform for urban students to voice their journeys toward academic excellence, while simultaneously disproving the notion that students, who come from urban communities, cannot achieve academic excellence. In addition, by focusing on this population of students, this researcher could explore specific processes, thoughts, and family structures that are likely to produce high achieving African-American students.

Although this study explored single-parent and two parent homes, more effort is needed to gain greater insight into the experiences of African-American grandparents raising urban secondary student receiving public education. Future research could investigate single, male-headed homes and gain greater insight as the experiences of single African-American fathers raising urban secondary students.

Conclusion

Previous research has highlighted the benefits that the African-American family's involvement has in the education of students. Tienda & Kao (1994) suggested that high-achieving, impoverished, African-American adolescents have parents who are more highly involved in their education both within the home and at school. Although past research suggests that family involvement is imperative to student achievement, researchers have unsuccessfully portrayed urban African-American secondary students receiving public education with a profile of an underachiever as a result of specific risk factors faced on a daily basis. However, participants in this study who experience similar risk factors were able to achieve, if not thrive. These students came from single-parent homes as well as from two-parent homes; however, both types of families were involved in their children's education, personal lives, and daily routines. These students knew their parents believed education was important, which manifested in their own beliefs that education is important. When frustrated over school work or just difficult daily life experiences, students felt comfortable discussing these problems with their parents. Students felt a bond with their parents and rated their relationships as "cool." As the students aged, reaching various academic milestones, their parents entrusted them with more independence and freedom to make appropriate life decisions. Brody et al., (1999) described this style of parenting as "no nonsense parenting" in relation to the African-American parenting practices (Brody et al., 1999). No nonsense parenting is indicative of higher levels of warmth than are typically associated with authoritative parenting, and higher levels of monitoring, control, and attentiveness than are typically representative of the authoritarian style.

In past studies, most of the research focused on a specific development stage or the gender of urban student such preschool age, pre-adolescents, adolescents, or males. By focusing on those specific profiles, previous researchers were limited in gathering crucial information that may have occurred over the life span of a secondary level student. However, this study was able to explore how student achievement may have changed over time as well as specific factors that contributed to student achievement. Results suggest that every student who participated in this study revealed that academics came somewhat easy to him or her, until each reached the high school level. It was at the high school level that students needed to put forth more effort to continue achieving exceptional grades in school. They always felt that education was important, based on the beliefs instilled by their parents. Bronfenbrenner (1992) also talks about how the family system is the closest and most influential system in a child's beginning stages of learning. However, students realized the important of education for themselves when it was time to plan for higher education, i.e., high school or college. Students talked about the importance of their teacher's role in their academic achievements. Teachers were said to be caring, had high expectations, and provided help when needed, which motivated the students to work harder and achieve academic excellence. Flores-Gonzales (2002) concludes that all teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, who care about, mentor, and guide their students are likely to have a big impact on student educational outcomes, despite tremendous barriers related to poverty, racism, and other social problems.

There is a substantial body of research that highlight the benefit of student resiliency factors for students from urban environments.   Lord et al., (1994) suggest that

psychological characteristics such as problem-solving skills, cognitive skills, confidence in one's competence, and feelings of efficacy are crucial components of an African-American student's ability to manage stressful situations and achieve academically. Moreover, Hall (2003) postulates that students who are autonomous develop skills to achieve and have parents who believe in their children's ability to achieve, and in turn, the students believe that they will achieve. The finding of this study support and expand on previous research surrounding the characteristics of resilient students. Participants in this study discussed how their families were influential in their abilities to achieve through continued support, guidance, understanding, and believing in their abilities. Students also talked about their own self-motivation and the internal drive to succeed in spite of barriers, disappointments, and naysayers. Students wanted a better life for themselves and their children. In some cases, students were motivated to achieve academically to be the first person in the family to attend college and/or take advantage of the privilege to be educated in a public school. Gabrielle, a student interviewed for this study, quoted something that most parents usually say to their children, "I want you to have more than what I had." However, she then said, "I want my kids to have more than what I have, so I have to do what I have to do to make that happen." Gabrielle's way of thinking is consistent with the remaining nine students who participated in this study because they want more in life and know they have to work hard to get it.

This study also examined the influence that urban communities have on student achievement. Participants in this study described their neighborhoods as being both safe and dangerous at the same time. Students referenced hearing gunshots in the surrounding streets of their homes, gangs in the neighborhood, student altercations, and unsafe-

looking people lurking around; however, they considered their blocks safe. Freeman et al., (1993) described how continued exposure to violent urban communities has been shown to have negative effects on student achievements and their school outcomes, yet the students who participated in this study continued to perform at high academic levels, despite continued exposure to acts of violence in their communities. The male students would even often venture out in the communities, although the female participants chose to stay in the house. Students who participated in this study reported never experiencing or witnessing major life-threatening events while living in their urban communities, especially something that would prove to affect them long-term. However, students did experience negative peer pressures, yet were able not to allow these to affect their agendas of academic success. Most, if not all of the students participated in some form of extracurricular activity that provided an outlet for fun and enjoyment. These types of outlets are necessary. In addition, Hale-Benson (1987) also describes the spirituality of African-Americans as a key factor in coping with stressful events. A significant number of students who participated in this study supported and expanded previous research by noting they also felt that religion or spiritual practices were an important part in their lives.

In closing, it is the researcher's hope that a better understanding of the perception and experiences of how the African-American family's influence on academic achievement of urban secondary students will lead to greater empathy on the part of educators and to more effective methods of educating urban youth.

Table 3

Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Age	Grade Level	Student's Sex	Parent(s)residing in home	Student Educational Placement
Dorothy	14	9th	Female	2 Parents	Philadelphia Public High School
C.A.M.	16	11th	Male	1 Parent	Camden New Jersey Public High School
Xavier	14	9th	Male	1 Parent	Philadelphia Public High School
Jacob	17	11th	Male	2 Parents	Camden New Jersey Public High School
Gabrielle	18	12th	Female	1 Parent	Camden New Jersey Public High School
Emmanuel	16	11th	Male	1 Parent	Philadelphia Public High School
Nicole	18	12th	Female	2 Parents	Philadelphia Public High School
Sierra	15	10th	Female	2 Parents	Camden New Jersey Public High School
Stacey	17	12th	Female	1 Parent	Philadelphia Public High School
Nehemiah	17	11th	Male	1 Parent	Camden New Jersey Public High School

References

Abell, E., & Clawson, M. (1996). Parenting values, attitudes, behaviors, and goals of

    African-American mothers from a low income community. Journal of Family

    Issues, 17, 593-614.

Abernathy S.F., (2007). No Child Left Behind and the Public Schools. Ann Arbor,

    Michigan: Michigan Press.

Allen, W.R. (1981). Moms, dads, and boys: Race and sex differences in the socialization

    of male children. In. L. E. Gary (Ed.), Black men (pp. 99-114) Beverly Hills, CA:

    Sage.

Anyon, J. (1997). Ghetto Schooling: A political economy of urban education reform.

    New York: Teachers College Press.

Attare, B. K., Guerra, N. G., & Tolan, P.H. (1994). Neighborhood disadvantage, stressful

    life events, and adjustment in urban elementary-school children. Journal of

    Clinical Child Psychology, 23, 391-400.

Baach, P.A., & Goldring, E. B. (1995). Parent involvement and school responsiveness:

    Facilitating the home-school connection in school of choice. Educational

    Evaluation & Policy Analysis, 17, 1-21.

Baca Zinn, M., & Eitzen, D.S. (1999). Diversity in American Families. New York:

    Addison Wesley Longman.

Baharoglu, D.and C. Kessides. (2004): Urban poverty chapter of the PRSP Sourcebook.

    Chapter   16. World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Baldwin, A. L., Baldwin, C., & Cole, R. E. (1990). Stress-resistant families and stress

      resistant children. In J. Rolf, A. S. Master, D. Cicchetti, K. H. Nuechterlein, & S.

      Weintraub (Eds.), Risk and protective factors in the development of

      psychopathology (pp. 257-280). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barber, B. L., & Eccles, J.S. (1990). The impact of family structure on the development

      of adolescents' family and work related values, beliefs, and aspirations. Doctoral

      dissertation, University of Michigan,Ann Arbor.

Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. Review

      of Educational Research, 48(2), 259-271

Baumrind, D. (1973). The development of instrumental competence through

      socialization. In A. D. Pick (Ed), Minnesota symposium on child psychology

      (Vol. 7 pp. 3-46). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Baumrind, D. (1991). Effective parenting during the early adolescent transition. In P.

      Cowan & E. M. Hetherington (Eds.), Advances in family research: Vol. 2- family

      transition (pp. 111-163). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Blanchett, W. J. (2009). A Retrospective Examination of Urban Education: From Brown

      to the Resegregation of African-Americans in Special Education-It Is Time to

      "Go for Broke".Urban Education, 44(4), 370-388.

Blanchett, W.J., Mumford, V., & Beachum, F. (2005). Urban school failure and

      disproportionality in a post Brown era: Benign neglect of the constitutional rights

      of students of color. *Remedial and Special Education, 26*(2), 70-81.

Blanchett, W.J, & Shealey, M.W. (2005). The forgotten ones: African-American students

    with disabilities in the wake of Brown. In D.N. Byrne (Ed), *Brown v. Board of*

    Education: Its impact on public education 1954-2005, pp. 213-226. Brooklyn:

    Word for Word Publishing.

Bowen, N.K., & Bowen, G.L., (1999). Effects of crime and violence in neighborhoods

    and schools on the school behavior and performance of adolescents. Journal of

    Adolescents Research. 14: 319-342

Bradley , R.H., Mundfrom, D. J., Whiteside, L., Casey, P.H., Barrett, K.   (1994). A

    factor analytic study of the infant-toddler and early childhood versions of the

    home inventory administered to white, black, and Hispanic American parents of

    children born preterm. Child Development, 65, 880-888.

Brody, G.H., & Flor, D. L. (1997). Maternal psychological functioning, family

    processes, and child adjustment in rural, single-parent, African-American

    families. Developmental Psychology, 33, 1000-1011.

Brody, G. H., Flor, D. L., & Gibson, N. M. (1999). Linking maternal efficacy beliefs,

    developmental goals, parenting practices, and child competence in rural single

    parent African-American families. Child Development, 70, 1197-1208.

Brofenbrenner, U. (1974). Is early intervention effective? Teachers College Record, 76,

    279-303.

Brook-Gunn, J., & Duncan, G. J. (1997). The effects of poverty on children. *The future*

    of Children, 7, 55-71.

Brooks-Gunn, J., Klebanov, P. K., and Duncan, G. (1996). Ethnic differences in children'
intelligence test scores; Role of economic deprivation, home environment, and
maternal characteristics. Child Development 67: 396-408.

Burke, L.M. (2012). The Student Success Act: Reforming Federal Accountablility
Requirements Under the No Child Left Behind. *The Heritage Foundation*

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, (1995). *Great Transitions: Preparing
Adolescents for the New Century. Carnegie*, New York.

Cauce, A. M., Hannan, K., and Sargeant, M. (1992). Life stress, social support, and locus
of control during early adolescent: Interactive effects. Am. J. Commun. Psychol.
20: 787 798.

Christenson, S.L., & Sheridan, S.M. (2001). Schools and families: Creating essential
connections for learning. New York: Guilford Press.

Cicchetti, D., & Garmezy, N. (1993). Prospects and promise in the study of resilience.
Development and Psychopathology, 5, 497-502.

Cole-Henderson, B. (2000). Organizational characteristics of schools that successfully
serve low income urban African-American students. Journal of Education for
Students Placed at Risk, 5: 77-91

Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfield, F., &
York, R. (1966). Equality of education opportunities. Washington, DC: U. S.
Government Printing Office.

Comer, J. P. (1980). School Power. The Free Press, New York.

Comer, J. P.,& Hayes, N. M. (1991). Parent Involvement in Schools: An ecological
approach. The Elementary School Journal, 91(3), 271-278.

Comer, J. P. (1996). Rallying the whole village: The Comer process for reforming

    education. New York: Teachers College Press.

Cooper, R. (1996). De-tracking reform in an urban California high school: Improving the

    Schooling experience of African-American students. *Journal of Negro Education,*

    65, 190-208.

Cooper, R., & Jordan, W.J. (2003). Cultural issues in comprehensive school reform.

    Urban Education, 38, 380-397.

Cowen, E. L., Wyman, P. A., & Work, W. C. (1996). Resilience in highly stressed urban

    children: Concepts and findings. Bullentin of the New York Academy of

    Medicine, 73, 267-284.

Clark, R. M. (1983). Family life and school achievement. Chicago: University of

    Chicago Press.

Clark, R. (1993). Family Life an School Achievment: Why Poor Black Children Succeed

    or Fail. University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

Crawford, S., and Levitt, P. (1999). Social Change and Civic Engagement: The Case of

    the PTA. In Civiv Engagement in American Democracy. Brookings Institution

    Press.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among five

    approaches. Sage Publications.

Cronkite, R., & Moos, R. H. (1984). The role of predisposing and moderating factors in

    the stress-illness relationship. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 25, 372-

    393.

Dauber , S. L. & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In N. F. Chavkin (Ed), Families and schools in a pluralistic society (pp. 53-71). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Davis, J.E. (2005). Early schooling and academic achievement of African-American males. In F.S. Olatokunbo (Ed.), *Educating African-American males: Voices from the field* (pp. 129-150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Davis, T. J. (2012). Plessy v. Ferguson (Landmarks of the American Mosaic). Geenwood press. An imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC

Deci, E. L. (1995). Why we do what we do: Understanding self-motivation. New York: Penguin Books.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R.M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum Press.

Deci, E. L., Schwartz, A., Scheinman, L., & Ryan, R.M. (1981). An instrument to assess adult's orientations toward control versus autonomy in children: Reflections on intrinsic motivation and perceived competence. Journal of Educational Psychology, 73, 642-650.

Deci, E. L., Speigel, N. H., Ryan, R. M., Koestner,R., & Kauffman, M. (1982). Effects of performance standards on teaching styles: Behavior of controlling teachers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 74, 852-859.

Deci, E.L., Vallerand, R.J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation in education: The self-determination perspective. Educational Psychologist, 26, 325-346.

De Leon, E., Roeger, K.L., De Vita, C. J., and Boris, E. T. (2010) Who Helps Public

      Schools. Urban Institute

Donovan, S., & Cross, C. (Eds.). (2002). *Minority students and gifted education.*

      Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Dornbusch, S.M., & Ritter, P.L. (1993). Home-school processes in diverse ethnic

      groups, social classes, and family structures. In S.L. Christenson & J.C. Conoley

      (Eds.), Home-school collaboration, Colesville, MD: National Association of

      School Psychologists.

Dornbusch, S., Ritter, P., Leiderman, P., Roberts, D., & Fraleigh, M. (1987). The

      relation of parenting style to adolescent school performance. Child Development,

      54, 1244-1357.

Dunn, L.M. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable?

      Exceptional Children, 23, 5-21.

Durlak, J. A. (1997). Successful prevention programs for children and adolescents. New

      York: Plenum Press.

Dye, J. (1989). Parental involvement in curriculum matters: Parents, teachers, and

      children working together, *Educational Research*, 31, 20-35

Eccles, J. S.   (1993). School and family effects on the ontogeny of children's interest,

      self-perceptions, and activity choice. In J. Jacobs (Ed.), Nebraska Symposium on

      Motivation: Vol. 40. Developmental perspectives on motivation (pp. 145-208):

      Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Ekstrom, R. B., Goertz, M. E., Pollack, J.M., & Rock, D. A. (1986). Who drops out of

    high school and why? Findings from a national study. Teachers College Record,

    87, 356-373.

Ensiminger, M. E. (1990). Sexual activity and problem behaviors among urban

    adolescents. Child Development, 61, 2032-2046.

Epstein, J.L. (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. The

    Elementary School Journal, 86, 277-294.

Epstein, J.L. (1987). Toward a theory of family-school connections: Teacher practices

    and parent involvement. In K. Hurrelmann, F. Kaufmann, & F. Losel (Eds.),

    Social Intervention:Potential and constraints (pp. 121-136). New York:

    deGruyter.

Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement:

    Ameta-analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 13(1), 1-22.

Farrow, A., Lang, J., Frank, J., (2005). How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited

    from Slavery. The Hartford Courant Company

Feldman, S. S., & Gehring, T.M. (1988). Changing perception of family cohesion and

    power across adolescene. Child Development, 59, 1034-1045

Felson, R. B. & Zielinski, M. A. (1989). Children's self-esteem and parental support.

    Journal of Marriage and the Family , 51, 727-735

Fincham, F.R., Hokoda, A., & Sanders, R., (1989). Learned helplessness, test anxiety,

    and academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis. Child Development, 60

    138-145.

Finkelman, P. (2006). Encyclopedia of African-American History 1619-1895: To the

colonial period to the age of Fredrick Douglass. Volume II. Oxford Community

Press.

Finn, J.D. & Rock, D.A. (1997). Academic success among students at risk for school

failure. Journal of Applied Psychology, 82, 221-234.

Flores-Gonzales, N.   (2002). School kids, street kids: Identity and high school

completion among Latinos. New York: Teachers College Press.

Foote, C. J. (2005). The Challenge and Potential of High-Need Urban Education. The

Journal of Negro Education 74 (4): 371-81

Ford, D. Y. (1993). Black students' achievement orientation as a function of perceived

family Achievement orientation and demographic variables. J. Negro Educ. 62:

47-66

Frankenberg, E., and Lee, C.(2003). Charter Schools and Race: A Lost Opportunity for

Integration Education. Education Policy Analysis Achieves.

Franklin, A.J., & Boyd-Franklin, N. (1985). A psychoeducational perspective on black

parenting. In H.P. McAdoo & J.L. McAdoo (Ed.s), Black Children: Social,

Educational & Parental Environments. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Freeman, L.N., Mokros, H., Poznanski, E.O. (1993). Violent events reported by normal

urban school-aged children: characteristics and depression correlates. J Am Acad

Child Adolescent Psychiatry. 32:419-423.

Frontier, M.S., Vallerand, R.J., & Guay, F. (1995). Academic motivation and school

    performance: Toward a structural model. Contemporary Educational Psychology,

    20, 257-274.

Furstenberg, F.F., (1986). The children of teenage mothers: Patterns of early child

    bearing in two generations. Family Planning Perspectives, 22(2), 54-61.

Furstenberg, F.F., (1976). The Impact of Adolescent Childbearing on Educational

    Attainment and Income of Black Females. Youth and Society Volume 22. No. 1

Garbarino , J. (1995). Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment. San Francisco:

    Jossey-Bass; 1995.

Garbarino , J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., Pardo, C., (1992). Children in war zones: from

    Mozambique to Chicago. Children in Danger: Coping With the Consequences of

    Community Violence. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1992: 22-47.

Garmezy, N. (1981). Children under stress: Perspectives on antecedents and correlates

    of vulnerability and resistance to psychopathology. In A. I. Rabin, J. Aronoff, A.

    M. Barclay, & R. A. Zucker (Eds.), *Further explorations in personality* (pp. 196-

    269). New York: Wiley.

Garmezy, N. (1993). Children in poverty: Resilience despite risk. Psychiatry 56: 127-136

Gordon, R., Chase-Lansdale, P., Matjasko, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1997). Young

    mothers living with grandmothers and living apart: How neighborhood and

      household contexts relate to multigenerational coresidence in African-

    American families. Applied Developmental Science, 1, 89-106.

Grant, P. (1992). Using special education to destroy Black boys. The Negro Educational

    Review, 63, 17-21.

Green, L. R., Blasik, K., Hartshorn, K.,&Shatten-Jones, E. (2000). Closing the

    Achievement gap in science: A program to encourage minority and female

    students to participate and succeed. ERS Spectrum, 18(2), 3-13.

Green, S. R. (2001). Closing the achievement gap: Lessons learned and challenges ahead.

    Teaching and Change, 8(2), 215-224.

Gregory, S. (1998). Black Corona. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gribble, P. A., Cowen, E. L., Wyman, P. A., Work, W. C., Wannon, M., & Raoof, A.

    (1993). Parent and child views of parent-child relationship qualities and resilient

    outcomes among urban children. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 34,

    507-519.

Gutman, L. M., and McLoyde, V.C. (2000). Parents' Management of Their Children's

    Education Within the Home, at School, and in the Community: An Examination

    of African-American Families Living in Poverty. *The Urban Review* 32: 1-23

Guyer, B.   (1992). An epidemiological overview of violence among children. In:

    Schwarz DS, ed. Report of the twenty-third Ross Round-table on Critical

    Approaches to Common Pediatric Problems. Columbus, Ohio: Ross

    Laboratories; 1992: 3-11.

Hale-Benson, J. (1987). The transmission of faith to young black children. Paper

    presented at the Conference on Faith Development in Early Childhood,

    Henderson, NC.

Hall, A. S. (2003). Expanding academic and career self-efficacy: A family systems

     framework. Journal of Counseling & Development, 81 (1), 33,39.

Halle, T., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Mahoney, J.   (1997). Family influences on school

     achievement in low-income, African-American children. Journal of Educational

     Psychology, 89, 527-537.

Hampton, F. M., Mumford, D. A., & Bond, L. (1998). Parental involvement in inner city

     schools: The project FAST extended family approach to success. Urban

     Education, 33(3), 410-427.

Hara, S.R. (1998). Parent involvement: The key to improved student achievement.

     School Community Journal, 8(2), 9-19.

Harry, B., & Klingner, J. (2006) *Why are so many minority students in special*

     education? Understanding race and disability in schools. New York, NY:

     Teachers College Press.

Hess, R.D., Holloway, S. D., Price, G, G., & Dickson, W.P. (1982). Family

     environments and acquisition of reading skills: Toward a more precise analysis. In

     L.M. Laosa & I.Siegel (Eds.), Families as learning environment for children (pp.

     87-113). New York: Plenum.

Hetherington, E. M., & Henderson, S. (1997). Fathers in stepfamilies. In M. E. Lamb

     (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed., pp. 212-226). New

     York: Wiley.

Hickman, C. W., Greenwood, G., & Miller, M. D. (1995). High school parent

     involvement: Relationship with achievement, grade level, SES, and gender.

     Journal of Research and Development in Education, 28(3), 125-134.

Hidi, S., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2000). Motivation the academically unmotivated: A

   critical issue for the 21st century. Review of Educational Research, 70, 151-179.

Hill, N. (1995). The relationship between family environment and parenting style: A

   preliminary study of African-American families. Journal of Black Psychology,

   21, 408-423.

Hill, N. E., Castellino, D.R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A. Bates, J., et al

   (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement,

   and aspirations: Demongraphic variations across adolescence. Child

   Development, 75: 1491-1509.

Holly, W. J. (1987). Student self-esteem and academic success. Oregon School Study

   Council Bulletin, 31(2).

Holmes, C., Frentz, J., & Yu, Z. (1999). Chronic and Discrete Stress as Predictors of

   Children's Adjustment. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol. 67,

   No 3, 411-419

Howard, T. Co., & Reynold, R. (2008). Examining parent involvement in reversing the

   underachievement of African-American students in middle-school. Education

   Foundation, 22:79-98.

Howell, W. G., and Peterson, P.E. (2002). The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban

   Schools, Washington D.C.L: Brookings Institution Press

Hunter, A. (1997). Counting on grandmothers: Black mothers' and fathers' reliance on

   grandmothers for parenting support. Journal of Family Issues, 18, 251-269.

Jeynes, W.H. (2005) A Meta-Analysis of the Relation of Parental Involvement to Urban

   Elementary School Student Academic Achievement. Urban Education 40; 237

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban

    secondary school student academic achievement: A Meta-Analysis. Urban

    Education, 42:82-110.

Jones, P.A. (1972). Home environment and the development of verbal ability. Child

    Development, 43, 1081-1086.

Kammerman, S., & Kahn, A. (1988). Mothers alone: Strategies for a time of change.

    Dover, MA: Auburn House.

Kelley, M. L., Power, T. G., & Wimbush, D. D. (1992). Determinants of disciplinary

    practices in low-income Black mothers. Child Development, 63, 573-582.

Klimes-Dougan, B., Lopez, J. A., Nelson, P., & Adelman, H. S. (1992). Two studies of

    low income parents' involvement in schooling. The Urban Review, 24, 185-202.

Koop, C.E., & Lundberg, G.D., (1992). Violence in America: a public health

    emergency. JAMA 267: 3076-3077.

Kozol, J. (1991). Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools. New York: Crown.

Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities*. New York: HarperCollins.

Kozol, J. (2005). Still Separate, Still Unequal. *American's educational apartied. Harper*

    Magazine 311(1864)

Kretovics, J., & Nussel, E. J. (1994). Introduction: School reform and transforming urban

    education. In J.Kretovics, & E.J. Nussel (Eds.) Transforming urban education.

    Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt:

    Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools. Educational Researcher, Volume

    35, Number 7, pp. 3-12

Laffey, J. M.   (1982). The assessment of involvement with school work among urban

      high school students. Journal of Educational Psychology, 67, 62-71.

Lamborn, S. D., Dornbusch, S. M., & Steinburg, L. (1996). Ethnicity and community

      context as moderators of the relations between family decision making and

      adolescent adjustment. Child Development, 67, 283-301.Lazaras, R. S., &

      Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. New York: Springer-

      Verlag.

Lefcourt, H. (1992). Durability and impact of the locus of control construct.

      Psychological Bulletin, 112, 411-414.

Lord, S., Eccles, J.S., and McCarthy, K. (1994). Surviving the junior high school

      transition: Family processes and self-perceptions as protective and risk factors. J.

      Early Adolesc. 14:162-199

Losen,D., & Orfield, G. (2002). *Racial inequality in special education*. Cambridge, MA:

      Harvard Education.

Mannan, G. & Blackwell, J. (1992). Parent Involvement: Barriers and opportunities.

      The Urban Review, 24, 219-226.

Marcon, R. A. (1998). *Predicting parent involvement and its influence on school*

      success: *A follow-up study.* Paper presented at the Fourth National Head Start

      Research Conference, Washington, DC.

Markowitz, J., Garcia, S., & Eichelberger, J.H. (1997). *Addressing the disproportionate*

      placement of students from racial and ethnic minority groups in special ed

      programs and classes. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors

      of Special Education.

Maslen, A., Best, K., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and developmentL: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. Development and Psychopathology, 2, 25-444.

Mason, C. A., Cauce, A. M., Gonzales, N., & Hiraga, Y. (1996). Neither too sweat nor too sour: Problems peers, maternal control, and problem behavior in African-American Adolescents. Child Development, 67, 2115-2130.

Masten , A.S. (1994). Resilience in individual development: Successful adaption despite risk and adversity. In M.C. Wang & E.W. Gordon (Ed.S), Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects (pp. 3-25). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Mau, W. (1997). Parental influences on the high school students' academic achievement: A comparison of Asian immigrants, Asian Americans, and white A mericans. Psychology in the Schools, 34(3), 267-277.

McLoyd, V.C. (1990). The Impact of economic hardship on black families and children: Psychological distress, parenting, and socioeconomic development. Child Development 61: 311-346

McLoyd, V.C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantages and child development. American Psychologist 53:185-204

Mercer, J.R. (1973). *Labeling the mentally retarded*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Miedel, W. & Reynolds, A.J. (2000). Parent Involvement in Early Intervention for Disadvantage Children: Does It Matter? Journal of School Psychology, Vol. 37, No. 4 pp.379-402

National Education Goal Panel . (1997). Getting a good start in school. Washington,

    DC: Author.

Needleman, H. L., Schell, A., Bellinger, D., Leviton, A., & Allred, E. (1990). The long-

    term effects of low doses of the lead in childhood: An 11-year follow up report.

    New England Journal of Medicine, 322, 83-88. No Child Left Behind

    (NCLB)Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, (2002)

Noguera, P.A. (2003). The trouble with black boys: The role and influence of

    environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African-

    American males. *Urban Education,38*, 431-459.

Noguera, P.A. (2005). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of

    environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African-

    American males. In F.S. Olatokunbo (Ed.), *Educating African-American males:*

    Voices from the field (pp. 51-78). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Nygreen, K. (2006). Reproducing or Challenging Power in the Questions We Ask and

    the Methods We Use: A Framework for Activist Research in Urban Education.

    The Urban Review Vol. 38(1), 1-26

Orfield, G., Frankenberg, E.D., & Lee, C. (2003). The resurgence of school segregation.

    Educational Leadership, 60(4), 16-20.

Payne, C. (1984). Getting what we ask for. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Patton, J.M. (1998). The disproportionate representation of African-Americans in special

    education: Looking behind the curtain for understanding and solutions. *Journal of*

    Special Education, 32, 25-31.

Perry, S. (2011). Push Has Come to Shove: Getting our kids the education they deserve, even if it means picking a fight. Crown Publishers. New York.

Prothrow-Stith, D. & Weissman, M.   (1991). Deadly Consequences. New York, NY: Harper-Collins; 1991

Quanes, J., & Rankin, B. (1998). Neighborhood poverty, family characteristics, and commitment to mainstream goals: The case of African-American adolescents in the inner city. Journal of Family Issues, 19, 769-794.

Reynolds, A. (1989). A structural model of first-grade outcomes for an urban, low socioeconomic status, minority population. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 594-603.

Reynolds, A. J., Mavrogenes, N., Bezruczko, N. , & Hagemann, M. (1996). Cognitive and family-support mediators of preschool effectiveness : A confirmatory analysis. Child Development, 67, 1119-1140.

Rich, D. (1987). Schools and families: Issues and actions. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Robinson, R. (2000). The Debt: What American Owes To Blacks. Penguin Group p. 74

Rowley, L. L. & Bowman, P. J. (2009). Risk, Protection, and Achievement Disparities Among African-American Males: Cross-Generation Theory, Research, and Comprehensive Intervention. Journal of Negro Education, 78, 3.

Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1994). Urban poverty in the family context of delinquency: A new look at structure and process in a classic study. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 18, 419-435.

Scott-Jones, D. (1984). Family influence on cognitive development and school achievement. Review of Research in Education, 11, 259-304.

Shaver, A. V., &Walls, R. T. (1998). Effect of Title I parent involvement on student Reading and mathematics achievement. Journal of Research and Development in Education,31(2), 90-97.

Shernoff, D.J., & Schmidt, J.A. (2008). Further evidence of an engagement-achievement paradox among U.S. high school students. *Youth Adolescence, 37*, 564-580. doi: 10.1007/s10964-007-9241-z.

Snodgrass, D. (1991). The parent connection. *Adolescent*, 26, 83-87.

Snow, C.E. (1983). Literacy and language. Relationship during the preschool years. Harvard Educational Review, 53, 165-189.

Spencer, M. B., Cole, S.P., DuPree, D., Glymph, A., and Pierre, P. (1993). Self-Efficacy among urban African-American early adolescents: Exploring issues of risk, vulnerability, and resilience. Devel. Psychopath, 5 :719-739

Steele, C. (1992). Race and schooling of black Americans. Atlantic Monthly 269:791-798.

Steinberg, L., Mounts, N. S., Lamborn, S. D., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1991). Authoritative parenting and adolescent adjustment across varied ecological niches. *Journal of Research on Adolescent*, 1, 19-36.

Sterling, S., Cowen, E. L., Weissberg, R. P., Lotyczewski, B. S., & Boike, M. (1985). Recent stressful life events and young children's school adjustment. American Journal of Community Psychology, 13, 87-98.

Steven, J. (1988). Social support, locus of control, and parenting in three low-income

  groups of mothers: Black teenagers, Black adults, and White adults. Child

  Development, 59, 635-642.

Stullich, S., Eisner, E., McCrary, J., and Roney, C. (2006) National Assessment of Title I:

  Interium Report Vol I: Implementation of Title I, Washington D.C. : U.S.

  Department of Education, Institute of Education Science, National Center for

  Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Sutherland, E.H., & Cressey, D.R. (1978). Criminology. 10th ed. Philadelphia, Pa: .

  Lippincott; 1978.

Swanson, C.B. (2001). Who Graduates? Who Doesn't?: A statistical portrait of public

  high school graduation, class of 2001. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Swanson, C.B. (2003). Ten Questions (and Answers) about Graduates, Dropouts, and

  NCLB Accountability. Washington, DC: The Urban Istitute.

Taylor, A.R. (1991). Social competence and the early school transition: Risk and

  protective factors for African-American children.   Education and Urban Society,

  24, 15-26.

Taylor, R. D. (2000). An examination of the association of African-American mothers'

  perceptions of their neighborhoods with their parenting and adolescent

  adjustment. Journal of Black Psychology, 26, 267-287.

Taylor, R., Casten, R., & Flickinger, S. (1993). Influence of kinship social support on

  the parenting experiences and psychosocial adjustment of African-American

  adolescents. Developmental Psychology, 29, 382-388.

Taylor, R., Roberts, D., & Jacobson, L. (1997). Stressful life events, psychological well-

being, and parenting in African-American mothers. Journal of Family

Psychology, 11, 436-446.

Tienda, M., and Kao, G. (1994). Parental Behavior and the Odds of Success Among

Students at Risk of Failure. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

American Sociological Association, Los Angesles, CA.

Trivette, P., & Anderson, E. (1995). The effects of four components of parental

involvement on eight grade student achievement: Structural analysis on NECS-88

data. School Psychology Review, 24 (2), 299-318

U.S. Bureau of Census. (1996). Statistical abstract of the United States: 1996.

Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Census Bureau (2010) http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/ctychng.html

U.S. Department of Education (1994). Goals 2000 legislation and related items [On –

line]. Available: http//www.ed.gov/G2K/

U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *Twenty-seventh annual report to Congress on the*

implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Section 664(d)

of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Washington, DC:

Author.

Vallerand, R. J., & Bissonnette, R. (1992). Intrinsic, extrinsic, and amoti-vational styles

as predictors of behavior: A prospective study. Journal of Personality, 60, 599-

620.

Vallerand , R. J., Fortier, M. S., & Guay, F. (1997). Self-determination and persistence in

a real-life setting: Toward a motivational model of high school dropout. Journal

of Personality and Social Psychology, 72, 1161-1176.

Varenne, H., & McDermott, R. (1999). Successful failure: The school American builds.

Boulder: Westview Press.

Vigil, J.D., & Long, J.M. (1990). Emic and etic perspectives on gang culture: The

Chicano case. In: Huff, C.R., ed. Gangs in America. Newbury Park: Sage

Publications, pp. 55-68.

Walberg, H. J., Bole, R.J. & Waxman, H. C. (1980). School-based family socialization

and reading achievement in the inner city. Psychology in the Schools, 17, 509-

514.

Wang, M.C., Haertel, G.D., & Walberg, H.J. (1995). Educational resilience: An

emergent construct. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American

Educational Research Association, San Francsico, CA.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1982). Vulnerable but invincible: A study of resilient

children. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Werner, E. (1990). Protective factors and individual resilience. In S. Meisels & J.

Shonkoff (Eds.), Handbook of early childhood intervention (pp. 97-116). New

York: Cambridge University Press.

Whitaker, C., & Bastian, L. (1991). Teenage Victims: A National Crime Survey Report.

Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics; 1991.

Publication NCJ-128129.

Wilson, M. N. (1989). Child development in the context of the Black extended family. American Psychologist, 44, 380-385.

Wilson, W. J. (1990). The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wyman, P. A., Cowen, E. L., Work, W. C., Raoof, A., Gribble, P. A., Parker, G.R., & Wannon, M. (1992). Interviews with children who experienced major life stress: Family and child attributes that predict resilience outcomes. Journal of the American Academy of child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 31, 904-910.

Young, V.H. (1974). A Black American socialization pattern. American Ethnologist, 1, 415-431.

Zill, N., Moore, K., Smith, E., Stief, T., & Coiro, M. (1995). The life circumstances and development of children in welfare families: A profile based on national survey data. In P.L. Chase-Lansdale & J. Brooks-Gunn (Eds.), Escape from poverty: What makes a difference for children? (pp. 38-59). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix A:

Letter to Solicit Participation

Date

Dear Parent:

My name is Frank Edwards, and I'm a doctoral student in the School Psychology

program at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM). I am looking for

families to participate in my doctoral dissertation study. With your participation, I hope

to learn the relationship between the African-American family and its influence on

academic achievement in urban secondary student. If you and your child are interested in

becoming a volunteer, the requirements are as follows:

- Commit about a 1 1/2 hours to meet with me in your home or at another place that
  is convenient for you to talk.

- Talk about your educational experiences and how the parent/child interaction
  impacted student achievement.

- Provide clarifying information during a follow-up phone interview, if necessary.

- Allow all interviews to be audiotaped for data collection purposes.

- Discuss basic questions regarding yourself and your family.

You will be offered a summary of the research findings following the completion of the

study. If you are willing to meet these specific requirements, or need more information,

please contact Mr. Frank Edwards at 215-219-9333 or Dr. Yuma Tomes at 215-871-

6946.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Frank Edwards
PCOM Doctoral Student

Yuma I. Tomes, PhD, ABA
Director, PsyD, School Psychology Program

WOULD YOU LIKE TO INFORM THE PUBLIC OF HOW YOU ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE ACADEMICALLY IN SCHOOL DESPITE VARIOUS BARRIERS?

My name is Frank Edwards, a doctoral student in the school psychology program at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. I am interested in learning more about the African American family's influence on academic achievement of urban secondary students. Would you be interested in sharing your experience with me as part of my doctoral dissertation study? If so, the requirements are:

- Commit about a 1 1/2 hour to meet with me in your home or at another place that is convenient for you to talk.
- Talk about your experience in educational and interactions with parents/guardians during your academic career.
- Provide clarifying information during a follow-up phone interview, if necessary.
- Allow all interviews to be audiotaped for data collection purposes.
- Discuss basic questions regarding yourself and your family.

If so, I'm interested in hearing your story!!

Contact me at 215-219-9333 if you are willing to share your story and you meet these specific requirements, or would like more information about the study.

Appendix C:

Screening Script

<u>Introduction:</u>

Hello, this is Frank Edwards. I appreciate your agreeing to allow your child to participate

in my study. As mentioned, I am interested in learning more about the relationship

between parents/guardian influences on urban high school students. I would like to ask

you, the parent(s) a series of qualifying questions before moving forward in the process

of this study. Do you have several minutes to answer my questions? Great:

- Was your child ever retained in school?

- Does your child struggle academically in school?

- Are you the primary guardian/parent of a secondary student?

- Does your child live in your home five or more days a week?

- Is your child between the ages of 14 to 18?

- Is your child enrolled in an urban public school system?

- What is your race or ethnicity?

<u>Response to prospective participants that qualify for the study:</u>

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. I am very much interested in you

and your child taking part in my study. Are still interested? Do you have any questions

regarding the study? What is a good date and time that we can meet to conduct the

interview portion of my study?

<u>Response to prospective participants that do not qualify for the study:</u>

 I really appreciate your taking the time to respond to my study. However, based on your

responses to the qualifying questions, I will not be able to include you and your student in

the study. I am able to include only African-American parents/guardians, whose children

are secondary students between the ages of 14-18, who achieve academically in an urban

public school setting. Have a great day!

Appendix D:

Demographic Questionnaire

Name:_____

Date:_____

1) Please indicate your grade level.
   a.   9th

   b.   10th

   c.   11th

   d.   12th

2) Please indicate your race.
   a.   African-American

   b.   Hispanic

   c.   Caucasian

   d.   Other

3) Please indicate your age.
   a.   13-14

   b.   15-16

   c.   17-18

   d.   Other

4) Please indicate person(s) caring for you at your current resident
   a.   Two Parent household

   b.   Single Parent household

   c.   Grandparent/Guardian household

   d.   Other

5) Please indicate your gender
   a   Male

   b   Female

6) Age of Parent(s)
   a   25-30

   b   31-35

   c   36-40

   d   41-45

   e   46 and over

Appendix E:

Interview Protocol

African-American Family Influence on Urban Academic Achievement of Secondary

Students

Interview Protocol

Interview Script

Hello, I appreciate you and your child agreeing to take part in my study.   It is my hope

that the information I learn throughout this process will help other families understand

their influence on student achievement, as well as reveal the journey that urban students

travel in order to achieve academically. Your participation in this study makes it possible

to learn invaluable information about the experiences of African-American parents/

guardians of adolescents in urban, academic environments. Interview sessions will be

audio taped, so that I can accurately write out your responses at a later date, allowing me

fully understand your thoughts, feelings and opinions.

Over the next 1 hour, I am going ask your student questions about his or her own

experiences and thoughts associated with being a student who achieves academically. It

would be great if your child and I could meet individually to begin the interview session.

Upon the student's requests, a summary of the findings will be made available at the

completion my study.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Right now, I would like to go

over some information that will be important for you to be aware of prior to beginning

the interview session.

When possible, please tell me as much information as you can about the question asked, so I can clearly understand your story. I may ask additional question to clarify your response or gain a better understanding of your experience. You may decline to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering. You also may stop at any time during the interview for any reason. If during the interview you chose to discontinue the session, you may do so. All information you tell me today will be held strictly confidential. Your "real" name will not be used within the findings of this research or any identifying information. If at any point during the interview session you would like to provide information that I did not ask you within the topic of research and/ or could further contribute to the study, please feel free to do so.

Do you have any questions regarding anything I have said up to this point? Okay, let's begin.

Interview Protocol

1) Tell me about your parent/guardian?

2) What is your relationship with your parent/guardian?

3) Tell me about your school history.

4) Tell me about your parent/guardian's interactions with your schools.

5) How has this relationship changed or evolved over the years?

6) Tell me about your parent/guardian's involvement in your education.

7) How has their involvement changed or evolved over the years?

8) What are some barriers or risk factors you have faced being African-American and attending an urban schools?

9) What helped you and or protected you in your efforts to achieve in school?

10) What else would you like educators to know about your experience with the

school system?

Clarifying probes

1) Please say more about that.

2) Tell me more about "…."

3) I'm not sure I understand what you meant when you said "…."

Appendix F:

Student Consent Form

Student Informed Consent Form

Title:
The African-American Family's Influence on Academic Achievement of Urban Secondary Students

Purpose of the study:
I would like to gain a better understanding of how your parents or guardian helped you earn good grades in school. I would like you to discribe some things that made it harder to do well in school. Then tell me some things that made it easier to do well in school.

If you are interested and agree to be in this study, I will need you to print and sign your name below. If at anytime during the study you do not want to take part, you can change your mind and stop participating.

Also keep in mind that you do not have to participate in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not print or sign your name below.

Things you will do if you decide to be in the study:
- Commit about a 1 1/2 hour to meet with me in your home or at another place that is convenient for you to talk.
- Discuss basic questions regarding yourself and your family.
- Talk about your experience in educational and interactions with parents/guardians during your academic career.
- Provide clarifying information during a follow-up phone interview..
- Allow all interviews to be audiotaped for data collection purposes.

Questions about the study:
If you question or want more information about the study, you can ask the person in charge of the study, Mr.Frank Edwards any time. Just in case you do have questions before or after the study, Mr. Edward's telephone number is 215-219-9333.

I understand what Mr. Edward's explained. I want to be in the study.

_____

Student's Printed Name

_____

Student's Signature

_____

Date

Appendix G:

Informed Consent Form