

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
PARENTS' AND GUARDIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS
EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A DISSERTATION IN
Education

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by
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Kansas City, Missouri
2011

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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2011

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine African-American student perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement at five urban schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. One hundred four sixth grade African-American students responded to 28 statements about their personal beliefs and attitudes as well as their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and education. Fourteen statements on the survey invited students to consider their personal thoughts and opinions about school and academic achievement; 14 statements also required students to predict their parents' and guardians' attitudes and feelings about the same or similar educational concerns. The Likert scale was used as a measurement method for assessing student responses. Information from this study established significant common factors among students and their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes regarding academic achievement. The survey results shed light on the complex relationships between messages students *hear* and beliefs they deemed were actually held by parents and guardians. Convictions students believe were espoused by primary caregivers may affect their own opinions about the value of education and their performance at school.

APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled “African-American Student Perceptions of Their Parents’ and Guardians’ Attitudes towards Education and Academic Achievement” presented by Julie Ann Connor, candidate for the Doctorate of Education degree, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the 104 sixth grade students who provided input through participation in the research survey. This study would not exist without their contributions. The impact of their words and unique views of the world inspired me and fueled this investigation. I owe heartfelt thanks to Chester Palmer, Adrain Howard, Judith Jordan-Campbell, Marques Stewart, and Stan Strauss for their support throughout the survey process. I would also like to thank Christopher Winders, IRB director of research compliance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, for his sagacious guidance and encouragement.

I appreciated the support and direction I received from Dr. Dianne Smith as my advisor throughout the development of this study. I am grateful for input from Dr. Loyce Caruthers, Dr. Jennifer Friend, and Dr. Sue Thompson who devoted considerable time and effort in revision recommendations to this research study. My academic adventure was profoundly shaped by the members of my UMKC cohort, especially Raquel Coy, Lori Dameron, Renee Freers, Andrew Kohl, and Amanda-Fay Moore. They are strong role models and inspirational instructional leaders. I appreciated their collective wisdom, humor, and insight. Their commitment to students reinforced my own social justice convictions.

Gloria Steinem said, “The art of acting morally is behaving as if everything we do matters.” Words do not adequately express my admiration and infinite gratitude to my mother, Barbara Giblin, who embodies all of the character traits I value and want to emulate in my own professional and spiritual journey. And, finally, I wish to thank Patrick Dougherty who, through his kindness and loving goodness, models the type of person I strive to be every day.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Langston Hughes was the great, great-grandson of the first African-American elected to public office in the United States. His words often reflected the internal struggles experienced by many African-Americans in pursuits of personal aspirations. In his poem, *Dream Deferred* (1951), Hughes famously lamented, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?” (p. 426). The poignant words were the inspiration of the title of the 1959 play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. The Tony award-winning drama was the first Broadway production written and directed by African-Americans.

Kozol (1992) painfully recalled the repercussions he experienced in his compelling work, *Savage Inequalities*, when he recited the infamous verses by Hughes to his fourth grade students in an impoverished and overcrowded Boston classroom which had no textbooks, instructional resources, or lesson materials. He was promptly fired because Hughes’s words were considered “inflammatory” and too advanced for African-American fourth graders (p. 2). Kozol argued that U.S. schools were just as segregated now as they were before the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. He insisted, “Whether the issue is inequity alone or deepening resegregation or the labyrinthine intertwining of the two, it is well past the time for us to start the work that it will take to change this” (2005a, p. 54).

Purpose Overview

Kozol (2005b) described the disintegration of U.S. urban schools in his book, *The Shame of the Nation*, and advocated for public education system reforms that provided

equitable funds and resources for every child, regardless of where he or she lived in their communities. Although there were many theories regarding poor achievement among African-American students from low socioeconomic families, particularly youth from poor urban schools (Corallo & McDonald, 2002; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Ogbu, 1988, 2003; Payne, 2005; Strayhorn, 2009), there was insufficient research which examined parallels between students' thoughts and opinions as they related to their perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes towards learning and scholastic success (Nelson, 2007; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Wanat, 2010). Wanat (2010) insisted that deeper exploration of students' and their parents' attitudes and beliefs about education and educational systems could lead to greater communication between school staff members and families as well as greater parental involvement in schools.

The goal of this study was to compare and contrast personal beliefs and attitudes of African-American middle school students and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement. Although many students heard repeated verbal messages from parents and guardians about the value of a good education, this study also considered children's perceptions of their primary caregivers' nonverbal messages about learning and student achievement. Data collected from this study were analyzed to determine whether or not students who held more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement included those who also perceived stronger support from parents and guardians.

Conceptual Framework

Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment as a result of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, a

significant body of research reflected a growing number of African-American students experiencing inequality and academic failure in U.S. schools (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Kozol, 2005; Kupchik, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Payne, 2005; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Strayhorn (2009) explained that numerous factors contributed to many African-Americans' lack of trust in the educational system and lack of faith in themselves as successful learners. Those factors included prior achievement experiences; neighborhood settings; lack of familial, peer, and cultural support within communities; and socioeconomic standings (p. 711). This study and results of this research was filtered through a theoretical lens of social justice and examination of issues which continued to haunt U.S. schools and perpetuated inequities across cultures and ethnic groups. Information about African-American students and hurdles in U.S. schools as well as academic achievement and parental involvement in the lives of students was included in the design of the conceptual framework for this study.

Ogbu (1981, 1988, 2003) examined the effects of race and ethnic differences on educational and economic systems. According to his cultural-ecological model, African-Americans were systematically prevented from taking advantage of educational opportunities that were most often reserved for Caucasian students (1981, p. 419). He argued that generations of abusive treatment by Caucasian hierarchies coupled with social and economic hardships led many African-American students to abandon efforts to become successful (1988, p. 17). As a result, Ogbu contended that many African-Americans did not trust the dominant Caucasian culture and developed behaviors and attitudes that were incompatible with choices that resulted in scholastic achievement and success.

Bracey (1998) used the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD) and its desegregation debacle as an example of how not to spend taxpayers' dollars earmarked for

education. According to Gotham (2002), local school desegregation rulings following the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision were controlled by key local officials in Kansas City (p. 99). Because Kansas City bureaucrats were given such generous leeway, Gotham contended that it “purposefully and systematically kept Black families walled in” (p. 99). He further explained, “School officials in Kansas City publically advocated economic and political equality for Blacks but not racially integrated schools and housing” (p. 117).

U.S. District Judge Russell Clark assumed partial control over the troubled Kansas City, Missouri, School District in 1985 on grounds that it was an unconstitutionally segregated district with dilapidated facilities and students who repeatedly scored below grade level on standardized achievement tests (Bracey, 1998; Ryan, 2010). To bring the district into compliance with his interpretation of federal law, Clark ordered the state to provide more than \$2 billion dollars over a 12-year period to build new schools, integrate classrooms, and raise student test scores to national norms. Although KCMSD students had access to some of the best school facilities in the country, the percentage of African-American students in the predominantly segregated district increased, student achievement scores decreased, and the achievement gap between Caucasian and minority students deepened (Moran, 2005).

Gotham (2002) discussed the racial composition of elementary schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District between 1954 to 1975 (p. 16). Table 1 illustrated dramatic racial shifts among African-American student populations spanning the 20-year period following the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. He explained that the racial composition of high schools also experienced radical population changes, adding:

Lincoln, the state-mandated black high school before 1954, started out at 100 percent in 1954-55. Central, all white in 1954, became more than 90

percent black by 1960-61. Paseo, all white in 1954 and 9.7 percent black in 1960 became more than 99 percent black by 1970-71. Southeast, all white in 1954 and 1.7 percent black in 1960-61, became more than 97 percent black by 1974-75. (p. 16)

Gotham (2002) explained that divisive school actions between 1955 through 1974 established Troost Avenue or the “Troost Wall” as a “cognitive racial boundary” that real estate “blockbusters” manipulated to stimulate “White flight” from adjacent neighborhoods (p. 18).

Table 1

Racial Makeup of Kansas City, Missouri School District Elementary Schools at Five-Year Intervals (1955-56—1974-75) located east of Troost Avenue, west of the Blue River, south of 31st Street.

School	1955-56 % Black	1960-61 % Black	1965-66 % Black	1970-71 % Black	1974-75 % Black
Linwood	18.2	89.9	98.8*	99.8	98.4
Ladd	4.7	9.0*	99.8	99.8	99.6
Moore	2.3	45.2	72.1	92.6	93.2
Faxon	0.7	11.5	54.6*	92.5	95.6
Seven Oaks	0*	65.1	96.8*	99.4	98.7
Melcher	not open	0.2	38.6	89.9	96.7
Mann	0	84.2	97.9*	99.1	98.9
Kumpf	0	62.2	96.8*	99.4*	100.0
Meservey	0	13.5	76.7	98.2	97.5
Graceland	28.8	43.4	89.6	99.0	99.6

Table 1—Continued

School	1955-56 % Black	1960-61 % Black	1965-66 % Black	1970-71 % Black	1974-75 % Black
Chick	0	10.8	51.2	83.6	90.8
Willard	0	0	7.3	92.2	98.7
Pershing	0	2.7	42.7	99.5	98.7
Pinkerton	0	0	18.0	84.3	94.9

Note: Adapted from Benson, A. (1995), *School Segregation and Desegregation in Kansas City*. Retrieved from <https://journals.ku.edu/index.php/amerstud/article/viewFile/3050/3009>.

* Boundary change occurred within the noted five year interval.

Data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) showed that the number of African-American students in district schools reflected few of the radical changes Judge Clark had hoped for. The number of African-American students at Pitcher Elementary School increased from 46.8% in 2005 to 80.7% in 2010. Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) 2010 disaggregated data showed that 98.4% of the student population at Troost Elementary School was African-American; 96.3% of the students at Satchel Paige Elementary School were African-Americans (DESE, 2011a).

Minority students resided in every urban and suburban sector in Kansas City, yet more than half of the area's African-American impoverished population lived in the narrow wedge of neighborhoods in Kansas City's urban core. Several studies revealed that desegregation data in inner-city schools showed little progress since the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision (Benson, 1995; Gotham, 2002; Moran, 2005; Ryan, 2010). All of

the KCMSD students eligible to take part in this study lived in this heavily segregated and economically suppressed 16-mile wedge.

African-American Students and Hurdles in U.S. Schools

Findings from Ford, Obiakor, and Patton (1995) revealed that an African-American student was suspended from a U.S. public school every seven seconds. Wynn (2007) added that suspensions for Black males in schools escalated to every five seconds. He explained that an African-American student dropped out of school every 46 seconds. Losen and Skiba (2010) collected school suspension data from more than 9,000 urban middle schools. They found that 28.3% of African-American male students were suspended at least once during the academic year (three times the 10% rate for Caucasian males). African-American females were suspended more than four times than their Caucasian counterparts (p. 5). Many large urban schools reported that the drop-out rate among African-American high school students was above 50% (Chaddock, 2006; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

Although the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2010) found that U.S. districts usually reported that graduation rates exceeded 88% and claimed that the racial gap in education was no longer significant, Heckman and LaFontaine (2008) argued that actual graduation rates were much lower than reports from the NCES. “In fact,” they argued, “we find no evidence of convergence in minority–minority graduation rates over the past 35 years” (p. 3). Table 2 reflected information collected by the NCES in 2011 which displayed the percentage of U.S. high school dropouts by race and ethnicity between 1980 and 2009.

Table 2

Status Dropout Rates of 16- through 24-Year-Olds by Race/Ethnicity: Selected Years, 1980-2009

Status Dropout Rates of 16- Through 24-Year-Olds, by Race/Ethnicity Selected Years, 1980-2009						
Year	Total ¹	Race/Ethnicity				
		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
1980	14.1	11.4	19.1	35.2	—	—
1985	12.6	10.4	15.2	27.6	—	—
1990	12.1	9.0	13.2	32.4	4.9!	16.4!
1995	12.0	8.6	12.1	30.0	3.9	13.4!
1998	11.8	7.7	13.8	29.5	4.1	11.8
1999	11.2	7.3	12.6	28.6	4.3	‡
2000	0.9	6.9	13.1	27.8	3.8	14.0
2002	10.5	6.5	11.3	25.7	3.9	16.8
2003	9.9	6.3	10.9!	23.5	3.9	15.0
2004	10.3	6.8	11.8	23.8	3.6	17.0
2005	9.4	6.0	10.4!	22.4	2.9	14.0
2006	9.3	5.8	10.7	22.1	3.6	14.7
2007	8.7	5.3	8.4	21.4	6.1	19.3
2008	8.0	4.8	9.9	18.3	4.4	14.6

Table 2—Continued

Status Dropout Rates of 16- Through 24-Year-Olds, by Race/Ethnicity Selected Years, 1980-2009						
Year	Total ¹	Race/Ethnicity ²				
		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
2009	8.1	5.2	9.3	17.6	3.4	13.2

Note: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *The Condition of Education 2011* (NCES 2011-033), Table A-20-1.

— Not available.

! Interpret data with caution (estimates are unstable).

‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

¹ Total includes other race/ethnicity categories not separately shown

The status dropout rate is the percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in high school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a General Educational Development [GED] certificate). The status dropout rate includes all dropouts regardless of when they last attended school. Estimates from 1987 and onward reflect new editing procedures for cases with missing data on school enrollment items. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. One should use caution when making comparisons between data from 1995 and earlier and data from 1996 and later because of differing response options for race/ethnicity over time.

Aspinall (2002) observed that a broad range of “catch-all” terminology was often used to generally define subpopulations belonging to minority ethnic groups. He explained, “Given the widespread and often inconsistent use of this terminology in both text and tables, resulting in confusion or ambiguity about the populations being described, it is important that this issue is addressed” (p. 804). Temple and Chahal (2002) added that words to describe ethnicity such as *African-American* and *minority* were often interchangeably used in the same reports. Agemang, Bhopal, and Bruijnzeels (2005) insisted, “The terms and concepts of

ethnicity need to be explicitly defined to permit better understanding of research and to facilitate regional and international comparisons” (p. 1014).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that 72.4% of the U.S. population was Caucasian of Western European ancestry (p. 3); African-Americans represented 13% of the total population (p. 4). For the purpose of this research study, *minority* referred to individuals identified as “something other than non-Hispanic White” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, p.17) and *African-American* referred to U.S. citizens of African ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, p. 4). The terms *minority* and *African-American* were not used interchangeably in this study.

A growing body of research indicated that there was a direct relationship between African-American primary caregivers’ lack of trust in fair school policies and their lack of participation and involvement at their children’s schools (Bloom, 2003; Kupchik, 2009; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Ramirez, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992) explored similar issues in a survey of 15,000 Western and Midwestern high school students. Their analysis indicated an absence of peer support among African-American youngsters which undermined the positive influence of authoritative parenting. They concluded that, although a large number of African-American parents supported their children’s academic success, their children found it much more difficult to find acceptance in peer groups that encouraged the same scholastic ambitions. Steinberg et al. discovered in student interviews that many academically-successful African-American students avoided contact with children of the same race and affiliated primarily with students from other ethnic groups. As a result, the collective pressures of peer groups for African-American students relative to other ethnic groups led researchers to conclude that African-American students

pursuing academic excellence often faced isolation or separation from social networks among their peers of the same race (Ogbu, 2003; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997).

Kivel (1996) identified racial friction as a plague in American public schools. He believed conversations about racism among school community members often generated feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment and, unfortunately, denial of racial tensions in the classrooms. Baptiste, Boyer, Herra, and Murry (1999) agreed that, although dialogue among educators and families was commonly painful, discussions must be an important priority in educational communities because “racism’s manifestations are public and its reflections of power, prestige, and privilege are so visible” (p. 19).

Academic Achievement and Parental Involvement

Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) explained that the most important factors contributing to student achievement were consistent parental commitment and positive encouragement of their children’s educational formation. Studies throughout the last 40 years confirmed that student achievement was determined more by family support and participation at their children’s schools than race or socioeconomic status (Andre, Hawley, & Rockwell; 2010; Clay, 1993; Coleman, 1966; López, González, & Fierro as cited by Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Ogbu, 1988; Strayhorn, 2009; Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2010). Information from the Child Trends Databank (2003) showed that children whose primary caregivers were involved in their education experienced better test scores, increased long-term academic achievement, more positive attitudes and behaviors, and less participation in violence and drug abuse than students with less involved primary caregivers.

Requirements for parental involvement in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) focused attention on school reform. *NCLB: A Parents Guide* (2003) further explained

that every school receiving Title I funds must provide evidence of parent involvement; including written parent involvement policies, records of annual parent meetings, and school-parent compacts with detailed academic performance strategies (p.31). U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, in summarizing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009), insisted that schools must forge strong parent-school relationships in order to be successful. This incorporated long-standing evidence that parent involvement made a difference in school outcomes for children (Andre et al., 2010; Bell, Fields, Johnson, & Powell, 2007; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Davies, 2002; Sampson, 2004; Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005; Viadero, 2010; Vincent & Martin, 2002; Wraga, 2002). Duncan added, “The education reform movement is not a table where we all sit around and talk. It’s a train that is leaving the station, gaining speed, momentum and direction. It is time for everyone everywhere to get on board” (2009, p. 9).

Design of the Study

Survey data collected from 104 sixth grade African-American students attending five KCMSD elementary schools revealed relevant information about their perceptions of their primary caregivers’ attitudes towards education and student achievement. Students responded to 28 statements about their personal beliefs and attitudes as well as their perceptions of their parents’ and guardians’ attitudes towards learning and education. Data and results of this research were examined through a theoretical lens of social justice and issues through which “education systems perpetuate the inequalities that are present in society” (Choules, 2007, p. 160). Patton (2002) explained that the depth in which individuals’ experiences were described provided the foundation of “understanding the

phenomenon studied” which led to opportunities for us to “draw interpretations about meaning and significance” (p. 438).

The quantitative approach to this study was in part due to the researcher’s dual experiences as an instructional coach and teacher, particularly with middle school students, in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. Although students were often exposed to positive words about learning and the value of effort they must apply to their own educational experiences (such as completing homework, attending classes, etc.), there seemed to be a disconnect between messages urban children were exposed to and their scores on common and formal assessments. This study explored connections between students’ personal thoughts and feelings about learning and their perceptions of their primary caregivers’ attitudes towards education. Significant relationships were found between messages students *heard* and messages they believed were actually held by parents and guardians. Patterns about the convictions students believed were espoused by their primary caregivers emerged as they related to their own opinions about the value of education and, as a result, offered insights related to student performance on annual formal achievement tests such as the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this quantitative study:

1. How were student survey responses similar to their perceptions of parents’ and guardians’ attitudes towards learning and academic achievement?
2. How were student survey responses different from their perceptions of parents’ and guardians’ attitudes towards learning and academic achievement?

3. What did students identify as positive areas of support from parents and guardians in regard to academic achievement?
4. Were students who held more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement those who also perceived stronger support from parents and guardians?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the quantitative data analysis:

1. There will be significant relationships between personal attitudes towards school held by African-American lower socioeconomic sixth grade students and their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement.
2. Survey results will demonstrate that students who have more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement will also perceive stronger educational support from parents and guardians.

Data Collection

Two hundred twenty-eight sixth grade African-American students were invited to take part in the survey process. One hundred four students from five elementary schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District turned in student survey assent forms, parent survey consent forms, and completed surveys. All of the students involved in this study lived in Kansas City's urban core. The study examined African-American student perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes towards education and student achievement through use of a 28-question survey. The research questions guiding the study included comparisons which revealed similarities and differences between students' responses to their perceptions of

parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and academic achievement. Survey responses also revealed whether or not students believed they received positive support from parents and guardians in regard to scholastic achievement.

Data Analysis

Students' reactions and their perceptions of their parents' responses were aligned in table form. Table headings revealed themes through which data were categorized. Percentages and frequencies were used to summarize the quantitative data. The means and standard deviations were used to describe students' attitudes and perceptions. Pearson correlation analyses were used to measure the strength of the relationships between the students' attitudes and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and scholastic achievement. T-tests were used to compare the means of two groups on the values of the variables. Cross tabulations were used to indicate the relationships between each pair of categorical variables and to establish criterion validity. A Pearson coefficient was used to determine relationships between students' and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses.

Inferential statistics supplied means through which the researcher established conclusions and determined predictions based on information obtained from the sample. Interrelationships among variables were established through the use of correlational data. Paired-sample t-tests were used to compare students' survey responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reflections about similar statements. Survey response alignment reflected similarities and differences between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes towards learning and scholastic achievement.

Limitations of the Study

Individuals who participated in this study were limited to the student populations at five schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. Participating individuals were African-American sixth grade students who took part in free and reduced lunch programs at their schools. There was a risk that some students would express views that were consistent with social standards and try not to present themselves or their families with perceived negative attitudes towards learning or education. This social desirability bias may have led respondents to self-censor their actual views, especially when responding to survey statements in a group setting.

The skills of the researcher who explained survey instructions to students at the five selected schools may have impacted the quality of the data collection. The students' teachers were invited to participate in the survey distribution and collection processes to lessen any personal bias students had towards the researcher of this study. Because distribution, monitoring of the survey processes, and collection of surveys also included interpersonal exchanges with respondents, any number of variables, including dress, demeanor, and language used by the researcher and teachers during the data collection process may have influenced the quantity and quality of information given by respondents.

Although I was employed as an instructional coach at one of the participating schools, I had no connections with students or their primary caregivers at four of the five schools invited to take part in the survey process. Patton (2002) explained, "Closeness does not make bias and loss of perspective inevitable; distance is no guarantee of objectivity" (p. 49).

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine African-American student perceptions of their own and their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement at five KCMSD schools in Kansas City's urban core. Sixth grade African-American students were invited to respond to 28 statements about their personal beliefs and attitudes as well as their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and education. Information from this study revealed common factors among students and their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes regarding academic achievement.

Sampson (2004) maintained that parental behavior was a crucial link to students' academic performance in schools across all socioeconomic levels (p. 136). Many studies revealed that low-income families seemed less willing to encourage their children to strive for academic excellence than middle class families (Andre et al., 2010; Bloom, 2003; *Civil Rights Project*, 2000; Coleman et al., 1966; Moles, 1993; Nieto, 1992; Payne, 2005) and less positive in their support of teachers than Caucasian parents. Numerous studies also showed that minority caregivers were often less equipped to provide their children with the educational supports needed to experience academic success (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Davis, 2006; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Vincent & Martin, 2002).

However, Hilliard (1998) criticized educational research which focused on disadvantaged children, excluded information about systems that served them, and obvious inequities within those systems. Bempechat and Ginsberg (1989) argued:

There is a great deal of literature on low-achieving poor and minority students, but relatively little on high-achieving at-risk students. Researchers might do

well to extract some principles from these children's experiences and apply them toward helping other at-risk children reach academic potential. (p. 38)

Results from this study may promote greater communication among stakeholders and support successful means through which all children could experience academic achievement.

A review of the conceptual framework that undergirded this research study and a methodological overview of this quantitative investigation were provided in Chapter One. A review of the historical and sociological literature as it connected to African-Americans' experiences in schools as well as challenges and opportunities instructional leaders faced in establishing working relationships with lower socioeconomic African-American families will be discussed in Chapter Two. The design used in this study to explore the research questions and hypotheses regarding African-American students' perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes towards academic achievement will be found in Chapter Three. Findings from this study will be provided in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will contain a discussion of conclusions and recommendations as well as implications and recommendations for future research based upon this study. Appendices include the UMKC SSIRB approval letter, a letter of consent from the Kansas City, Missouri School District's superintendent's office, student survey assent form, parent/guardian consent form, survey statements used on the survey, student perception survey, and a list of definition of terms used in this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Background

Hill and Celio (1998) insisted that urban schools must promote high standards by demanding high performance from students and teachers, exploring better teaching methods, uniting the efforts of all adults, gaining parents' confidence, and using parental support to motivate student work (p. 24). Many schools in large urban areas failed to experience positive communication between rising numbers of middle class Caucasian teachers and the increasing numbers of disadvantaged minority parents (Bloom, 2003; Strayhorn, 2009). Although instructional leaders acknowledged that student achievement was largely dependent upon the construction of stronger ties within the community, urban school staffs and parents were often frustrated by their inability to facilitate dialogue across cultural lines, socioeconomic levels, and language barriers (Andre et al., 2010; Fields-Smith, 2009; López & Parker, 2003; Miretzky, 2004; Ogbu, 2003).

Interactions between primary caregivers and schools were often hindered by widespread assumptions among teachers that disadvantaged minority parents did not want to be involved in their children's education (Andre et al., 2010; Brown & Beckett, 2007; Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Communication issues were further complicated by the fact that many low-income African-American parents and guardians believed that educators did not want them involved in their children's instruction (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Although most teachers stated that parents should play an active role in their children's learning (Cooper & Jordan, 2003), many low-income parents felt that education was a responsibility that belonged to their children's teachers (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

Furthermore, minority parents were often critical of school policies they believed prevented their children from receiving a quality education (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; López & Parker, 2003; Ramirez, 2003, Roper, 2008). Minority parents were also found to be less trusting and more critical of teachers than Caucasian parents (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Davis, 2006; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lightfoot, 2004).

Many factors contributed to minority primary caregivers' attitudes towards education and academic achievement in the United States. Dewey (1938) contended, "Failure to examine the conceptual structures and frames of reference which are unconsciously implicated in even the seemingly most innocent factual inquiries is the single greatest defect that can be found in any field of inquiry" (p. 505). The literature review included a synopsis of the history of educational opportunities for African-American students, racial tensions between school staffs and minority families, cultural differences in childrearing practices, the significance of socioeconomic status and expectations on academic achievement, and positive working relationships between families and school communities.

Historical Context of Educational Opportunities for Minority Students in America

Madaus, Airasian, and Kellaghan (1980) stated there was a period of national struggle against unequal educational opportunities, discrimination, and poverty following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Efforts to calm domestic issues dominated legislative actions. They explained, "Attempts to document and remedy the problems of unequal educational opportunity, particularly as they related to minority-group children, provided the major impetus for school effectiveness studies" (p. 11).

A cornerstone of President Johnson's administration was the Civil Rights Act (1964). It demanded a nationwide survey by the Commissioner of Education about the lack of

educational opportunities available to students, especially disadvantaged and minority youth, in America. Sociological theorist James Coleman led a team of researchers to conduct the survey and report conclusions about the state of U.S. public school education. Mosteller and Moynihan (1972) agreed that results in *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966), or the *Coleman Report* as it was popularly known, had a dramatic impact upon public school education in America.

As part of the study, more than 640,000 students in grades one through twelve took part in a series of achievement and aptitude tests. Roughly 60,000 teachers completed questionnaires about their personal histories and educational training. Madaus et al. (1980) explained the report had two striking effects on perceptions about public school education in America. The *Coleman Report (1966)* bashed the notion that schools could be a positive force in leveling the disparity in student achievement due to environmental factors. One of the most well-known findings was that schools accounted for approximately 10% of the variances in student achievement. The remaining 90% was accounted for by students' backgrounds and environmental factors.

Jencks et al. (1972) and Coleman, Kelly, and Moore (1975) suggested that socially disadvantaged African-American students benefited from academic opportunities in racially-mixed classrooms. Their findings were a catalyst for the implementation of the desegregation busing system in the United States. Coleman et al. (1975) published *Trends in School Segregation, 1968-1973*, to expose the effects of school busing systems which intended to bring lower-class African-American students into racially-mixed middle class schools.

Coleman coined the term "White flight" to define the rapid traffic of Caucasian parents who transferred their children out of desegregated schools. In 1966, he reported

African-American students would only benefit from integrated education if there was a majority of Caucasian students in the classrooms. Coleman (1975) claimed that African-American students experienced increased academic success and more opportunities to take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities in integrated schools. Unfortunately, involvement and support from students' families failed to rise because parents and guardians were unwilling to cross racially-drawn boundaries in their communities or unable to find adequate transportation to their children's school events.

Moles (1993) assessed large-scale surveys of parent involvement conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. He found that low-income parents were three times more likely to report poor relationships with schools when compared to high-income parents. He concluded that many minority parents remained uninvolved at their children's schools because they believed school leaders demonstrated negative racial bias and had lower expectations for their children.

The federal government adopted numerous policies to encourage parental involvement in schools. *Goals 2000: Education America* (1986) reflected efforts during the Reagan administration to involve parents in the decision-making processes within schools. Congress added a parent involvement objective to the *National Education Goals* (1986) which encouraged schools to promote partnerships that would increase parent participation and support students' social, emotional, and academic growth.

Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) demanded parental and guardian involvement in the assessment and program planning processes for students with special needs in schools. Reauthorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1999) by the Clinton administration added a provision which

required schools to spend at least one percent of their Title I funds on developing educational compacts between schools and their students' families. The Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) required schools to organize programs that would advocate parent involvement. NCLB also established important scholastic benchmarks for annual achievement tests and maintained schools must effectively communicate student achievement to parents and guardians.

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, 2009) which was designed to sustain creation of jobs, stimulate the economy, and support school reforms. He introduced *Race to the Top* (2009), an ambitious \$4.35 billion program created by the U.S. Department of Education and funded by ARRA, to stimulate state and local education reform and to stabilize declining state and local school budgets, slow down the negative effects of the economic downturn for schools, and increase slumping student achievement test scores. In order to be eligible for funds, states were required to submit detailed plans which featured implementation of rigorous standards and quality assessments, hiring and retention of highly-qualified teachers and school administrators, support data systems which drive and improve instruction, employ innovative strategies to support struggling schools, and sustain education reforms (*Race to the Top Program Executive Summary*, 2009, p. 2). According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, districts received approximately \$80 billion from ARRA in 2009 and 2010 (Kober & Rentner, 2011, p. 4). Unfortunately, none of the *Race to the Top* reforms called for increased parent involvement in schools or advocated for stronger parent-school relationships.

Doyle (2003) believed schools had a responsibility to be advocates of social justice by challenging all stakeholders in the educational community to question their own habits of

exclusion demonstrated through tracking and alienating practices that assumed a normalization process for certain racial or socioeconomic groups. He insisted that schools must serve as models of democracy by “challenging the appropriateness of separateness” (p. 77). Doyle explained that school reform and “reculturing” must include collaboration and cooperation among primary caregivers, school leaders, and community stakeholders in the decision-making processes (p. 79).

Minority Families and School Staff Racial Tensions

Over the past 50 years, African-American primary caregivers and community members achieved relatively high levels of involvement within schools at local and district levels (Andre et al., 2010; Hess & Leal, 2001). In some urban districts, primary caregivers and community stakeholders used that access to lobby school boards for control of schools in largely African-American neighborhoods (Byndloss, 2001) and for African-centered magnet schools to serve families throughout urban districts (Murrell, 2002; Pollard & Ajirotutu, 2000; Roper, 2008). Many of those schools had predominantly African-American teaching staffs. As a result, African-American parents were involved at multiple levels and in positive ways within the schools (Byndloss, 2001; Murrell, 2002). For the majority of African-American parents, however, decades of activism produced little change and the only opportunities they had for involvement were in nominally desegregated schools with predominantly Caucasian teaching staffs (Heilman, 2003; Kozol, 2005; López & Parker, 2003; Losen & Skiba, 2010).

Numerous studies have shown that many African-American parents found it difficult to give teachers the support that was expected of them (Cook & Fine, 1995; Diamond &

Gomez, 2004; Fields-Smith, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999, Roper, 2008). López and Parker (2003) explained,

This problem of noninvolvement has troubled educators and policy makers in the field who recognize the demographic shift of an increasing ethnic and linguistically diverse student population. They argue if we are to address the problem of minority student failure effectively, it is imperative that we begin to search for ways to get marginalized parents involved in greater numbers. (p. 73)

Lightfoot (2004) described the “adversarial relationships” within which families and schools repeatedly found themselves in continuous conflict with one another. “One would expect that parents and teachers would be natural allies,” she added, “but social science and our experience recognize their adversarial relationship – one that emerges out of their roles as they are defined by the social structure of society” (p. 20).

Comer and Haynes (1991) believed that lack of participation by minority parents in traditional school events should not be interpreted as a lack of interest in their children’s education. Roper (2008) maintained that African-American parents often “see the world as it relates to school participation through what they experienced as children. Their understandings influence their behavior” (p. 134). Ogbu and Simons (1998) explained that minority parents’ actual experiences with educators and school personnel influenced their behavior more than abstract beliefs about the importance of an education. They encouraged educators and parents to work together to develop tools which would allow them to cross cultural barriers, appreciate one another’s cultural backgrounds, and collaboratively identify means through which they can positively shape their children’s school experiences (p. 185).

Heilman (2003) contended it was important for educators to consider how class and race intersect to shaped social relations between African-American parents of low-income status and children's teachers. She explained that critical theorists in education were "united by their concerns about how society and institutions fail and oppress children and by their dedication and development of both individuals and society through commitment to democracy, diversity, and social justice" (p. 248). Roper (2008) agreed that if educators sought to promote means through which they could nurture relationships between primary caregivers and minority low-income parents and guardians, "it is important to understand the concept of hegemony as it relates to culture and schools" (p. 59).

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argued that many African-Americans doubted their own intellectual ability and defined academic success as "White people's prerogative" (p. 204). They believed the intergenerational legacy of slavery and discrimination may have forced many African-Americans to develop an oppositional identity which caused them to reject the values of middle class culture. Steinberg et al. (1992) agreed many African-Americans discouraged their peers from academic achievement because of the history of racial discrimination in the United States. Ogbu (1988, 2003) acknowledged that when African-American students rejected the pursuit of academic excellence by "acting White," the results led to failure and estrangement from success.

Caruthers (2005) maintained that many students in urban districts failed to experience academic success because educators refused to examine their own beliefs and assumptions about cultural differences. Nieto (1992) indicated that teachers' lack of understanding regarding students' ethnic uniqueness, personal attitudes, and differential behaviors towards African-Americans contributed to the academic decline among students. This was connected

to her conviction that learning difficulties experienced by African-American students should be viewed by educators as a result of cultural differences rather than indices of deficient intellectual abilities. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978) added, “Creative conflict can only exist where there is a balance of power and responsibility between family and school, not when the family’s role is negated or diminished” (p. 41).

Childrearing Practices and Cultural Differences

Dauber and Epstein (1993) and Graham (1994) connected poor test scores and academic underachievement among African-American students from low-income families to lack of parental encouragement, direction, and involvement. Cooper and Christie (2005) believed minority primary caregivers were often intimidated and refused to confront bureaucratic and habitually nonresponsive school systems. They explained that parents and guardians who advocated for their children faced “the challenge of seeking the knowledge and power to do so in a system that is inclined to resist their efforts” (p. 2249). Harry, Klinger, and Hart (2005) maintained, “Public constructions of African-American family structures and practices have been colored historically by an overwhelming assumption of deficit, making it difficult to disentangle the real effects of poverty and historical discrimination from the continuation of negative stereotypes” (p. 102).

Parental perceptions of unfairness and racial discrimination in schools were often connected to diverse standards of childrearing within different class and ethnic cultures (Harris, 2007; Strayhorn, 2009). Lareau (1996) compared and contrasted middle class Caucasian parents from a suburban community with working class minority parents in a large urban city. Suburban parents generally did not practice corporal punishment at home and supported teachers when they refused to allow students to strike one another at school.

Conversely, working-class minority parents from an urban setting agreed corporal punishment was a standard disciplinary norm in their homes. They encouraged their children to physically and verbally defend themselves at school.

Cook and Fine (1995) similarly compared middle class parents from relatively violent-free areas who allowed their children more personal freedom with low-income African-American parents from areas where crime was prevalent. African-American parents were often more protective and controlling of their children because they knew they would not always be available to protect them. Cook and Fine believed many low-income African-American primary caregivers did not model strategies which lacked physical or abusive behaviors because those skills were not familiar nor were they considered appropriate responses in their experiences.

Given the different standards of childrearing, working class parents often believed that school disciplinary policies which dictated zero tolerance for fighting were unfair because they punished their children for standing up for themselves (Kupchik, 2009). Losen and Skiba (2010), Brown and Beckett (2007), and Lareau (1996, 2006) agreed many low-income African-American parents were convinced that school disciplinary policies often prohibited their children from opportunities to learn how to defend themselves. As a result, they believed their children had a far greater risk of facing punitive consequences which included suspension, expulsion and, ultimately, explained why so many of their children dropped out of schools.

Unfair Disciplinary Practices in Schools

Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) insisted, “A critical perspective on race and education highlights that – whatever the rhetoric – race inequity has been a constant and a

central feature of the educational system” (p. 190). Information from the Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships (2008) showed 2.6 African-American students were suspended for every Caucasian student enrolled in U.S. public schools. They maintained that school suspensions were often the “starting point of contact with the juvenile justice system” or “the school-to-prison pipeline” (p. 1). The organization appealed to school districts to examine their disciplinary policies, especially long and short term suspension procedures, and to pursue means that led to the reduction of disproportionate numbers of minority students within the juvenile justice system.

A study conducted by the Advancement Project and The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (2000) showed that students of color were suspended and expelled at far higher rates than their Caucasian peers. Low-income minority students were also punished more often and more severely by teachers and administrators than students from other ethnic groups (Bloom, 2003; Calabrese, 1990; Fisher, 2007; Kupchik, 2009; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Ramirez, 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

Although the violence triggering zero tolerance policies in schools primarily involved Caucasian students in predominantly minority-free institutions (Furlong & Morrison, 2000), the number of suspensions and expulsions among African-American students escalated at a much faster rate within the last decade than other racial groups (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Kupchik, 2009; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Reyes, 2006). Blackorby and Cameto (2004) reported that 40% more African-American students were suspended or expelled than their Caucasian peers and 20% more likely to be repeat offenders. Table 3 and Table 4 contain Raush and Skiba’s (2004) data regarding suspension and expulsion rates by discipline category and race.

Table 3

Out of School Suspension Incident Rate by Disciplinary Category and Race

Disciplinary Category	Racial Classification		
	White	African-American	Hispanic
Alcohol	0.07	0.05	0.05
Drugs	0.26	0.25	0.22
Weapons	0.10	0.22	0.15
Tobacco	0.32	0.18	0.12
Disruptive Behavior	5.22	19.97	9.39
Other	4.14	19.81	8.83

Note: Adapted from Rausch, M., & Skiba, R. (2004, July 18). Disproportionality in school discipline among minority students in Indiana: Description and analysis. *Children left behind policy briefs: Supplementary Analysis 2-A*. Bloomington, ID: Center for Evaluation and Education Policy.

Table 4

Expulsion Incident Rate by Disciplinary Category and Race

Disciplinary Category	Racial Classification		
	White	African-American	Hispanic
Alcohol	0.02	0.01	0.02
Drugs	0.12	0.17	0.11
Weapons	0.02	0.05	0.04
Tobacco	0.01	0.00	0.00
Disruptive Behavior	0.16	0.53	0.28
Other	0.18	0.40	0.28

Note: Adapted from Rausch, M., & Skiba, R. (2004, July 18). Disproportionality in school discipline among minority students in Indiana: Description and analysis. *Children left behind policy briefs: Supplementary Analysis 2-A*. Bloomington, ID: Center for Evaluation and Education Policy.

Exclusionary school discipline policies were intended to ensure productive and safe learning environments. However, students demonstrating disruptive behaviors in classrooms had fewer opportunities to experience academic success if they continued to be separated from their peers without alternative interventions (Kupchik, 2009; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Payne, 2005; Shepherd, 2007). Learning difficulties such as poor reading skills dramatically contributed to students' displays of increasingly rebellious behaviors (Brown, 2004; Cooper & Fine, 2003). Moreover, little scientific evidence indicated that suspension and expulsion policies were effective in reducing school violence or increasing school safety (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Gottfredson, 1997; Kupchick, 2009).

As a result of the landmark case between *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the U.S. Supreme Court declared that reassignment of students of color to separate educational facilities violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. A statement from the U.S. Supreme Court declared, "Education is ... a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him adjust normally to his environment" (pp. 489, 493). Nevertheless, a large number of African-American youth continued to be segregated from valuable learning opportunities because they were perpetually thrust into in-school suspension programs and isolation rooms where they had very few opportunities to become academically successful (Payne, 2005; Kupchik, 2009; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Shepherd, 2007).

Many minority parents charged that schools had a responsibility to remove students with difficult behavior issues from the classroom because discipline problems interrupted teaching and learning (Brown & Beckett, 2007; *Teaching Interrupted*, 2004). On the other hand, Skiba et al. (2002) discovered that a large number of minority parents from low

socioeconomic households did not believe schools had nondiscriminatory and just student discipline policies. Levels of disruptive behavior were higher in schools where students believed disciplinary policies were unfair (Blount, 2008; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2001; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). More importantly, a growing body of research indicated that there was a direct relationship between minority primary caregivers' lack of trust in fair school disciplinary policies and their lack of participation and involvement at their children's schools (Bloom, 2003; Fields-Smith, 2009; Ramirez, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

Socioeconomic Status and Parent/Guardian Expectations on Academic Achievement

Shepard (2007) and Strayhorn (2009) found a negative correlation between academic performance and the size of a school's low-income student population. Shepard predicted that the challenge to encourage and support students from low-income families would continue to rise because many of those students needed additional services many schools could no longer afford. However, many low-income parents were successful in translating their high academic aspirations for their children into reality (Andre et al., 2010; Fields-Smith, 2009; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). Although financial hardship and social discrimination proved to be challenging hurdles, parents' and guardians' behaviors, attitudes, and goals relating to education and academic achievement played important roles in circumventing the detrimental effects of poverty. Consequently, many youth from disadvantaged families who were encouraged by parents and guardians to develop good study habits often experienced scholastic success (Capper, Rodríguez, & McKinney, 2010; Domina, 2005; Pena, 2001; Tableman, 2004; Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005).

A large body of research (Andre et al., 2010; Brain & Reid, 2003; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2001; Domina, 2005; Pena, 200; Rhodes, 2011; Wanat, 2010) provided evidence

which connected scholastic success to parental behaviors that supported learning and valued education. Bemechat (1992) explained, “Parental teaching is embedded in daily life and occurs in many subtle and indirect ways” (p. 32). Roper (2008) maintained, “These parents teach and demonstrate the importance of education which provides their children with the cultural and social capital needed to have good experiences at school” (p. 168).

Although several studies offered explanations regarding low academic achievement among African-American students (Brown, 2004; Fields-Smith, 2005; Ogbu, 2003), research related to academic *resiliency* of many youth struggling in the midst of enormous financial hardship remained relatively small (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). Halle, Kurtz-Costes, and Mahoney (1997) examined parents’ school-related beliefs and behaviors as well as students’ views of their own academic competencies. They believed the key to resiliency among lower socioeconomic African-American youth was rooted in the ability of parents and guardians who combined high expectations for their children’s academic success with actions that promoted success. Bearing the aid of resources outside the family system, the preservation of positive attitudes by primary caregivers supporting academic excellence was one of the most important factors associated with their children’s future achievement.

Establishing Working Relationships Between Families and Schools

The communication challenges faced by many urban school staffs and parents so problematic and with such long-standing histories that stakeholders demanded changes in parent-teacher relationships (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) argued that the roles of parents as “supporters, helpers, and fund raisers” were no longer plausible and must be replaced by roles where they were “decision makers, partners, and collaborators” (p. 87). Brown and Beckett (2007) encouraged teachers

and primary caregivers to work together to build more family-like environments in schools, more school-like environments in students' homes, and stronger home-school learning communities which focused on the needs of at-risk children. To accomplish that task, they recognized that educators and primary caregivers had to overcome communication barriers associated with differences in socioeconomic class and ethnic status. Brown and Beckett agreed educators and the students' parents and guardians had a responsibility to come to consensus on a range of disciplinary policies and educational programs.

Because disproportionately large numbers of minority and disadvantaged students were raised in homes with widely divergent standards of discipline, many urban school staffs were required to develop new disciplinary policies for students whose disruptive behaviors and poor academic performances in schools came from home environments that suffered from the challenges associated with poverty and discrimination (Payne, 2005). Therefore, school districts had a responsibility to increase efforts to involve school staffs in their students' lives at home and to engage their parents and guardians in the schools (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Ubben et al., 2010; Viadero, 2010).

Andre et al. (2010), Byndloss (2001), and Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby (2001) concurred there were many benefits to shared projects developed through collaborative efforts among educators and primary caregivers. They encouraged schools to host events where primary caregivers could learn how to extend the work of the school into the home. They beseeched parents and guardians to volunteer at their schools to create more family-like atmospheres in their children's learning environments. Byndloss, Carpenter-Aeby, and Aeby contended that joint participation among educators and primary caregivers in a larger home-

school learning community would have a more profound and lasting impact on children than any one of them would achieve on their own.

Summary

Byndloss (2001) claimed that implementation of strategies to build stronger ties between schools and students' families were not insurmountable aspirations. Urban school districts established the attention of federal courts, city governments, and business communities which guaranteed funds for special remedial programs to assist disadvantaged students (Lehr & Lange, 2003). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) encouraged school districts to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their Caucasian middle class peers. *No Child Left Behind: A Parents Guide* (2003) stated that urban schools must be dedicated to the preparation of students for 100% proficiency in achievement test scores by 2014 according to the NCLB directives by building curriculum programs based on stronger accountability for results, proven educational methods, and more choices for parents (p. 3). In order to meet President Obama's goal of reestablishing the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan (2009) encouraged parent-teacher associations to "be leaders in pressing for higher standards, better assessments, for a richer vision of parental involvement, and for a well-rounded curriculum" (p. 3).

Ogbu insisted that race and culture continued to impact parent-teacher relationships and, consequently, students' experiences in U.S. public schools (1988, 2003). As a result of their own lived experiences of discrimination, Roper (2008) contended that many minority primary caregivers approached schools with feelings of distrust in systems where they believed high expectations were not held for their children and feared that their own children

might experience discrimination because of their low socioeconomic status or skin color (p. 174). She encouraged teachers and school administrators to consider how class and race intersected and shaped social relations between African-American parents of low-income status and children's teachers. Bempechat (1992) added that many low-income parents wanted to support their children's academic experiences, but they lacked the skills necessary to guide and assist their children. She explained that their anger focused at their children's teachers often masked their own embarrassment and frustration. She insisted, "Parents who do not have these skills can readily acquire them" (p. 38). Mapp (2007) contented:

Successful engagement initiatives focused on improving student learning and developing meaningful relationships with family and community partners can achieve great results. Developing a school system and culture that expects, supports and sustains family and community connections to improve student achievement takes time but is well-worth the investment. (p. 6)

Raywid (1995) believed there was no instant solution that could be expected to affect permanent changes required for many at-risk minority students to experience scholastic success. She maintained, however, that recruiting highly-qualified instructors who proved themselves successful in teaching at-risk elementary and middle school students was not a hopeless endeavor. Most urban teachers were deeply committed to inner-city youth and dedicated their professional lives to what they believed were noble vocations (Beaty-O'Ferrall, Ingram, & Stotko, 2007; Bell et al., 2007; Fields-Smith, 2009). Involving parents and guardians who might initially be hostile to new ideas (Bloom, 2003; Dunbar, 1999), to the school districts (Byndloss, 2001), or to those who preferred to keep their distance from

their children's schools (Andre et al., 2010; Crozier, 1999; Lareau, 1996, 2000; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Viadero, 2010) was feasible if all stakeholders respected the strengths of one another's differences and expressed a willingness to collaboratively work together towards common goals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

A review of literature suggested that although there were many theories regarding poor achievement among African-American students from low socioeconomic families, particularly youth from poor urban schools (Corallo & McDonald, 2002; Fields-Smith, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Payne, 2005), there was little research which explored student perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic success (Nelson, 2007; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Wanat, 2010). The lack of information from studies which examined parallels between African-American middle school students' beliefs and attitudes with respect to their perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes towards learning and education led to the development of this quantitative research analysis. In order to understand parental perceptions towards academic achievement among African-American students, it was necessary to gain understanding of the meaning individuals attached to achievement-oriented behaviors and the factors which contributed to such behaviors.

Selection of Research Sites and Participants

The five urban elementary schools selected for this study shared specific criterion. All of the schools were in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. The building principals enthusiastically supported the research and were eager to learn the results of the study as it pertained to their particular student populations. The schools also had large populations of African-American students who were eligible for free or reduced lunches.

Information provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, 2011c) revealed that students from the five participating schools selected

for this study belonged to an urban district which educated 15,826 children and employed more than 2,300 teachers and administrators. Demographic data of the Kansas City, Missouri School District showed that the student population was 62.6% African-American, 25.3% Hispanic, 8.9% Caucasian, 3.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native. Four out of every five students (84.2%) were eligible for participation in the free and reduced lunch program.

The African-American student populations ranged from 35.1% to 96.0% at the five selected elementary schools. Approximately 71% of the total number of children from the selected schools was composed of African-American students. Ninety-four percent of the students at the five schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches (DESE, 2011b). Table 5 reflected 2010-2011 enrollment data for each of the five KCMSD schools from which sixth grade students (11 – 14 years of age) were invited to take part in the survey process.

Table 5

KCMSD Participating Schools' Pre-K – Gr. 6 2010-2011 Enrollment Data

Schools	Total Number of Students	Number of Eligible 6 th Graders*	Number of Participating 6 th Graders	African-American Population (%)	Free/Reduced Lunch Participants (%)
School A	218	41	10	74.3	94.5
School B	187	39	21	55.6	92.2
School C	446	58	35	96.0	92.3
School D	293	40	18	95.6	93.1
School E	456	50	20	35.1	97.6

Note: Sixth grade African-American children who participated in the free and reduced lunch programs at the five selected schools were eligible to take part in the survey process.

Performance standards for Missouri K-12 school districts measured general academic achievement on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test. Disaggregated data for selected schools were used to show students' comprehension of basic skills in mathematics and communication arts on the 2011 MAP test. African-American students participating in the free and reduced lunch program at the selected schools were invited to take part in the survey process.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reported that 23.6% of sixth grade students in the Kansas City, Missouri School District earned proficient scores on the communication arts portion of the 2011 MAP test; 7.6% of the district's sixth grade students received advanced scores in communication arts (2011d). One-fourth of the sixth grade students (25.5%) demonstrated proficiency on the mathematics portion of the 2011 MAP test; 5.5% of the sixth grade students earned advanced scores in mathematics. Information in Table 6 showed percentages of (a) the total number of students who received proficient and advanced scores and (b) African-American students who received proficient and advanced scores in communication arts and mathematics on the 2011 MAP tests at each participating school (DESE, 2011d).

Research Procedures

Data for this quantitative study were collected through a survey designed to gather responses related to African-American student perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement at five schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. The non-experimental approach of this study allowed for relationships to be drawn between students' attitudes and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes with a research sample drawn from a particular group of urban students.

Non-experimental research lacked manipulation of independent variables and lent itself only to interpretations about the degree to which certain things may occur or were related to each other (Price, 2000).

Table 6

KCMSD Participating Schools' Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) 2011 Data

Schools	Total Number of Students Proficient in Comm. Arts (%)	African-American 6 th Graders Proficient in Comm. Arts (%)	Total Number of Students Proficient in Mathematics (%)	African-American 6 th Graders Proficient in Mathematics (%)
School A	10.7	14.3	7.2	9.6
School B	10.3	13.4	33.4	40.0
School C	18.9	17.6	17.2	15.8
School D	13.5	13.9	5.4	5.6
School E	4.9	0.0	24.4	10.0

Note: The term “proficient” on this table included proficient and advanced score percentages obtained by students on the 2011 MAP tests.

Federal regulations mandated that institutional review boards (IRBs) provide special consideration to protecting the welfare of particularly vulnerable subjects such as children. As a result, approval from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Social Sciences Institutional Review Board was granted in writing prior to any survey activities (see Appendix A). Students were required to provide their written assent (see Appendix C) to partake in the survey process. Their primary caregivers also completed the *Parent/Guardian Survey Consent Form* (see Appendix D). Students who did not turn in signed copies of the *Student Survey Assent Form* and the *Parent/Guardian Survey Consent Form* took part in

another activity unrelated to the study outside of the classroom while participating students completed the surveys.

Student Survey

Before principals were contacted at five of the KCMSD elementary schools about the survey process, consent was sought and granted by the KCMSD superintendent's office. The superintendent appointed the assistant superintendent for professional development, assessment, and accountability to assess and approve the survey process (see Appendix B). Consent for student participation in the survey process was granted by principals from each of the five schools.

Sixth grade teachers at the selected schools informed eligible African-American students that they were invited to take part in a survey. Core data from the KCMSD assessment office provided all teachers with disaggregated information regarding students' race as well as free and reduced lunch status. In accordance with the Family and Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1974), federal law guarded the confidentiality rights of all students and educational records. As a result, all information regarding students was protected according to FERPA's strict guidelines and protected from unauthorized use. Eligible sixth graders were directed to classrooms at the selected schools to hear an introduction about the survey process.

The researcher explained the survey process to eligible sixth grade students and addressed their questions and concerns. Parental consent and student assent forms were distributed to all students who wanted to take part in the survey process. Participating students at the five selected schools turned in signed copies of their parents' and guardians' consent as well as signed copies of their assent before they were permitted to complete

surveys. The students' sixth grade teachers collected the signed consent and assent forms. Anonymity of students and primary caregivers was protected because consent and assent information was not tagged or included on any of the survey instruments.

The researcher contacted the principals and sixth grade teachers at the five selected schools and arranged specific dates and places for survey distribution and collection. The schools' sixth grade teachers were included in the survey processes to lessen any personal bias students had towards the researcher. Eligible students who turned in signed assent and consent forms were invited to go to designated areas at the selected schools to take part in the survey processes. Sixth grade teachers at each school acted as survey moderators. Moderators distributed and collected the surveys, reiterated the purpose of the survey, and distributed pencils and erasers provided by the researcher to students. Students were allowed to ask moderators about the pronunciation of difficult words, but they were required to interpret the meaning of survey questions for themselves. The researcher was available in the hall at each of the five selected schools to address students' questions throughout the survey process.

In the first portion of the survey, students provided information regarding their gender and number of children and adults living in their homes. They also indicated if they lived with their parents or guardians. Students identified the level of education completed by parents, guardians, and significant adults in their households who were responsible for their care. Anonymity was protected because students were not required to reveal specific personal information about themselves such as their names, ages, and addresses; nor were they obligated to provide names, ages, and addresses of parents, guardians, and other members

living in or outside their households. Students were encouraged to print in block capital letters where applicable on the surveys to avoid identification of personal handwriting styles.

Students reacted to 28 statements about their (a) personal beliefs and attitudes and (b) perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and education in the second section of the survey (see Appendix F). Fourteen statements invited students to consider their personal thoughts and opinions about education; 14 statements also required students to predict their parents' and guardians attitudes and feelings about academic achievement. The Likert scale was used as a measurement method for assessing student responses in the second part of the survey. Students who took part in the survey process were rewarded with a healthy snack. Students selected any three of the following as part of their healthy snack choices: strawberry yogurt, blueberry yogurt, grapes, bananas, or granola fruit bars. Student participants were also provided with fruit juice or water.

Upon completion of each survey, students sealed their results in envelopes and placed their results in a survey box. The survey box was a locked metal container with a slot for survey collection at the five selected schools. Consequently, student participants were not at risk of personal exposure because their names were not identified on the surveys or envelopes. It was virtually impossible to distinguish between individual surveys because students were not required to respond to any of the questions that required disclosures of individuals' names or personalized handwriting samples. All materials associated with this study were stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home office.

Measures

The Likert scale (1932) was used as a measurement method for surveying student perceptions in the second section of the survey. This type of response scale was used for this

study because of its wide recognition value in survey research (Trochim, 2005). When responding to each Likert item, respondents identified their level of agreement or disagreement to each statement. The survey for this study utilized a four-point scale for measuring either positive or negative responses to each statement. Responses to the survey included the following: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Disagree, and (4) Strongly Disagree. The categorical variables of this survey instrument included students' desire for a good education, attendance at school, positive comments about school, reading at home, completion of homework and homework assistance from primary caregivers, communication with teachers, pleasure with academic successes, students' desire to become more successful than primary caregivers, high school graduation, and post-graduation plans after high school.

The validity of the instrument was established by means of content and face validity. Brown (1983) defined content validity as the degree to which items on a test representatively sampled the underlying content domain. He recommended the use of advice from experts as one means of establishing content validity. A panel of university professors, each possessing more than 35 years of individual experience in education, school administration, and knowledge in research and development of survey tools, reviewed this instrument. Their comments and suggestions were used to modify the survey. Face validity was established during a pilot study of 381 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade participants from a KCMSD middle school. Pilot participants were selected because of similarities they shared with the sample schools and did not take part in this survey process. Written descriptions, tables, and graphs were utilized to present the data. Information gathered from the survey and the corresponding data were represented in tables and narrative form.

Data Analysis

Descriptive information was presented for numerical quantitative data analysis. Student reactions and corresponding predictions of their parents' responses were aligned in table form. Table headings revealed emerging themes through which data were categorized. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the quantitative data. All data were analyzed at the .05 Alpha level. The means and standard deviations were used to describe students' attitudes and perceptions. Pearson correlation analyses were used to measure the strength of the relationships between the students' attitudes and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and scholastic achievement.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics which were also used to summarize and establish relationships among variables. T-tests were used to compare the means of two groups on the values of the variables. Cross tabulations were used to indicate the relationships between each pair of categorical variables and establish criterion validity. A Pearson coefficient was used to establish the relationships among students' and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses.

Inferential statistics provided means through which the researcher developed conclusions and made predictions about a given population based on information obtained from a given sample. Correlational data provided means through which interrelationships among variables were established. Paired-sample t-tests were used to compare students' survey responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reflections about education and achievement. Cross tabulations and percentages were used to describe relationships between categorical variables. Alignment of survey responses reflected

similarities and differences between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and academic achievement.

Limitations of the Study

Survey participants were not randomly selected for this study. Individuals were limited to willing participants drawn from the sixth grade student population at five selected schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. Students invited to take part in the survey process were African-American children who received free and reduced lunches at their schools. There were no foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subjects because of measures employed to protect students' anonymity and confidentiality. There was a risk that some student participants might express views that were consistent with social standards and might try not to present themselves or their families with perceived negative attitudes towards education or student achievement. This social desirability bias may have led respondents to self-censor their actual views, especially when taking part in the survey in a group setting.

Finally, the quality of the data collection was highly dependent on the skills of the researcher and survey moderators who distributed and collected the surveys from students. Because distribution, monitoring of survey processes, and collection of surveys also included interpersonal exchanges with respondents, any number of variables, including dress and language used by the researcher and moderators as well as input from other individuals (i.e.: staff assistants, teachers, building principals) may have influenced the quantity and quality of information given by respondents.

Ethical Considerations

The survey used in this study met the federal definition of research in that it was designed to contribute to our understanding of students. The student participants in this study were younger than 16 years of age. Therefore, written assent from the students as well as their primary caregivers' consent was required before children were allowed to take part in the survey process (see Appendices D and E). Parents and children were provided with verbal and written explanations of the survey, its intended purpose, and instructions for participation in the survey process. Student and familial anonymity was protected because personal information was not required on any part of the survey; confidentiality was protected because survey responses were sealed in envelopes and locked in secured areas. Only the researcher had access to students' written responses.

Students could choose to withdraw from the survey process at any time. If a student decided he or she no longer wished to complete a survey, the student could place the unfinished survey in an empty envelope and place it in the survey box. Information from incomplete surveys was not included in the final data analyses. All letters of consent and assent, surveys, the survey box, and all data connected with this survey were stored in a locked cabinet in the privacy of the researcher's home office. Children who completed the survey process were compensated with a healthy snack.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore similarities and differences between the personal beliefs and attitudes of sixth grade African-American students at five selected elementary schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District as well as their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement. Aimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) and Halle et al. (1997) maintained that primary caregivers' attitudes and behaviors related to education and scholastic achievement were important components of their children's academic development despite the grueling challenges of poverty. As a result, many youth from disadvantaged families who were encouraged by parents and guardians to develop good study habits experienced scholastic success. Their findings revealed that the key to academic achievement among low-income African-American youth was rooted in the abilities of primary caregivers to combine their high academic expectations with actions that promoted success.

Data from this particular quantitative study were analyzed to explore relationships between students' attitudes and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians attitudes towards learning and scholastic achievement. The following hypotheses which guided the quantitative data analysis included:

1. There will be significant relationships between personal attitudes towards school held by African-American lower socioeconomic sixth grade students and their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement.

2. Survey results will demonstrate that students who have more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement will also perceive stronger educational support from parents and guardians.

Information from this study established significant factors among African-American students at the selected schools and their interpretations of their primary caregivers' attitudes regarding scholastic excellence. Survey results showed that students who valued education and academic achievement also perceived greater educational support from their primary caregivers. Responses from students also showed that students with less positive beliefs about learning and education expressed a lack of support from their parents and guardians.

Student Survey Respondents

Results of the data analysis described in Chapter Three were based on survey responses of 104 sixth grade African-American students at five KCMSD elementary schools. All participants were eligible for free or reduced lunches at their schools. Students responded to 28 statements about their personal beliefs as well as perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement. Parents and guardians were required to provide written consent for their children to take part in the survey process. Students were required to give written assent before they were allowed to complete the surveys.

Two hundred twenty-eight sixth grade children were eligible to take part in the survey process at the time consent and assent forms were distributed among students at the five selected schools. Seventy-one percent of the total number of children from the selected schools was composed of African-American students. Ninety-four percent of the students at

the five schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches at the schools. Consent and assent forms were distributed to all eligible participants during the first week of June, 2011.

Of the 228 forms that were distributed to selected students, 104 students (46%) returned the obligatory consent and assent forms and participated in the survey process. The response rate was 25% ($n = 10$) among sixth grade students at School A, 54% ($n = 21$) among students at School B, 60% ($n = 35$) at School C, 45% ($n = 18$) at School D, and 40% ($n = 20$) among sixth grade students at School E. Figure 1 represented the total numbers of sixth grade students eligible to take participate in the survey process and the number of students who completed the surveys at the five selected schools.

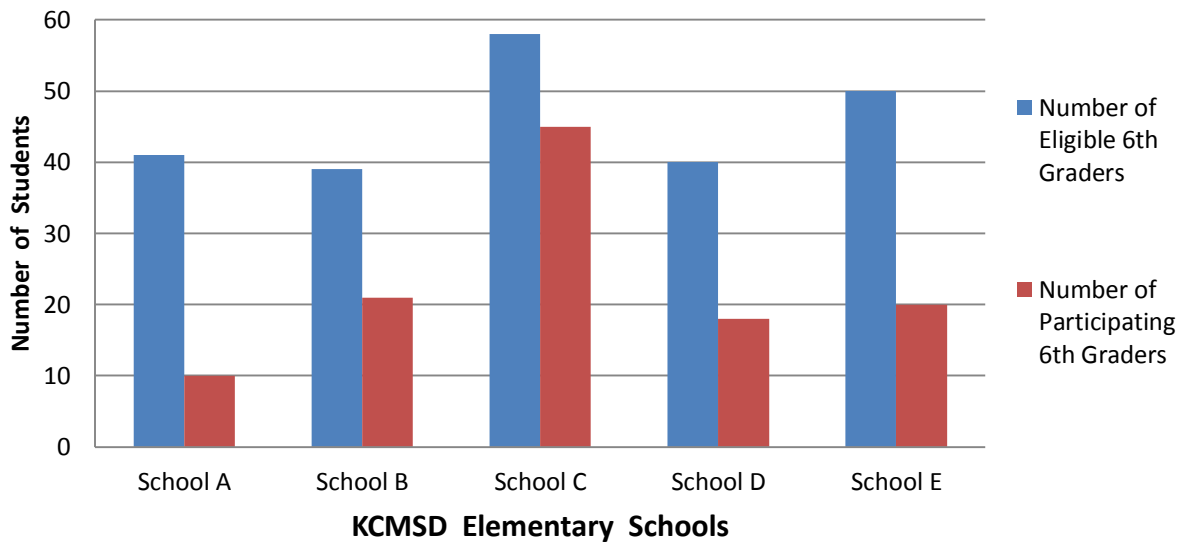


Figure 1. Kansas City, Missouri School District sixth grade student survey respondents at five participating elementary schools.

Survey participants ranged in age from 11 to 14 years of age where 56% ($n = 56$) of the students were 12 years old and 36% ($n = 36$) of the students were 11 years old. Eight percent ($n = 8$) of the students were 13 years old; 4% ($n = 4$) of the student participants were

14 years of age. Males constituted 51% ($n = 53$) of the survey sample. Females comprised 49% ($n = 51$) of the survey sample.

In the first part of the survey, students provided information about their gender and number of children and adults living in their homes. Eighteen percent of the students revealed that both parents lived in their homes. About half of the students (52%) indicated that their mothers were their primary caregivers; 4% identified fathers as primary caregivers. One-fifth of the students (21%) indicated that they lived with grandparents.

Six percent of the students identified other adults as their primary caregivers. Forty-two percent of the students indicated that they lived in homes where two adults were present. Approximately 61% of the students living in homes with two adults reported that they lived with their mothers. Thirty-nine percent of students in the subgroup did not identify other adults as persons who were responsible for their care. However, one student identified a stepfather as an adult who was responsible for their care; another student named “my mother’s boyfriend” as a primary caregiver in her home. Figure 2 represented the relationships survey respondents shared with their primary caregivers.

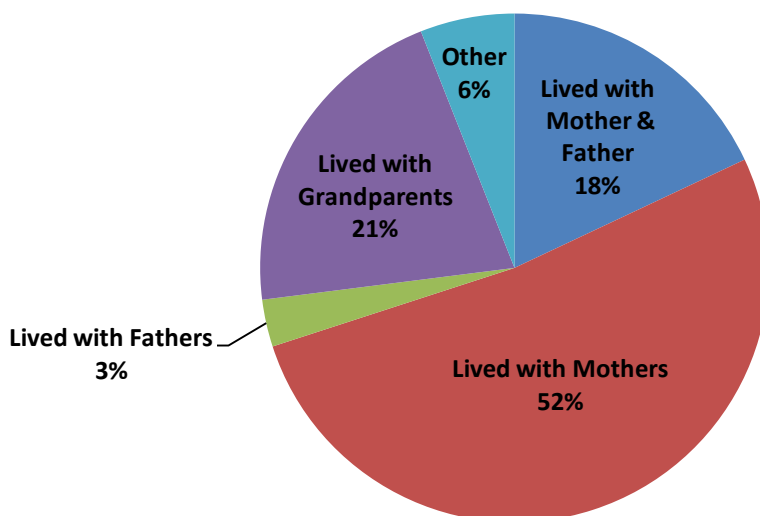


Figure 2. Relationships between KCMSD student participants and their primary caregivers.

Sixty percent ($n = 62$) of the student participants indicated more than one adult lived in their homes. Approximately 40% of the student sample ($n = 43$) revealed that they lived with a combination of adults which generally included parents, grandparents, and extended family members. Eighteen percent of the students ($n = 19$) indicated that three or more adults lived in their homes. Ten students lived with three adults, six students lived with four adults, one student lived in a home with seven adults, and one student lived in a home with eight adults. All of the students with three or more adults living in their homes indicated that their mothers were the only persons who were responsible for their care.

Fifteen percent of the students ($n = 16$) reported that they were the only child in their households. One-fourth of the students (26%, $n = 27$) lived with another child; 10% ($n = 10$) of the students lived in homes with three children in their households. About half of the students in (49%, $n = 51$) lived in homes with more than three children. Four students lived in homes with seven children; three students lived in homes with eight children.

Students also provided information about their parents' and guardians' educational histories. They indicated that 41% ($n = 43$) of their mothers graduated from high school or successfully passed the General Educational Development (GED) tests; 31% ($n = 32$) of their fathers graduated from high school or passed the GED. Eleven percent of their mothers ($n = 12$) and 8% of the students' fathers ($n = 8$) graduated from high school and were either presently enrolled in or received credit for some college course work. Eleven percent of the students' mothers ($n = 11$) and 9% of their fathers ($n = 9$) graduated from college.

Thirty percent of the students ($n = 31$) lived with primary caregivers who were not their parents. Students revealed that none of these adults possessed college degrees. Eight of the adults in that subgroup graduated from high school or passed the GED tests; two adults

attended some college. Students reported that they did not know anything about the educational histories of 18 adults who were not parents and responsible for their care.

Thirty-two percent of the students' primary caregivers ($n = 34$) did not pass the GED tests or graduate from high school. Twenty-four percent of their caregivers ($n = 25$) attended some high school classes but did not graduate from high school. Eight percent of the students' primary caregivers ($n = 9$) had less than a ninth grade education. Six percent of the students ($n = 6$) knew nothing about the educational backgrounds of their primary caregivers. Of that particular subgroup, 40% of the students ($n = 42$) knew nothing about their mothers' educational histories and 50% of the students ($n = 51$) were unable to provide information about their fathers' academic backgrounds. Figure 3 represented the educational histories of the survey respondents' primary caregivers.

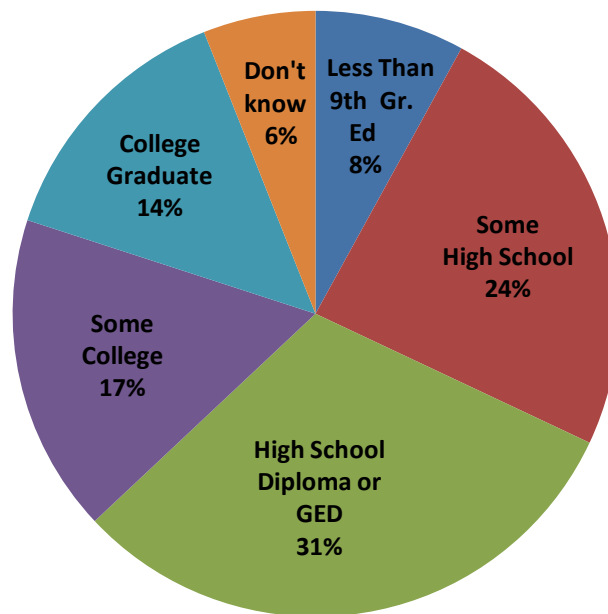


Figure 3. Educational histories of student respondents' primary caregivers.

Student Survey Response Summary

The survey was created to compare students' responses to statements about education and academic achievement to reactions they believed their parents and guardians would provide to similar statements. One hundred four African-American students responded to 28 statements about their thoughts and feelings as well as perceptions about their primary caregivers' attitudes towards learning and scholastic achievement. When responding to each Likert item, students identified their level of agreement or disagreement to each statement. The survey utilized a four-point scale for measuring either positive or negative responses to each statement. Responses to the survey included the following: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Disagree, and (4) Strongly Disagree.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine if there were relationships between students' survey responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' reactions on Items 2 through 28 (see Table 7). Correlational data provided the means through which interrelationships among variables were established. Paired-sample t-tests were used to compare students' survey responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reflections about education and achievement.

P-value (probability value) inference data was used in this analysis to provide evidence that supported the hypotheses. The p-value inference data established numerical measures of statistical significance between students' responses to survey statements and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' responses. P-value inference data that were less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) reflected statistical significance between students' and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses. Data in Table 7 showed that comparisons of statement pairs related to attendance at school, skipping classes at school, completing

homework, communication with teachers, desires to become more successful than primary caregivers, and desire to attend college were statistically significant. Results of p-value inference data related to acquisition of a good education, positive comments about school, reading at home, parental assistance with homework, satisfaction with success at school, desire to graduate from high school, and desire to obtain full-time employment was not statistically significant.

Analysis of data from this particular quantitative study revealed significant relationships between personal attitudes towards school from African-American lower socioeconomic sixth grade students and their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement. Survey results showed that students who held more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement also perceived stronger educational support from parents and guardians. Common factors emerged within all survey response pairs among the sixth grade students and their interpretations of their primary caregivers' reactions and attitudes. The greater the mean scores among student responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses, the more positively students responded to survey items. Data in Table 7 showed that all correlations between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses on the paired t-tests were significant.

Students expressed whether or not they liked to go to school in Statement 1. Seventy-six percent of the students ($n = 79$) agreed that they enjoyed going to school. Less than one-fourth of the students (24%, $n = 25$) revealed that they did not like to go to school. Only 3% ($n = 3$) of the survey participants strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 7

Comparison of Students' Responses and Perceived Primary Caregivers' Responses on Paired t-Tests

	Students		Parents		t-Value	DF	p-Value Inference	Correlation	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Q2 & Q15	3.52	.750	3.58	.649	1.616	103	0.109 ^{NS}	.874	.000*
Q3 & Q16	3.49	.836	3.58	.720	2.802	103	0.006*	.929	.000*
Q4 & Q17	3.55	.799	3.37	.997	4.643	103	0.000*	.934	.000*
Q5 & Q18	2.91	.946	2.84	.956	1.808	103	0.073 ^{NS}	.896	.000*
Q6 & Q19	2.26	.995	2.32	.917	1.421	103	0.158 ^{NS}	.909	.000*
Q6 & Q20	2.26	.995	2.38	.997	1.364	103	0.175 ^{NS}	.625	.000*
Q7 & Q21	2.27	1.026	2.37	1.043	2.411	103	0.018*	.923	.000*
Q8 & Q22	2.45	1.004	2.51	1.052	1.135	103	0.259 ^{NS}	.874	.000*
Q9 & Q23	2.83	.970	2.64	1.033	3.172	103	0.002*	.830	.000*
Q10 & Q24	3.19	.738	3.12	.673	1.580	103	0.117 ^{NS}	.756	.000*
Q11 & Q25	3.13	.942	3.28	.841	4.039	103	0.000*	.911	.000*
Q12 & Q26	3.29	.844	3.21	.992	1.521	103	0.131 ^{NS}	.854	.000*
Q13 & Q27	2.72	1.056	2.47	1.088	4.934	103	0.000*	.844	.000*
Q14 & Q28	3.45	.762	3.48	.800	0.904	103	0.368 ^{NS}	.914	.000*

Note: * is significant; ^{NS} is not significant

Table 8 reflected students' aspirations to get a good education. An overwhelming majority of respondents (90%, $n = 94$) agreed with Statement 2 and revealed that they wanted a solid educational foundation. Ninety-three percent of the students ($n = 97$) believed their parents and guardians also wanted them to receive a good education (Statement 15).

There was a significant positive correlation between students' desire for a quality education and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' desire for them to acquire a good education, $r = 0.874$, $p < .001$ (see Table 7). The average mean agreement between students' responses was $3.52(0.750)$ [$M(SD)$] and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was $3.58(0.649)$. Respondents generally agreed that it was important to obtain a solid educational foundation. This also confirmed that students believed their primary caregivers valued the importance of a quality education. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions as they related to acquisition of a good education was not significant, $t(103) = 1.616$, $p = .109$.

Table 8

Desire for Good Education

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
2. I want to get a good education.	64%	26%	7%	3%
15. My parent(s)/guardian(s) want me to get a good education.	65%	28%	6%	1%

Note: $n=104$

Table 9 provided information about students' attitudes related to attendance at school. Most students (87%, $n = 90$) indicated they would get in trouble if they did not go to school. Similarly, 92% ($n = 96$) of the students agreed that their primary caregivers disapproved if

they did not go to school. Thirteen percent ($n = 14$) of the students believed they would not experience negative consequences if they did not go to school. Eight percent of the students ($n = 8$) reported that their parents would not disapprove if they did not go to school.

A paired-sample t-test (see Table 7) showed a significant positive correlation between the means of students' reactions and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses about attendance at school, $r = 0.929$, $p < .001$. Mean score agreement for student responses, 3.49(0.836), and their perceived reactions of primary caregivers, 3.58(0.720), reflected students' strong awareness that they would experience negative consequences as well as their primary caregivers' disapproval if they did not go to school. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions indicated minimal significance, $t(103) = 2.802$, $p = .006$. This reflected differences between students who believed they would get in trouble if they did not go to school (87%) and knowledge of their parents' and guardians' disapproval (92%) if they did not attend school.

Table 9

Students' Attendance at School

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
3. I get in trouble if I do not go to go to school.	66%	21%	8%	5%
16. My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not like it if I do not go to school.	68%	24%	5%	3%

Note: $n=104$

Although three-fourths of the students (76%, $n = 79$) reported that they liked going to school, 86% ($n = 89$) of the respondents indicated that they went to all of their classes. Table

10 showed that 14% of the sixth grade students admitted they skipped classes while at school; 3% of the students strongly disagreed with this statement. About three-fourths of the students (76%, $n = 79$) believed their primary caregivers would disapprove if they found out they skipped classes while at school. Seven percent ($n = 7$) of the students strongly believed their parents and guardians did not care if they attended classes or not.

A paired-samples t-test (see Table 7) showed a strong positive correlation between students' responses and their beliefs regarding their parents' and guardians reactions to skipping classes at school, $r = 0.934$, $p < .001$. The average mean agreement between students' responses related to attending all of their classes at school was 3.55(0.799) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 3.37(0.997). Most students (86%) acknowledged they attended all of their classes. They also recognized that their primary caregivers disapproved if they did not attend all of their classes when they were at school. However, the mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' beliefs, $t(103) = 4.643$, $p = .000$, was significant. Most students (86%) thought it was important to attend classes, but fewer students (76%) believed their primary caregivers would express disapprove if they did not attend classes.

KCMSD middle schools (grades 6 - 8) were dissolved in 2009. Sixth grade students were reassigned to district elementary schools; seventh and eighth grade students were moved to KCMSD high schools. Consequently, sixth graders had fewer opportunities to skip classes without the attention of their teachers because they attended most of their classes throughout the day with the same instructors. Students at the five selected elementary schools left their homeroom classes throughout the day to attend exploratory classes (art,

music, physical education, computer science, and library) with different teachers who provided instruction in those specific subject areas.

Table 10

Skipping Classes at School

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
4. I go to all of my classes when I am at school.	71%	15%	11%	3%
17. My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not like it if they find out I skipped classes at school.	68%	8%	17%	7%

Note: n=104

Students shared whether or not they said positive things about their schools in Statement 5. They also indicated whether or not they believed their primary caregivers spoke favorably about their schools in Statement 18. Table 11 showed more than half of the students (62%, $n = 64$) agreed that they said positive things about their schools. Students believed that 63% ($n = 65$) of their parents and guardians shared their positive enthusiasm about their schools. More than one-third of the students (38%, $n = 39$) indicated that they did not say positive things about their schools; approximately the same number of students (37%, $n = 38$) believed their parents did not speak favorably about their schools.

Correlation between the means of students' responses as they related to speaking positively about their schools and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' reactions was $r = 0.896, p < .001$ (see Table 7). This significant positive correlation showed that there was strong agreement between students' responses 2.91(0.946) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers 2.84(0.956). Students' responses on the Likert scale

related to speaking favorably about their schools generally ranged between “Disagree” and “Agree.” The mean difference between students’ responses and their perception of their parents’ and guardians reactions were not significant, $t(103) = 1.421, p = .158$. Although students and their perceptions of their parents’ willingness to speak positively about their schools was not high, there were strong similarities between students and their perceptions of their primary caregivers’ reactions to Statements 5 and 18 on the survey.

Table 11

Positive Comments About School

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
5. I say positive things about my school.	34%	28%	32%	6%
18. My parent(s)/guardian(s) say say positive things about my school.	30%	33%	29%	8%

Note: n=104

Table 12 showed that about one-third of the students strongly agreed (14%, $n = 15$) or agreed (22%, $n = 23$) that they enjoyed reading when they were at home (Statement 6).

About two-thirds of the students disagreed (38%, $n = 40$) or strongly objected (26%, $n = 26$) to reading at home. Sixty percent ($n = 64$) of the students agreed they were not regularly encouraged to read at home (Statement 19). The same number of students ($n = 64$) did not observe their parents and guardians engaged in reading on a regular basis (Statement 20).

Data in Table 7 showed that there were strong correlations between students’ responses regarding reading at home and their perceptions of their primary caregivers’ encouragement to read at home, $r = 0.909, p < .001$. Mean score agreement for student

responses about reading at home (Statement 6) was 2.26(0.995) and their responses related encouragement from caregivers to read (Statement 19) was 3.32(0.917). The mean difference between responses, $t(103) = 1.421, p = 0.158$, was not significant. This suggested a strong relationship between students' responses regarding their enjoyment of reading, their reading habits at home, and the amount of encouragement they believed they received from their caregivers.

The mean score agreement of students' enjoyment of reading at home (Statement 6) and their observations of parents and guardians who regularly read at home (Statement 20) was the same as the mean score agreement of caregivers they believed encouraged them to read at home, 2.26(0.995). Similarly, the mean difference between responses, $t(103) = 1.364, p = 0.175$, was not significant. This suggested there was also a relationship between students who liked to read at home and their observations of parents and guardians who read at home.

Table 12

Reading at Home

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
6. I like to read when I am at home.	14%	22%	38%	26%
19. My parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage me to read at home.	12%	28%	41%	19%
20. My parent(s)/guardian(s) read at home.	12%	28%	41%	19%

Note: n=104

Table 13 showed about one-third of the students (33%, $n = 34$) generally agreed that they completed all of their homework. Less than one-fourth of the students (18%, $n = 19$)

strongly agreed that they completed their homework. More than two-thirds of the students (67%, $n = 70$) disagreed with this statement; about one-quarter of the students (24%, $n = 25$) indicated they strongly disagreed with this statement. Students revealed less than half of their parents and guardians (40%, $n = 42$) encouraged them to do homework. Approximately one-fourth of the students (23%, $n = 24$) strongly disagreed that their primary caregivers encouraged them to complete their homework.

The correlation between the means of students' responses regarding homework completion and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' encouragement to complete homework assignments was $r = 0.923, p < .001$ (see Table 7). This significant positive correlation showed there was strong agreement between students' responses and perceptions regarding the amount of support received from parents and guardians to complete homework. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 2.27(1.026) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 2.37(1.043). Students generally did not agree it was important to complete homework nor did they agree that they received significant encouragement from parents and guardians to complete assignments. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions related to the value of homework and completing assignments was significant, $t(103) = 2.411, p = .018$.

Table 13

Homework Completion

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
7. I complete all of my homework.	18%	15%	43%	24%
21. My parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage me to do my homework.	19%	21%	37%	23%

Note: n=104

Information regarding students' desire for assistance with homework from their primary caregivers was shown in Table 14. Almost half of the students (44%) indicated that they liked their parents and guardians to help them with homework assignments.

Approximately the same number of students (45%) admitted that they consistently received homework assistance from their primary caregivers. Fifty-six percent of the students acknowledged that they did not like assistance with homework from their parents and guardians. Almost one-fifth of the students (18%) strongly objected to assistance from parents and guardians with homework assignments. One student wrote "*My mom don't know how to do my homework*" across the space marked "Strongly Disagreed" on Statement 22.

Table 7 showed correlations between the means of students' desires for homework assistance and their perceptions of the support they received from primary caregivers to complete assignments, $r = 0.874, p < .001$. This significant positive correlation showed that there was strong agreement between students' responses and their perceptions of the support they received from parents and guardians to complete homework. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 2.45(1.004) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 2.51(1.052). This showed that most students did not want

assistance to complete homework from their primary caregivers. Their responses also showed that most students generally lacked assistance in completion of their homework from their parents and guardians. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' support was not significant, $t(103) = 1.135, p = .259$.

Table 14

Primary Caregivers' Assistance with Homework

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
8. I like my parent(s)/guardian(s) to help me with my homework.	19%	25%	38%	18%
22. My parent(s)/guardian(s) help me with my homework.	24%	21%	37%	18%

Note: n=104

Table 15 showed more than two-thirds of the sixth grade students (68%) liked to talk to their teachers. About half of the students (56%) believed their parents and guardians (56%) enjoyed conversations with their teachers. The number of students who indicated strong dislike of conversations with teachers (13%) was comparable to the number of primary caregivers they believed strongly objected to conversations with their instructors (16%).

The mean correlations between students' desires to talk with their teachers and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' enjoyment of conversations with their teachers was $r = 0.830, p < .001$ (see Table 7). A significant positive correlation between Statements 9 and 23 showed that there was strong agreement between students' responses and their perceptions of how comfortable they believed their parents' and guardians' felt when conversing with their teachers. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 2.83(0.970)

and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 2.64(1.033). Although many students enjoyed conversations with their teachers, significantly fewer students believed their primary caregivers' shared their feelings. Mean differences between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions as they related to communication with teachers was statistically significant, $t(103) = 3.172, p = .002$. This showed a significant difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' responses.

Table 15

Communication with Teachers

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
9. I like to talk to my teachers.	27%	41%	19%	13%
23. My parent(s)/guardian(s) like to talk to my teachers.	25%	31%	28%	16%

Note: n=104

Table 16 revealed that a majority of students (87%) were happy when they experienced success at school. Eighty-three percent of the students reported that their primary caregivers shared their joy when they were successful at school. Only 3% of the students strongly disagreed that they were happy when they were successful at school. About one-fifth of the students (17%) disagreed that their parents and guardians expressed pleasure when they experienced success at school. None of the children indicated that their parents or guardians strongly dismissed their success at their schools.

Table 7 showed that the mean correlation between students' happiness when they were successful at school and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expressed

pleasure when they experienced success was $r = 0.756, p < .001$. There was strong agreement and a significant positive correlation between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' pleasure when they experienced success at school. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 3.19(0.738) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 3.12(0.673). Students generally agreed they were happy when they experienced success at school and believed that their primary caregivers shared their joy when they experienced success. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions regarding their success at school was not significant, $t(103) = 1.580, p = .117$.

Table 16

Satisfaction with Success at School

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
10. I am happy when I do well at school.	36%	51%	10%	3%
24. My parent(s)/guardian(s) are happy when I do well at school.	29%	54%	17%	0%

Note: n=104

Three-fourths of students (75%) agreed that they wanted to become more successful than their parents or guardians (see Table 17). Approximately the same number of students (79%) believed primary caregivers wanted their children to become more successful than themselves. Although 83% of the students believed their parents and guardians were happy when they experienced success at school (Table 16), one-fourth of the students (25%) did not want to become more successful than their primary caregivers (Table 15). Similarly, one out

of every five students (21%) believed their caregivers did not wish for them to experience greater success than themselves.

The correlation between students' desire to become more successful than their parents and guardians and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' desire to experience greater success was $r = 0.911, p < .001$ (see Table 7). This significant positive correlation showed that there was strong agreement between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' desire for them to experience greater success. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 3.13(0.942) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 3.28(0.841). Students generally agreed that they wanted to become more successful than their primary caregivers and they believed their primary caregivers wanted them to experience greater success. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions related to experiences of success was significant, $t(103) = 4.039, p = .000$.

Table 17

Students' Desire to Become More Successful than Caregivers

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
11. I want to become more successful than my parent(s)/guardian(s).	44%	31%	18%	7%
25. My parent(s)/guardian(s) want me to become more successful than themselves.	51%	28%	19%	2%

Note: n=104

Table 18 reflected students' desires and perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations to graduate from high school. Though the vast majority of students (90%) reported that they wanted a good education (Table 8) and 87% were happy when they experienced success at school (Table 16), only 79% of the students confirmed that they wanted to graduate from high school. Seventy-seven percent of the students believed their primary caregivers expected them to graduate from high school. About one fifth of the students (21%) did not express desires to receive high school diplomas. Students' responses related to high school graduation were similar to their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations. Their desire to graduate from high school (79%) was similar to their aspirations to become more successful than their parents (75%). Furthermore, their perceptions of their primary caregivers' aspirations to experience greater success (79%) were similar to their perceptions of their parents' high school graduation expectations (77%).

Data in Table 7 showed that the correlation between students' desires to graduate from high school and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations was $r = 0.854, p < .001$. This significant positive correlation showed that there was strong agreement between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 3.29(0.844) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 3.21(0.992). This showed students agreed that it was important for them graduate from high school and confirmed their parents' and guardians' expectations that they receive high school diplomas. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions as they related to high school graduation was not significant, $t(103) = 1.521, p = .131$.

Table 18

Desire to Graduate from High School

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
12. I want to graduate from high school.	52%	27%	19%	2%
26. My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to graduate from high school.	53%	24%	14%	9%

Note: n=104

Students' desires and perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations related to college are found in Table 19. Although 90% of the students agreed they wanted to get a good education (Table 8) and 79% wanted to graduate from high school (Table 18), only 60% of the students expressed a desire to attend college after graduation. Ninety-three percent of the students agreed their parents wanted them to obtain a good education, but less than half of the students (47%) believed their primary caregivers expected them to go to college after they graduated from high school. About one-fourth of the students (23%) strongly disagreed that their primary caregivers expected them to attend college.

The correlation between students and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' desire to attend college after completing high school was $r = 0.844, p < .001$ (see Table 7). A significant positive correlation showed there was strong agreement between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' desire for them to attend college. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 2.72(1.056) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 2.47(1.088). Although students and their perceptions of their primary caregivers reflected importance on the acquisition of a good education (see Table 8), there appeared to be less value placed on attending college.

The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions as they related to college attendance was significant, $t(103) = 4.934, p = .000$.

Table 19

Desire to Attend College After Completing High School

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
13. I want to go to college after I graduate from high school.	29%	31%	24%	16%
27. My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to go to college after I graduate from high school.	23%	24%	30%	23%

Note: n=104

The vast majority of students (90%) indicated they wanted to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college (Table 20). More than half of the students (59%) strongly agreed that they wanted full-time employment after completing high school or college. Eighty-eight percent of the students agreed their parents' and guardians wanted them to find a job after they completed high school or college. Seventy-seven percent of the students indicated that their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school (see Table 18). However, the number of respondents who aspired to graduate from high school (79%, see Table 18) and believed their primary caregivers' expected them to earn high school diplomas (77%) was about 10 percent lower than both their desires and perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college (see Table 20).

Table 7 showed that the correlation between students and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' desire to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college was $r = 0.914, p < .001$. This significant positive correlation showed that there was strong agreement between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations for them to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college. The average mean agreement between students' responses was 3.45(0.762) and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' responses was 3.48(0.800). This showed students agreed that it was important for them to find full-time employment and confirmed their general belief that their primary caregivers valued the importance of full-time employment. The mean difference between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions as they related to finding full-time employment after graduation from high school or college was not significant, $t(103) = 0.904, p = .368$.

Table 20

Plans to Find Full-Time Employment After Graduation

Survey Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
14. I want to get a full-time job after I graduate from high school or college.	59%	31%	7%	3%
28. My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to get a full-time job after I graduate from high school or college.	63%	25%	8%	4%

Note: n=104

Similarities in Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Primary Caregivers

Pearson correlation analyses measured the strength of the relationships between their attitudes and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and scholastic achievement (see Table 7). Common factors emerged showing significant relationships which linked students' reactions to 28 survey statements and their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement. Paired sample t-tests showed strong positive correlations between students' reactions and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' responses to similar statements among all students/primary caregiver pairs. There were less than five percentage points between students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' thoughts and feelings on most statement pairs.

Cross tabulations were used to indicate the relationships between each pair of categorical variables and establish criterion validity (see Tables 8 – 20). Alignment of students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions to survey items showed that students who had more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement also perceived stronger educational support from their parents and guardians in all cases among student-parent/guardian pairs. Students who had less positive personal beliefs about learning and education perceived less support from their primary caregivers.

About three-fourths of the sixth grade students (76%) indicated that they enjoyed going to school. Most students (90%) wanted a good education; 93% percent of the respondents also believed their parents and guardians wanted them to obtain a quality education at school. Students generally indicated that they experienced negative

consequences when they did not go to school; 92% of the students reported that their parents did not like it if they did not attend school.

Students' enthusiasm about personal success at school was as overwhelmingly favorable as their perceptions of their primary caregivers' joy when they experienced academic achievement. The majority of students (87%) were happy when they were successful at school; 83% of the students believed that their primary caregivers shared their joy when they did well at school. In contrast, about two-thirds of the students (62%) reported that they spoke positively about their school; 63% of the students believed their primary caregivers also spoke favorably about their school.

Although differences appeared in items related to homework and reading at home, there were significant similarities among students' responses and their parents' perceptions. For instance, only about one-third of the students (36%) shared that they liked to read at home. Forty percent of the students agreed that their primary caregivers encouraged them to read; 44% of the respondents added that they observed their parents and guardians reading at home. Forty-four percent of the students reported that their primary caregivers helped them with homework. Students revealed less than half of their primary caregivers (45%) helped them with their homework.

Three-fourths of the students (75%) wanted to become more successful than their parents or guardians. About the same number of students (79%) also believed their primary caregivers wanted their children to become more successful than themselves. More than three-fourths of the students (79%) agreed they wanted to graduate from high school; 77% of the students believed their parents and guardians expected them to receive their high school diplomas. Although most students believed that their parents and guardians expected them to

graduate from high school, students' desires to graduate from high school consistently matched their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations. Furthermore, the number of primary caregivers who graduated from high school (62%, Figure 3) was similar to the number of students who aspired to go to college (63%, Table 18).

While most students believed their parents and guardians expected them find a job after they graduated from high school or college, students' desires to find full-time employment were very similar to their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations. Ninety percent of the students indicated that they wanted to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college. Accordingly, 88% of the students believed their primary caregivers expected them to find work after they graduated from high school or college.

Differences in Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Primary Caregivers

The vast majority of students (90%) reported that they wanted a good education and 87% were happy when they experienced success at school. However, several contradictions among students' responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes towards learning and education surfaced in the survey analyses. For example, 87% of the students indicated that they would get in trouble if they did not go to school and 92% of the students acknowledged that their parents and guardians did not like it if they did not go to school. Although 86% of the students agreed that they attended all of their classes while at school, only 76% of the students believed their parents disapproved if they skipped classes. There was a 10% discrepancy between the number of primary caregivers students believed were concerned about their attendance at school and the number of parents with whom they believed they would experience negative consequences if they skipped classes at school.

Furthermore, 14% of the students admitted to skipping classes while at school. About one-fourth of the students (24%) reported that their primary caregivers did not care if they skipped classes or not. Rhodes (2011) maintained that many lower socioeconomic parents were much more concerned about their children attending school than skipping classes because they believed their children were safer within the protective walls of the school than they were in homes that lacked adult supervision and protection.

About one-third of the students (33%) indicated that they completed their homework. They claimed less than half of their primary caregivers (40%) encouraged them to complete homework assignments. Slightly more students (44%) revealed that parents and guardians actually assisted them while completing homework. Almost one-fifth of the students (18%) strongly disagreed that they received homework assistance from parents and guardians.

Thirty-six percent of the students indicated they liked to read at home. One-fourth of the students (25%) admitted that they strongly disliked reading at home. Forty percent of the students agreed they were not regularly encouraged to read at home. Almost half of the students (44%) added that they did not observe their parents and guardians engaged in reading on a regular basis.

There was a strong discrepancy between students' responses and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes related to communication with teachers. Although most students (93%) indicated that their parents and guardians wanted them to get a good education, 33% fewer students reported that their primary caregivers spoke positively about their schools. About two-thirds of the students (68%) liked to talk to their teachers. In stark contrast, students revealed that about half of their parents and guardians (56%) enjoyed

talking to their teachers. Twelve percent more students believed they enjoyed talking to their teachers more than their primary caregivers.

Three-fourths of the students (75%) wanted to become more successful than their parents and guardians and 79% believed their primary caregivers wanted their children to be more successful than themselves. Similarly, 79% of the students wanted to graduate from high school and 77% reported that their primary caregivers expected them to receive high school diplomas. Although a majority of students (93%) revealed that their parents and guardians wanted them to get a good education, only 60% of the students wanted to go to college. Less than half of the students (47%) believed their parents and guardians expected them to attend college.

Respondents indicated that about two-thirds of their primary caregivers (62%) received high school diplomas. Slightly more than three-fourths of the students (79%) claimed they were certain about their own desires to graduate from high school. About the same number of students (77%) believed that their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school. Furthermore, the number of respondents who were confident about their desire to graduate from high school and believed their primary caregivers' expected them to receive a high school diploma was about 11% lower than both their desires and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations to find full-time employment.

Most students (90%) indicated that they wanted to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college. Eighty-eight percent of the students reported that their parents and guardians expected them to find full-time employment after they received high school and graduation diplomas. However, students' desires for full-time employment were 11% higher than their aspirations to graduate from high school. Likewise,

students' perceptions of their parents' expectations for them to find full-time employment after graduation was 11% higher than their expectations regarding high school graduation.

Student Perceptions of Positive Areas of Academic Support from Primary Caregivers

The data reflected positive similarities between the students' optimistic attitudes regarding education and academic achievement and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' attitudes. Three-fourths of the students indicated they enjoyed going to school. Students' views concerning their desires to be successful at school were almost the same as their perceptions of their primary caregivers' academic expectations and future goals. Three-fourths of the students (75%) also wanted to become more successful than their parents or guardians all or most of the time. About the same number of students (79%) also believed their primary caregivers wanted their children to become more successful than themselves.

An overwhelming majority of students (90%) indicated that they wanted a good education; almost the same number of respondents (93%) believed their parents and guardians wanted them to obtain a quality education. Two-thirds of the students (62%) claimed they said positive things about their schools; 63% of the students believed their primary caregivers also spoke favorably about their schools. Students' excitement about personal successes at school (87%) was as significantly favorable as their perceptions of their primary caregivers' delight (83%) when they experienced academic achievement.

Though the vast majority of students claimed that they wanted a good education and were happy when they experienced success at school, 79% of the respondents indicated they wanted to graduate from high school. Seventy-nine percent of the students also believed their parents and guardians wanted them to be more successful than themselves. Similarly, 77% of the students believed their primary caregivers expected them to graduate from high school.

Although only 60% of the students expressed desires to attend college, 90% of the students wanted to get a full-time job after they received high school or college diplomas. About two-thirds of the students' primary caregivers (62%) graduated from high school; about one-third of their parents and guardians (31%) enrolled in college courses or graduated from college (see Figure 3). Most of the students believed their primary caregivers expected them to acquire a quality education, receive a high school diploma, and find full-time employment or pursue college after they graduated from high school. The students' desires to graduate from high school and find full-time employment generally matched their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations.

Student Perceptions of Negative Areas of Academic Support from Primary Caregivers

The survey data showed students' personal academic attitudes and goals were generally very similar to their perceptions of their primary caregivers' academic expectations and future goals. Although students and their perceptions of the parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and academic achievement seemed to be quite high, the reality of the means through which students pursued scholastic success and found support from parents and guardians was significantly lower.

Students revealed almost one-third of their primary caregivers (32%) did not graduate from high school or complete GED certificate requirements. An additional 6% of the students knew nothing about their parents' and guardians' educational histories. Although three-fourths of the students indicated that their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school, the students' desires to graduate from high school almost identically matched their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations. While the vast majority of students reported that they wanted a good education (90%) and were happy

when they experienced success at school (87%), significantly fewer respondents (79%) claimed they wanted to graduate from high school.

Almost all of the students (90%) expressed they wanted to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college. About the same number of students reported that their parents and guardians expected them to work after receiving their high school or college diplomas. However, the number of students who aspired to graduate from high school as well as the number of students who wanted to attend college was significantly lower than the number of students who hoped to find full-time employment after graduation. The number of students who believed their primary caregivers expected them to attend college was 13% lower than the number of students who wanted to attend college.

Results from this study suggested that the majority of students believed their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school and find full-time employment after they received their high school or college diplomas. In most cases, the students' desires to graduate from high school and seek employment generally matched their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations. However, the data suggested that commitment on the parts of students and their primary caregivers to manage the responsibilities which led to academic success was considerably lower than their desires to attain those goals. Payne (2005) explained that many individuals of low socioeconomic status, especially those from families with histories rooted in generational poverty, "valued and revered [education] as abstract but not as reality" (p. 42). Ogbu and Simons (1998) added that disadvantaged minority primary caregivers' actual experiences influenced their behavior more than abstract beliefs about the importance of an education.

A majority of students (87%) indicated they would get in trouble if they did not go to school. Similarly, most students (92%) reported that their parents and guardians would disapprove if their children did not go to school. Although about the same number of students (86%) indicated that they did not skip classes while at school, respondents indicated that their primary caregivers (76%) were less concerned that they were actually attending classes while at school. About one-fourth of the students shared that their parents and guardians did not care if they skipped classes or not.

Only about one-third of the students admitted that they liked to read at home. Less than half of the students indicated they were not regularly encouraged to read at home. Furthermore, less than half of the students did not observe their parents and guardians engaged in reading on a regular basis. In a study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, Gioai (2007) warned:

Poor reading skills correlate heavily with lack of employment, lower wages, and fewer opportunities for advancement. Significantly worse reading skills are found among prisoners than in the general adult population. And deficient readers are less likely to become active in civic and cultural life, most notably in volunteerism and voting. (p. 5)

About one-third of the students (33%) revealed that they completed homework assignments. Eleven percent more students (44%) indicated they liked their parents and guardians to help them with their homework. However, less than half of the students claimed that their primary caregivers encouraged them to complete homework. Less than half of the respondents also admitted that they actually received homework assistance from their

primary caregivers. Almost one-fourth of the students strongly disagreed that they received assistance from parents and guardians with homework assignments.

Although three-fourths of the students enjoyed going to school and 87% of the students were happy when they experienced success at school, significantly fewer students (68%) liked to talk with their teachers. Slightly more than half of the students (56%) claimed that their primary caregivers liked to talk to their teachers. Comer (2001) explained that no significant learning occurred in classrooms without significant relationships (p. 30). Payne (2005) asserted that there was a direct correlation between classroom performance among students from generational poverty and the relationships they experienced with teachers. She maintained that educators must make concerted, consistent efforts to forge bonds and build positive channels of communication with students and their primary caregivers. Payne added that teachers must work with children and primary caregivers to set short- and long-term goals for students throughout the academic year.

Numerous studies provided evidence direct relationships between minority primary caregivers' lack of personal relationships with their local school communities and their lack of participation and involvement at their children's schools (Andre et al., 2010; Bloom, 2003; Calabrese, 1990; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ramirez, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Many African-American primary caregivers of children in nominally desegregated schools with predominantly Caucasian teaching staffs found it difficult to give teachers the support that was expected of them and to demonstrate positive actions which helped their children become academically successful (Calabrese, 1990; Cook & Fine, 1995; Davis, 2006; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fields-Smith, 2005, 2009; Halle et al., 1997). Chavkin and Williams (1993) insisted that educators must design practices which involved primary

parents and guardians at school and guided them at home in ways which enabled them to stay actively involved in their children's educations and promoted behaviors which helped prepare their children for successful futures (p. 68).

Summary

Bouffard and Vezeau (2009) agreed that children's perceptions of their parents' and guardians' academic support and achievement expectancies significantly contributed to their scholastic performance in schools. They also maintained that children who believed that they could rely on parents' support often believed that they were valued as persons and deserved love and care (p. 2). Numerous studies linked children's self-confidence with their perceptions of their parents' availability and acceptance (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Lightfoot, 2004; Tableman, 2004). Bempechat (1993) added that children's perceptions of their primary caregivers' support were strongly determined by their parents' and guardians' participation and involvement at their schools (p. 36).

Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) insisted that the most important factors contributing to student academic achievement included consistent parental commitment, involvement, and positive encouragement of their children's educational formation. Studies confirmed that scholastic achievement was determined more by family support of their children's academic development and participation at their children's schools than their race or socioeconomic status (Clay, 1993; Coleman, 1966; Long et al., 2007; Payne, 2005; Ubben et al., 2010; Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). Children whose parents and guardians were involved in their formal educations experienced better test scores, long-term achievement academic achievement, more positive attitudes and behaviors, and less

participation in violence and drug abuse than students with less involved parents (Andre et al., 2010; Child Trends Databank, 2003; Viadero, 2010).

A difficult challenge in large urban districts was the need to develop positive communication between increasing numbers of middle class Caucasian teachers and rising numbers of disadvantaged minority parents (Bloom, 2003; Brown & Beckett, 2007; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Davis, 2006; Fields-Smith, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Ogbu, 1988). Furthermore, the intergenerational legacy of slavery and discrimination continued to carry a negative weight upon underachievement among African-American students (Blount, 2008; Brown, 2004; Fields-Smith, 2005; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Steinberg et al. (1992) found that many African-Americans discouraged their peers from academic achievement because of the history of racial discrimination in the United States. Ogbu (1988) argued that when African-American students refused to strive for academic excellence because they were afraid of accusations related to “acting White,” the consequences resulted in failure and estrangement from opportunities for success. Roper (2008) explained, “Collective concerns around institutional racism and discrimination keep African-American parents of low socioeconomic status vigilant about the treatment of their children in educational institutions” (p. 145).

McLaren (2007) maintained that the majority of parents among the working poor held reasonably high expectations for their children. He warned, “These parents have a realistic expectation of how schools work for their own children, as distinct from how they work for more privileged children” (p. 239). Sampson (2004) added, “Parental behavior is the key to performance of the nonpoor and poor alike, regardless of race” (p. 136). However, many low-income African-American parents and guardians were successful in translating their high

academic aspirations for their children into reality by encouraging and supporting academic excellence (Andre et al., 2010; Capper et al., 2010; Ogbu, 2003; Strayhorn, 2009; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). The key to academic success among African-American youth from disadvantaged backgrounds was rooted in the ability of parents and guardians to combine high expectations and positive support of their children's academic achievement with actions that promoted success (Duncan, 2009; Halle et al., 1997; Harris, 2007; Lightfoot-Lawrence, 1978; Losen & Skiba, 2010).

Results from this study suggested that efforts by parents and teachers to communicate and build cooperative relationships were interpreted by students as positive motivational forces in their own scholastic efforts. Bempechat (1992) added, "Parental teaching is embedded in daily life and occurs in many subtle and indirect ways" (p. 32). Students also imitated learning behaviors they saw modeled by their primary caregivers. Roper (2008) affirmed that parent behaviors such as modeling and speech choices in conversation impacted their children's behavior (p. 144).

When primary caregivers saw their children responding positively to teachers and offered them the support they needed to become involved in their children's academic progress, most parents and guardians were enthusiastically eager to help their children strive for scholastic excellence (Andre et al., 2010; Brown & Beckett, 2007; Marzano, 2000; Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). Urban school districts must continue to provide opportunities for their most effective teachers to do their best work, invite their most concerned primary caregivers to become more involved in more positive ways at school, and encourage their most challenging students to reach their full academic potential.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement at five urban schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District. One hundred four sixth grade African-American students responded to statements about their personal beliefs and attitudes as well as their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and education. Data analysis revealed strong correlations between students' survey responses and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' reactions to similar statements. Students who possessed positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement also perceived stronger educational support from parents and guardians. Conversely, students who held negative attitudes about education and achievement also perceived less support from their primary caregivers.

Bouffard and Vezeau (2009) explained that young children often held very optimistic views of their own competence. They observed, as children aged and engaged in social interactions with other adults and peers, their beliefs in their own abilities diminished. They stated, "According to the inherent constructivist perspective in social cognitive theory, children's perceptions of competence are not innate but develop over time through direct success experiences, observed successes of a model, and persuasion from important others, particularly parents and teachers" (p. 1). Bouffard and Vezeau further explained:

Whether it is explicit or implicit, the efficacy of parents' persuasion is not straight forward but depends on the sense children give to messages.

Children use the feedback from their environment to elaborate and

internalize a mental image of competence in different areas of their functioning. The competence attributed by significant others to the child, the quality of parent/child attachment, and parents' support and expectations of children are relational factors conveying messages to the child. The child interprets and gives sense to these messages leading him to form and internalize a representation of self as being competent. (pp. 1-2)

Their research indicated that children's perceptions of their primary caregivers' judgments and expectations as they related to performance at school and academic achievement contributed more to their perceived competence than recognition from teachers, individual awards, or their performance on common and formal assessments. Bempechat (1992) maintained that primary caregivers displayed both subtle and deliberate actions and attitudes through which children learned expected behaviors (p. 32). Roper (2008) insisted that educators and parents must work together to develop positive vehicles which allowed them to cross cultural barriers, appreciate one another's cultural backgrounds, and collaboratively identify means through which they could positively shape their children's school experiences.

An extensive body of research identified positive correlations between substantial parental support of their children's education and academic success, increased attendance at school, more optimistic changes in their children's attitudes towards scholastic achievement (Capper et al., 2010; Domina, 2005; Fields-Smith, 2009; Sampson, 2004; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003; Wraga, 2002), and improved student behavior in school (Brain & Reid, 2003; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2001; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Reyes, 2006). Blankstein (2009) concurred that parental and guardian support of their children's academic progress resulted in greater student achievement despite ethnic differences or difficult socioeconomic circumstances.

Many studies over the past 50 years asserted that low-income families seemed less willing to encourage their children to strive for academic excellence than middle class families (Andre et al., 2010; Bloom, 2003; *Civil Rights Project*, 2000; Coleman et al., 1966; Moles, 1993; Nieto, 1992; Payne, 2005), less positive in their support of teachers than Caucasian parents, and often less equipped to provide their children with the supports needed to experience academic success (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Davis, 2006; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Vincent & Martin, 2002). Harry et al. (2005) argued, “Public constructions of African-American family structures and practices have been colored historically by an overwhelming assumption of deficit, making it difficult to disentangle the real effects of poverty and historical discrimination from the continuation of negative stereotypes” (p. 102). Schools must rally the efforts of all stakeholders, gain parents’ confidence, and use parental support to motivate student work (Hill & Celio, 1998, p. 24).

Halle et al. (1997) found that many youth from poor minority families who were encouraged by parents and guardians to develop good study habits experienced scholastic success. They agreed that the key to academic achievement among low-income African-American youth was rooted in the abilities of primary caregivers to combine high academic expectations with actions that promoted success. Chavkin and Williams (1993) insisted that school practices which involved parents at school and guided them at home determined whether urban primary caregivers stayed involved in their children’s educations through their middle school year experiences (p. 68). Collaborative efforts by parents, educators, and community stakeholders which supported its children led to increased high school graduation and college enrollment rates (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002; Gallagher et al., 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Summary

Sixth grade African-American students at five elementary schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District responded to 28 statements about their personal beliefs and attitudes as well as their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and education. Common factors emerged as a result of the study and significant relationships appeared within survey responses from students regarding their interpretations of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement.

Students' reactions to survey items were aligned with their perceptions of their parents and guardians responses to similar statements about learning and academic achievement. Survey results consistently showed students who responded positively towards statements related to education and learning predicted similar positive responses from parents and guardians; students who held negative opinions about education and scholastic achievement generally indicated that their primary caregivers did not exhibit behaviors that valued learning and academic success. The data from this quantitative study also showed that students who had more positive personal beliefs about education and academic achievement also perceived stronger educational support from their parents and guardians.

Three-fourths of the respondents revealed that they liked going to school. Most students (90%) agreed that they wanted a solid educational foundation. Similarly, about the same number of students believed their parents and guardians also wanted them to receive a good education. Most students (87%) were happy when they were successful at school; 83% of the students believed that their primary caregivers shared their joy when they did well at school. Survey results indicated that a quality education seemed to be an important priority among students and their primary caregivers. Although paired sample t-tests revealed that

students and their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards going to school seemed generally positive, survey results revealed several contradictions.

Though most students acknowledged that they would get in trouble if they did not go to school and their primary caregivers disapproved if they did not attend school, one in four students acknowledged that they did not always attend all of their classes when they were at school. Similarly, about the same number of students agreed that their parents and guardians would not express disapproval if they skipped classes while at school. There was a 10% discrepancy between the number of primary caregivers students believed were concerned about their attendance at school and the number of parents they believed would discipline them if they skipped classes. Rhodes (2011) maintained that many lower socioeconomic parents were more concerned about their children's attendance at school and less concerned with their attendance at individual classes because they believed their children were safer at school than they were at home where they lacked adult supervision and protection.

The number of students who acknowledged that they spoke positively about their schools (62%) was comparable to responses they believed were held by their primary caregivers. Although about two-thirds of the students liked to talk to their teachers, they revealed that about half of their parents and guardians (56%) enjoyed talking to their teachers. Pena (2002) found that communication between children, primary caregivers, and educators improved as parents and guardians became more involved in their children's education. Domina (2005) encouraged educators to support efforts to strengthen channels of communication with children and their families and increased home-school involvement through efforts that fostered reinforcement of community efforts in caring for its children through positive efforts such as business partnerships and donations.

Mutsotso and Abenga (2010) believed many students from lower socioeconomic families were less successful in school than their middle and upper-middle class peers because they lacked appropriate modeling and support of effective study skills and behaviors that led to academic success from their primary caregivers at home (p. 808). Less than half of the students agreed that they consistently completed their homework. Less than half of the students admitted that their parents helped them with homework or encouraged them to complete homework assignments. Only about one-third of the students shared that they liked to read at home. Similarly, less than half of the students agreed that their primary caregivers read at home or encouraged them to read at home. Mutsotso and Abenga believed good study habits could be more effectively modeled by primary caregivers and practiced by children if schools provided adults with resources for use at home and training which showed adults how to work with their own children in ways that supported academic success.

Three-fourths of the students wanted to become more successful than their primary caregivers. About the same number of students also believed their primary caregivers wanted their children to become more successful than themselves. Although more than three-fourths of the students agreed they wanted to graduate from high school. Although most students believed their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school, the students' desires to graduate from high school consistently matched their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations. Furthermore, the number of primary caregivers who graduated from high school was similar to the number of students who aspired to go to college. Students individual responses related to high school and graduation aspirations mirrored their primary caregivers' educational backgrounds and expectations. Henderson (1988) maintained that many parents and guardians who were involved in their children's

schools sought additional education for themselves and developed higher educational aspirations for their children.

Three-fourths of the students wanted to become more successful than their parents and guardians; slightly more students (79%) believed their primary caregivers wanted their children to be more successful than themselves. Although most students believed their parents and guardians expected them find a job after they graduated from high school or college, students' desires to find full-time employment were very similar to their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations. Most students indicated that they wanted to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college. Accordingly, most students believed their primary caregivers expected them to find work after they graduated from high school or college. And although a majority of students (93%) revealed that their parents and guardians wanted them to get a good education, only 60% of the students wanted to go to college.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that 91% of students enrolled in U.S. secondary schools had parents and guardians who expected them to continue their educations after they received their high school diplomas (2008, p. iii). The NCES further explained, "Eighty percent of Asian students had parents who expected them to finish college, compared to 66% of White students, 64% of Black and Hispanic students, and 53% of Other, Non-Hispanic students" (p. iii). They also found that 83% of the students from families with earned household incomes that were greater than \$75,000 had primary caregivers who expected them to pursue postsecondary education; only 51% of the students from families with earned household incomes less than \$25,000 had parents who expected

them to attend college. In this study, less than half of the students (47%) believed their parents and guardians expected them to attend college.

Although several sources argued that there were many jobs available for students without college diplomas (Bender, 2003; McClatchy, 2005; Stephens, 1996) and college degrees did not necessarily guarantee employment (Klugerman, 2010; Uchitelle, 1990), Wilson (2005) contended that students who did not attend college were denied higher-paying jobs, encountered less job security, and experienced greater stress from more severe financial difficulties. Furthermore, Madden, Stone, Wood, and Parker (2001) concluded that many minority students were not necessarily motivated to pursue postsecondary educational experiences because of monetary advantages nor were they necessarily impressed by college diplomas as tools to obtain financial security. They insisted that minority students from lower socioeconomic families were generally motivated to attend college if someone with whom they shared significant relationships encouraged them to go to college and provided the relational and academic supports needed to sustain their college experiences. Payne (2005) encouraged elementary and secondary schools to promote the benefits of postsecondary education and the advantages of college degrees. She also supported efforts among school staff members which provided parents and guardians with the skills they needed to help their children experience academic success.

The NCES (2008) revealed that 82% of the students whose primary caregivers expected them to attend college received assistance from family members who helped pay for postsecondary education costs (p. v). Students from lower socioeconomic families usually lacked the financial means with which to support postsecondary school expenses. Urban secondary school counselors and teachers promoted increased college aspirations

among financially-challenged students when they shared information about educational financial resources such as loans, grants, and special scholarships designed especially for minority students and families. Many special interest groups and alliances among college students, faculty, and community members on college campuses also provided positive support which helped meet undergraduates' needs throughout their college experiences.

Surprisingly, the number of respondents who were confident about their desire to graduate from high school and believed their primary caregivers' expected them to receive a high school diploma was about 11% lower than both their desires and their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations to find full-time employment. Furthermore, most of the students (90%) indicated that they wanted to find full-time employment after they graduated from high school or college. About the same number of students (88%) reported that their parents and guardians expected them to find full-time employment after they received high school and graduation diplomas. However, students' desires for full-time employment were 11% higher than their aspirations to graduate from high school. Likewise, students' perceptions of their parents' expectations for them to find full-time employment after graduation was 11% higher than their expectations related to high school graduation.

Results from this study suggested that the majority of students believed their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school and find full-time employment after they received their high school or college diplomas. In most cases, the students' desires to graduate from high school and seek employment generally matched their perceptions of their primary caregivers' expectations. However, the data suggested that commitment on the parts of students and their primary caregivers to manage the responsibilities which led to academic success was considerably lower than their desires to attain those goals. The survey

data showed students' personal academic attitudes and aspirations were almost identical to their perceptions of their primary caregivers' academic expectations and future goals. Although students and their perceptions of the parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and academic achievement seemed to be quite high, the reality of the means through which students pursued scholastic success and found support from parents and guardians was significantly lower.

Results from this study also suggested that the majority of sixth grade students at the five selected KCMSD elementary schools were of the opinion that their parents and guardians expected them to graduate from high school and pursue college or seek full-time employment after they received their high school diplomas. In most cases, students' desires to graduate from high school, pursue college, or seek full-time employment generally matched their perceptions of their parents' and guardians' expectations. However, commitment on the parts of students and their primary caregivers to manage the responsibilities which led to academic success was considerably lower than their desires to achieve those goals. Examples included:

- Although most students reported that their parents and guardians disapproved if they did not go to school, they believed their primary caregivers were less concerned if they attended all of their classes when they were at school.
- Less than half of the students completed their homework or read while they were at home. Similarly, less than half of the students received routine encouragement from parents and guardians to complete homework or read at home.

- Although most students indicated that receiving a firm educational foundation was an important priority, one in four students disagreed that they wanted to graduate from high school. Less than half of the students indicated a desire to go to college.
- Students who claimed that that they wanted to graduate from high school was about the same as (a) the number of students who believed their parents and guardians shared their aspirations and (b) the number of students who actually graduated from high school.
- Students who claimed that that they wanted to attend college was about the same as (a) the number of students who believed their parents and guardians shared their aspirations and (b) the number of students who actually attended or graduated from college.

Brown and Beckett (2007) and Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) agreed that the most important factors contributing to student academic achievement were consistent parental commitment, involvement, and positive encouragement of their children's educational formation. Payne (2005) added:

How does an organization or school create and build relationships? Through support systems, through caring about students, by promoting student achievement, by being role models, by insisting upon successful behaviors for school. Support systems are simply networks of relationships. (p. 111)

Most survey responses from students at the selected elementary schools generally reflected their enthusiasm and optimism regarding high school graduation, college, and future full-time employment. The respondents' desires to be successful were strong. Families and educational staffs must take advantage of opportunities to guide students towards their

goals and aspirations by providing opportunities for primary caregivers, children, families, and school communities to combine high expectations with behaviors that promoted academic excellence (Halle, et al., 1997; Kupchik, 2009; Mutsotso & Abenga, 2010).

Conclusions

Marzano (2003) identified parental and community involvement as one of six crucial factors which led to school improvement. Blankstein (2009) agreed that parental involvement in schools led to greater student achievement regardless of students' socioeconomic status or ethnic culture. Many urban educational experts concurred that strong parental involvement contributed to their children's readiness and success in school, improved attendance, and development of behaviors that contributed to greater academic achievement (Andre et al., 2010; Brown & Beckett, 2007; Domina, 2005; Duncan, 2009; Long et al., 2007; Mutsotso & Abenga, 2010; Reyes, 2006). Bempechat (1992) explained, "If we can identify parental practices that are relatively successful in enhancing cognitive growth, we may be able to help more parents help their children reach their intellectual potential" (p. 31).

Although parents and guardians of at-risk students were often willing to participate in their children's education, many teachers and administrators incorrectly believed that most low-income primary caregivers, especially in poor urban communities, were unwilling or unable to do so (Baptiste et al., 1997; Bell et al., 2007; Brown & Beckett, 2007; Fehrmann et al., 1987; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Epstein (2001) explained, "The myth of parental indifference has been debunked in study after study in this and other nations" (p. 162). He added that low socioeconomic African-American families often needed more frequent, detailed information to become and remain involved in their children's education. Therefore, schools must readily identify and implement creative ways to involve parents and

guardians in their children's education (Andre et al., 2010; Duncan, 2009; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Mutsotso & Abenga, 2010; Payne, 2005; Thorpe, 1997). In order for parents to become more genuinely involved in the lives of their children's schools and experience authentic participation, López and Kreider (2003) insisted that teachers and school administrators "need to move from protecting their power to grounding it in the needs of the communities they serve. Both administrators and teachers need to transform their roles as experts to that of partners in their relationships with families" (p. 4).

The issues concerning effective parent and guardian involvement in schools were complicated yet important factors which led to student achievement (Long et al., 2007; López et al., 2010; Piqueño, 2008). Those issues included primary caregivers' lack of knowledge about how to help their children with homework or support learning at home, parents' and guardians' negative attitudes about school, poverty, single parenthood, non-English literacy, cultural gaps between home and school, lack of teacher training and professional development regarding parent and family involvement in schools, as well as teachers' negative attitudes and inaccurate assumptions about low-income families (Kozol, 2005; Ogbu, 2003). However, honest communication and respect for one another's differences among all stakeholders allowed more collaborative formation and adoption of programs and processes that would best benefit the students (Brain & Reid, 2003; Brown & Beckett, 2007; Payne, 2005; Strayhorn, 2009).

Gallagher, Bagin, and Moore (2005) stated, "A good school-community relations program should encompass the concept of a partnership between the school and the parents" (p. 127). They advocated for the construction of home-school partnerships which provided teachers and administrators opportunities to learn about particular family difficulties, the

families' attitudes about education, and the primary caregivers' goals for their children. As a result, they believed schools would become more sensitive and willing to adapt specialized programs for the individual needs of its students. Gallagher et al. insisted that improved relationships between schools and families encouraged all parties to develop plans for attaining common objectives which served the best interests of the students.

A large body of research indicated that efforts by educators to unite and build relationships students and their families led to increased trust among parents and guardians and their increased willingness to engage in active roles in their children's education (Andre et al., 2010; Bloom, 2003; Kupchik, 2009; Long et al., 2007; Mutsotso & Abenga, 2010; Payne, 2005; Thorpe, 1997). Children's perceptions of their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards education and academic achievement dramatically shifted when their primary caregivers' words aligned with behaviors that reflected high scholastic and behavioral expectations. Consequently, children translated their parents' and guardians' high expectations and interest in their educational welfare into greater participation in the classroom, increased efforts in the completion of assigned work and, ultimately, improved academic achievement (Blankstein, 2009; Capper et al., 2010; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2001; Pena, 2000; Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005; Vincent & Martin, 2002).

Recommendations

Findings from this study had implications for students, parents, guardians, and school leaders. Marzano (2009) insisted that effective leadership could be considered the single most important aspect of successful school reform. No solitary sets of standards and dispositions would necessarily change relationships among all stakeholders in school systems. School leaders must embrace shared convictions that all students can learn, an

understanding that schools are responsible for student outcomes, and knowledge that schools worked best when they operated as organic wholes rather than collections of incongruent systems and elements (Andre et al., 2010; Beachum, 2008; Duncan, 2010; Earley & Jones, 2009; Stronge & Tucker, 2000).

In 2010, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) explored development of a centralized state-level student information system (SIS) that tracked students' names, addresses, gender, attendance descriptors, and key data management components. State-level trials were conducted in July, 2011 to determine if the system would support routine functions at school and district levels and fully integrate within the Missouri student information system (MOSIS). The Office of Data System Management implemented the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS) as well as an electronic plan and grants system (ePegs), an instrument designed to provide schools with federal grant and program planning assistance. The MCDS launched a longitudinal data system for tracking and research of student attendance and achievement records across grade levels, schools, and districts throughout Missouri. The system was designed to provide a roadmap with which quality data could be collected and used to target areas of specific need, fuel instructional decisions, and promote student achievement (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) argued that limiting roles of primary caregivers to “supporters, helpers, and fund raisers” were no longer reasonable and must be replaced by roles where they were “decision makers, partners, and collaborators” (p. 87). The National Research Council (2004) also encouraged schools to promote greater participation among parents and guardians within schools by making resources available to families and providing clear communication of expectations, policies, and special events (Long et al., 2007). An

extensive body of research demonstrated that highly-effective schools encouraged positive relationships among school staffs, primary caregivers, and families by providing evidence of the following essential elements: (1) high expectations and clear policies, (2) communication with primary caregivers and families, (3) celebration of students' talents and multicultural diversity, (4) learning opportunities for students and families, (5) parent involvement in the life of the school, and (6) professional development for teachers and administrators.

Promote High Expectations and Clear Policies

- Maintain high expectations and standards for all students and clearly defined means through which students could achieve those expectations (Blankstein, 2009; Marzano, 2003).
- Provide clear goals and objectives for all students across all grades and subject levels which are clearly communicated to primary caregivers and families (Fields-Smith, 2009; Reyes, 2006).
- Define clear rules of behavior and fair consequences for all students (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Reyes, 2006).

Communicate with Primary Caregivers and Families

- Build strong relationships with students and families through home visits, regular parent meetings, and positive daily interaction (Bloom, 2003).
- Document school policies and provide regular announcements of upcoming school events (Payne, 2005; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

- Distribute monthly newsletters highlighting student achievement and successes at school and within the community (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Payne, 2005; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).
- Send written communications to parents and guardians in the native language of non-English speaking families (Pena, 2000; Piquefo, 2008; Ramirez, 2003).

Celebrate Students' Talents and Multicultural Diversity

- Provide informal opportunities for families and school staff members to casually converse with one another and promote a sense of community welcome at school (Bloom, 2003).
- Send personal invitations and provide opportunities for primary caregivers and families to see their children perform at school events (Graham, 2004).
- Promote appreciation of unique ethnic traditions by providing opportunities for families and school staffs to celebrate cultural events such as Martin Luther King Day, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year (Payne, 2005; Piquefo, 2008).

Provide Learning Opportunities for Students and Families

- Facilitate parent and family programs and workshops that help primary caregivers improve their parenting skills (Payne, 2005).
- Offer education courses for parents, guardians, and families that help primary caregivers support learning and assist their children with assignments at home (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Payne, 2005).

- Create learning opportunities for families from linguistically different backgrounds to acquire the means to acquire skills in Standard American English (Pena, 2000; Piqueño, 2008; Ramirez, 2003).
- Work with parents and guardians to recruit volunteers to develop child care services for single-mothers and primary caregivers with young children to encourage their participation at school events (Fields-Smith, 2009).
- Assist primary caregivers and families in locating community resources necessary to help them accomplish their parenting, employment, educational, and personal goals (Wanat, 2010).

Involve Parents and Guardians in the Life of the School

- Promote appreciation for multicultural differences through invitations to parents and guardians to share their expertise and experiences, serve as cooperative advisors, editors, and advocates for their children, in the schools (Byndloss, 2001; Pena, 2000; Piqueño, 2008; Ramirez, 2003).
- Invite and involve parents and guardians in various roles at school during the day such as one-on-one student mentoring, library assistants, classroom aides, clerical assistance (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).
- Form governance vehicles that encouraged response and input from parents and guardians (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Wanat, 2010).

Provide Professional Development for Educators

- Prepare teachers and administrators with tools and resources to support parent and family involvement through professional development (Fields-Smith, 2009).

- Increase awareness of potential for bias among teachers and administrators through honest dialogue about racial and ethnic disparity in schools (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

“It takes an entire village to raise a child” were words that may have become clichéd in recent years, but the African proverb certainly reflected the kind of mentality among all stakeholders in highly-effective schools. Gallagher et al. (2005) reported that there was a time when local school boards and school administrators determined the goals of the community’s schools, but they stated two reasons why that was no longer true. “First, school systems became larger and more isolated from the community,” they declared. “Second, parents and citizens became better educated and no longer accepted previously established goals and skills” (p. 148). Cooperation and collaboration among students’ families, teachers, school administrators, and community stakeholders resulted in more opportunities for all children to strive for academic excellence and provided the supports primary caregivers needed to help guide their children towards brighter futures (Andre et al., 2010; Fields-Smith, 2009; Mutsotso & Abenga, 2010; Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002; Wanat, 2010).

Payne (2005) encouraged schools to develop vehicles such as videos composed by students, teachers, and administrators which enhanced personal relationships between schools and families, especially within poor urban schools. The videos could be used to communicate policies, curriculum guidelines, and promote upcoming school events. Videos were found to be an especially helpful means to communicate information from schools to parents and guardians who struggled with their own literacy issues.

Comer and Haynes (1991) emphasized that lack of participation by minority parents in traditional school events should not be interpreted as a lack of interest in their children’s

education. Lewis and Forman (2002) explained that many parents struggled with inadequate child care supervision at home, arduous family and financial responsibilities, dependence upon unreliable local systems for transportation, and were often employed at jobs with irregular working hours. They encouraged educators to explore unstructured and informal means through which to interact with their children's teachers.

Roper (2008) explained that parents felt empowered when they experienced school cultures where they felt welcomed. She encouraged educators to make home visits and engage in other informal interactions with primary caregivers. She believed efforts to nurture positive relationships invited greater participation at their children's schools. Roper added, "Some parents perceive that because they have relationships and connections at school, they can take on issues of conflict and feel that their concerns will be dealt with in a respectful manner" (p. 161). Parents who felt supported by educators within their children's schools were more likely to speak positively about their children's teachers and become more active in the life of the schools (Riblett et al., 2002; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Viadero, 2010).

Results from this research revealed that one-fifth of the student survey participants (21%) indicated that they lived with grandparents (see Figure 2). In 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 1.3 million African-American grandparents lived with their children and grandchildren. The U.S. Census Bureau also reported that 50% of the grandparents living with grandchildren were responsible for their care (p. 59). Grandparent caregivers needed current and accessible information and assistance about legal and financial issues, support services, health and housing information, and guidance about education and childrearing. Information and support services were often difficult to obtain and grandparents were overwhelmed when trying to "navigate the system" (AARP, 2003, p. 2).

Effective home-school collaboration fostered empowerment of primary caregivers through meaningful communication between families and school staffs. Ritblatt et al. (2002) stated, “The most effective school results will be obtained when parents, especially [those from] low-income communities, institutionalized the involvement of their members to support and participate with the public schools as an element within their local culture” (p. 541). They encouraged school personnel to explore their own experiences, values, cultural backgrounds, and attitudes and make efforts to learn about, understand, and promote respect of the experiences, values, backgrounds, and attitudes of the home-school community.

In considering behaviors and attitudes that supported students’ academic success in urban schools, it was important to include how class and race intersected and shaped social relations between educators, school administrators, African-American primary caregivers, and their children. Caruthers (2005) maintained, “Thus far, school desegregation has failed because many educators have not examined beliefs and assumptions about cultural differences” (p. 25). Courageous conversations between parents and teachers required mutual honesty and respect. Fear of sounding angry, offensive, ignorant, or politically incorrect often led to avoidance and silence or misinterpretations and misunderstandings. It was precisely through the engagement of difficult dialogues in environments that were created to invite trust that all stakeholders could experience greater understanding and, ultimately, transformation. Moraga (1983) adamantly stated:

The danger lies in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression. The danger lies in attempting to deal with oppression purely from a theoretical base. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming

the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place. (pp. 52–53)

Raffaele and Knoff (1999) reported that the strongest predictors of family involvement in schools were the specific programs and practices designed to reach those objectives. By creating on-going, reciprocal relationships with students and their families, educators could create school environments where parents and guardians believed they had something meaningful and relevant to offer their school communities (Thorpe, 1997). Schools must rally the efforts of all stakeholders, gain parents' confidence, and use parental support to motivate student work (Hill & Celio, 1998, p. 24).

The findings from this study suggested students' perceptions about their parents' and guardians' attitudes towards learning and education were linked to achievement-promoting behaviors and attitudes that were important in helping children achieve academic success. Schools had a responsibility to help parents and guardians combine high expectations with behaviors that promoted academic excellence (Andre et al., 2010; Halle et al., 1997). Tableman (2004) found that student achievement for low-income minority children not only improved when parents and guardians were involved in full partnerships in their children's educations, it could reach levels that was standard for their middle-class peers. However, provision of additional resources and support from the larger community was critical for ensuring success among low-income African-American urban students. Bearing the aid of resources outside the family network, preservation of positive attitudes about the academic abilities and skills of our students and enduring faith in them as learners may be one of the most important family characteristics associated with their future scholastic success.

Appendix A

University of Missouri-Kansas City IRB Approval Letter

From: windersc@umkc.edu [mailto:windersc@umkc.edu]
Sent: Friday, June 03, 2011 10:42 AM
To: Smith, Dianne
Cc: Winders, Chris
Subject: Study SS11-80e: African-American Student Perceptions of Their Parents' and Guardians' Attitudes towards Education and Academic Achievement

June 3, 2011

Dianne Smith, Ph.D.
UMKC - School of Education
5100 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, MO 64110

Approval Date: 06/02/2011
Expiration Date: 06/01/2012

RE: SSIRB Protocol #: SS11-80e: African-American Student Perceptions of Their Parents' and Guardians' Attitudes towards Education and Academic Achievement

Dear Dr. Smith,

Your research protocol IRB # SS11-80e, entitled: "African-American Student Perceptions of Their Parents' and Guardians' Attitudes towards Education and Academic Achievement" was given an expedited review by the UMKC Social Sciences Institutional Review Board.

The IRB approves research protocol IRB #SS11-80e as submitted. You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. You must obtain signed written consent from all subjects. The study is subject to continuing review on or before 06/01/2012, unless closed before that date. It is your responsibility to provide a Progress Report prior to that date to avoid disruption of your research or as necessary to close out your study.

The approval includes the following documents:

- *Student Survey Assent Form
- *Parent/Guardian Survey Consent Form
- *Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects dated June 01, 2011

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review.

Contact: 816-235-5927; email: UMKCSSIRB@umkc.edu if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Administrative Office
Social Sciences Institutional Review Board

This e-mail is an official notification intended only for the use of the recipient(s). This letter indicates the status of the UMKC Social Sciences IRB review of the referenced research project. When appropriate, a member of the UMKC Social Sciences IRB staff will be contacting the recipient(s) informing them of other IRB documents related to this project that are available to either 1) be picked up at the IRB office - 5319 Rockhill Road or 2) be mailed via campus mail or postal service - i.e.; revisions to consent form, advertisements, etc. If a signed copy of this letter is needed, please contact a member of the IRB staff. If you have received this communication in error, please return it to the sender immediately and delete any copy of it from your computer system.

Appendix B

Letter of Consent from the KCMSD Superintendent's Office



Julie Connor, Instructional Coach
Satchel Paige Pre-K – Gr. 6 Elementary School
3301 E. 75th Street
Kansas City, MO 64132
816.418.5050

Dr. Dianne Smith
UMKC School of Education
5100 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, Missouri 64110
smithdia@umkc.edu
816.235.2458

LETTER OF CONSENT

As assistant superintendent for Professional Development, Assessment & Accountability in the Kansas City, Missouri School District, I am granting consent to Julie Connor and allowing her permission to conduct a survey, after the MAP testing has been completed for the SY11 school year, related to her research, *Student Perceptions of Their Parents' and Guardians' Attitudes towards Education and Academic Achievement*, with our sixth grade students at five of our district schools (Attucks, Longfellow, Paige, Troost, and Wittier Elementary Schools). This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Dianne Smith, professor and department chairperson of the urban leadership and policies in education doctoral program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC).

Prior to distributing surveys among the selected sixth grade students, Ms. Connor will invite each school to participate in the project. Schools will not be required to participate. Participating students will be allowed approximately 20 minutes to complete the surveys. Ms Connor will provide parents and guardians with permission slips which will allow their children to participate in the survey process. Parents will be allowed to preview the survey before their children take part in the process. Primary caregivers will also be invited to complete and submit their responses to an adapted form of the survey. She will provide students with consent forms; their signed statements will allow them to participate in the survey process. Students who do not turn in (1) signed permission slips from their primary caregivers and (2) signed consent forms will not participate in the survey activity.

Personal information regarding individual names and addresses *will not be* included elements of this survey. Participation in this survey process is voluntary. Students will not be penalized in any way if they reconsider and choose not to complete a survey. They may also choose to skip questions or stop completing the survey at any time. They may also choose not to turn in their surveys; however, students who opt not to participate in the study will be asked to communicate that decision to the moderator because, once the results are sealed in unmarked envelopes and place in the survey box, it will not be possible to return surveys to students. The



information gathered as a result of this survey will be limited to the use of this research study. Students' and adults' participation in this study will be anonymous. Students whose parents or guardians do not want them to take part in the study and those who do not turn in their permission request forms will participate in another activity while the rest of the students take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Esselman', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Mary Esselman, Asst. Superintendent for
Professional Development, Assessment, & Accountability

A handwritten date '3/16/11' written in black ink over a horizontal line.

Date

Appendix C

Student Survey Assent Form

Dear Kansas City, Missouri School District student:

You are invited to complete a survey as part of a research study I am conducting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. I hope to find out more about your thoughts and feelings about learning and your perceptions of your primary caregivers' attitudes towards education. I hope this information will help me understand how I can encourage students to be successful at our school.

As part of this study, you will be asked to provide information regarding your gender as well as the number adults and children living in your home. You will also provide information about the level of education completed by parents or guardians living in your home. Personal information such as names and addresses *are not* required for participation in the survey process. You will respond to a 28-question survey to identify factors that best describe (1) *your* thoughts and feelings and (2) what you think *your parents and guardians* believe about learning and education. There are no known risks to you for being part of this study. You will not receive any direct benefit for being in this study. The information you provide may help students pursue their educational goals in the future. You will be allowed approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey form.

Participation in this survey process is voluntary. You will not be penalized if you change your mind and choose not to complete the survey. You may skip questions or stop completing the survey at any time. You may decide not to turn in your survey. You may choose to withdraw from the survey process at any time. If you decide you no longer wish to complete a survey, you may place the unfinished survey in an empty envelope and place it in the survey box. Information from incomplete surveys will not be included in the final data analyses. Information from the surveys will be limited to the use of this research study. Your participation in this study will be anonymous.

You must show your desire to take part in the survey process by completing the form on the other side of this assent letter. You will not be allowed to take part in this study without your parent's or guardian's permission. You may indicate your assent or non-assent (*see below*) and ask your primary caregiver to complete the consent form. The only document that identifies you will be the assent form. Your name will not be on the survey. Your name, your parent's or guardian's name, and answers to the survey will be kept confidential (no one will know your responses). Students whose parents or guardians do not turn in permission forms will be included in another activity while participating students complete the surveys.

Please contact me at Satchel Paige Elementary School (816-418-5050) if you have any questions or concerns. If you have any questions about being in this study, you can contact the administrative office of the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 816-235-5370 or by email at umkcssirb@umkc.edu. I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,

Julie Connor, Instructional Coach
Satchel Paige Elementary School
3301 E. 75th Street
Kansas City, MO 64132
jconnor@kcmsd.net
816-418-5050

Dr. Dianne Smith, Research Supervisor
UMKC School of Education
5100 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110
smithdia@umkc.edu
816-235-2458

----- **Cut and Return Form to Your Teacher** -----

I would like to participate in the student survey study.

I do NOT want to participate in the student survey study.

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Parent/Guardian Survey Consent Form

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I would like to invite your child to complete a survey as part of a research study I am conducting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC). I want to find out more about your child's personal feelings about learning and their understanding of your attitudes and feelings towards education and achievement. I hope this information will help me understand how we, as teachers, can encourage our students to be successful at school.

As part of this study, your sixth grade child will be asked to provide information regarding his or her gender as well as the number adults and children living in your home. Your child will also provide information regarding the level of education completed by parents or guardians living in your home. Personal information such as names and addresses *are not* required for their participation in the survey process. Children will respond to a 28-question survey where they will try to identify factors that best describe (1) their thoughts and feelings and (2) what they think *you* believe about learning and education. There are no known risks to your child for being part of this study. Your child will not receive any direct benefit for being in this study. The information your child provides may help students pursue their educational goals in the future. The children will have approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey form.

Participation in this survey process is voluntary. Students will not be penalized if they change their minds and choose not to complete surveys. They may skip questions or stop completing the survey at any time. They may decide not to turn in their surveys. Students may choose to withdraw from the survey process at any time. If a student decides he or she no longer wishes to complete a survey, the student may place the unfinished survey in an empty envelope and place it in the survey box. Information from incomplete surveys will not be included in the final data analyses. Information from the surveys will be limited to the use of this research study. You and your child's participation in this study will be anonymous.

Your child must show their desire to take part in the survey process by completing the form on the other side of this permission request. Children will not be allowed to take part in this study without your permission. You may indicate your consent or non-consent (*see below*) and encourage your child to complete the assent form. The only document that identifies your child will be the assent form. Your name or your child's name will not be on the survey. Your name, your child's name, and answers to the survey will be kept confidential. Students whose parents or guardians do not turn in permission forms will be included in another activity while participating students complete the surveys.

A copy of the survey that will be used in this study is enclosed in this envelope. Please contact me at Satchel Paige Elementary School (816-418-5050) if you have any questions or concerns. If you have any questions about your rights, your child's rights as a research participant, or concerns in the event of a research-related injury, you can contact the administrative office of the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 816-235-5370 or by email at umkcssirb@umkc.edu. I look forward to meeting your child and sharing the results of this survey process with you.

Sincerely,

Julie Connor, Instructional Coach
Satchel Paige Elementary School
3301 E. 75th Street
Kansas City, MO 64132
jconnor@kcmsd.net
816-418-5050

Dr. Dianne Smith, Research Supervisor
UMKC School of Education
5100 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110
smithdia@umkc.edu
816-235-2458

----- **Cut and Return Form to Your Teacher** -----

I would like to participate in the student survey study.

I do NOT want to participate in the student survey study.

Parent's or Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

Survey Statements

The following statements included in the survey were the driving force for the study:

1. I like to go to school.
2. I want to get a good education.
3. I get in trouble if I do not go to school.
4. I go to all of my classes when I am at school.
5. I say positive things about my school.
6. I like to read when I am at home.
7. I complete all of my homework.
8. I want my parent(s)/guardian(s) to help me with my homework.
9. I like to talk to my teachers.
10. I am happy when I do well at school.
11. I want to become more successful than my parent(s)/guardian(s).
12. I want to graduate from high school.
13. I want to go to college after I graduate from high school.
14. I want to get a full-time job after I graduate from high school or college.
15. My parent(s)/guardian(s) want me to get a good education.
16. My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not like it if I do not go to school.
17. My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not like it if they find out I skip classes at school.
18. My parent(s)/guardian(s) say positive things about my school.
19. My parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage me to read at home.

20. My parent(s)/guardian(s) read at home.
21. My parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage me to do my homework.
22. My parent(s)/guardian(s) help me with my homework.
23. My parent(s)/guardian(s) like to talk to my teachers.
24. My parent(s)/guardian(s) are happy when I do well at school.
25. My parent(s)/guardian(s) want me to become more successful than themselves.
26. My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to graduate from high school.
27. My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to go to college after I graduate from high school.
28. My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to get a full-time job after I graduate from high school or college.

Appendix F

Student Perception Survey

Student Perception Survey

The purpose of this survey is to discover (1) **your attitudes** and (2) your **parents' and guardians' attitudes** towards learning and education. Your participation is an important part of this study.

Part I: Personal Information

Please mark an "X" or PRINT your response in the spaces below to complete each section.

Section I: Student/Parent Relationships			
Gender: ____ Male ____ Female	Number of adults living in your house: _____	Number of children living in your house: _____	
Do you and your mother live in the same house? ____ yes ____ no			
Level of Education Completed by Mother: ____ Did not complete 6 th Gr. ____ 6 th Gr. ____ 7 th Gr. ____ 8 th Gr. ____ 9 th Gr. ____ 10 th Gr. ____ 11 th Gr. ____ High School Diploma ____ Some College ____ College Graduate ____ I Don't Know			
Do you and your father live in the same house? ____ yes ____ no			
Level of Education Completed by Father: ____ Did not complete 6 th Gr. ____ 6 th Gr. ____ 7 th Gr. ____ 8 th Gr. ____ 9 th Gr. ____ 10 th Gr. ____ 11 th Gr. ____ High School Diploma ____ Some College ____ College Graduate ____ I Don't Know			
Section II: Student/Adult Relationships <i>Complete this section ONLY if there are adults living with you who are NOT your parents but responsible for your care.</i>			
Relationship of Student to Adult #1: _____			
Level of Education Completed by Adult#1: ____ Did not complete 6 th Gr. ____ 6 th Gr. ____ 7 th Gr. ____ 8 th Gr. ____ 9 th Gr. ____ 10 th Gr. ____ 11 th Gr. ____ High School Diploma ____ Some College ____ College Graduate ____ I Don't Know			
Relationship of Student to Adult #2: _____			
Level of Education Completed by Adult #2: ____ Did not complete 6 th Gr. ____ 6 th Gr. ____ 7 th Gr. ____ 8 th Gr. ____ 9 th Gr. ____ 10 th Gr. ____ 11 th Gr. ____ High School Diploma ____ Some College ____ College Graduate ____ I Don't Know			

Part II: Survey Questions

Mark an "X" in the box that best describes your thoughts and feelings about learning and education.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I like to go to school.				
I want to get a good education.				
I get in trouble if I do not go to school.				
I go to all of my classes when I am at school.				
I say positive things about my school.				
I like to read when I am at home.				

Part II: Survey Questions (cont.)

Mark an **“X”** in the box that best describes your thoughts and feelings about learning and education.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I complete all of my homework.				
I like my parent(s)/guardian(s) to help me with my homework.				
I like to talk to my teachers.				
I am happy when I do well at school.				
I want to become more successful than my parent(s)/guardian(s).				
I want to graduate from high school.				
I want to go to college after I graduate from high school.				
I want to get a full-time job after I graduate from high school or college.				

Mark an **“X”** in the box that best describes what you believe express your parents’ or guardians’ thoughts and feelings about learning and education.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My parent(s)/guardian(s) want me to get a good education.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not like it if I do not go to school.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) do not like it if they find out I skip classes at school.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) say positive things about my school.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage me to read at home.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) read at home.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage me to do my homework.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) help me with my homework.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) like to talk to my teachers.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) are happy when I do well at school.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) want me to become more successful than themselves.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to graduate from high school.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to go to college after I graduate from high school.				
My parent(s)/guardian(s) expect me to get a full-time job after I graduate from high school.				

Go back and check your work.

Mark **only one response** for each statement.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to this study.

Appendix G

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used within this study and defined within the context of the presented information:

Academic achievement--Student performance based on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) and Grade Point Average (GPA).

African-American--U.S. citizen with African ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Alpha level--Also referred to as significance level and denoted as α , the amount of error acceptable in statistical analysis. At a .05 Alpha level, there is a 5% chance that the result is not significant or due to chance.

At-risk student--A student in danger of dropping out of school because he or she lacked basic academic, personal, or behavioral knowledge and skills in order to be successful; often challenged by factors which included low achievement, grade retention, behavior problems, poor attendance, and low socioeconomic status.

Attitude--A manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that reflected a person's disposition or opinion.

Background knowledge--An individual's ability to (a) process and store information and (b) the number and frequency of academically-oriented experiences (Marzano, 2003).

Belief--The state of mind of an individual who placed trust or confidence in a person or thing.

Communication arts--The study of reading, composition, speech, spelling, and literature aimed at developing comprehension and capacity for the use of written and oral language.

Content validity--The extent to which a measure represented all facets of a given social construct.

Culture--The totality of ideas, beliefs, values, activities, and knowledge of a group or individuals who shared historical, geographical, religious, racial, linguistic, ethnic, or social traditions and who transmitted, reinforced, and modified those traditions (Davis, 2006).

Custodial parent--An adult with legal responsibility of the physical care and custody of a child either under the provisions of a state law which granted custody or under the provisions of a court order.

Data--Information or statistics gathered for the purposes of analysis.

Demographic--Information relating to the dynamics and composition of a given population.

Descriptive statistics--A summary about the sample and size of a particular analysis.

Education--The process of acquiring knowledge through learning and formal instruction in school.

Face validity--A property of a test which reflected whether or not an instrument measured what it was designed to gauge.

General Educational Development (GED) Test--A battery of five multiple-choice tests covering high school subjects (reading, mathematics, social studies, science and writing skills) and generally accepted as being equivalent to a high school diploma (Rockowitz, 2002).

Generational poverty--A family's overwhelming lack of financial income and sufficient resources that existed for at least two generations (Payne, 2005).

Grade Point Average (GPA)--A mathematical measurement for evaluating a student's overall academic performance by adding the total number of grade points earned and dividing the sum by the total number of credit hours in a given semester.

Guardian--Person who fulfilled some of the custodial and parenting responsibilities of the legal parents of a child, although the court or biological parents continued to hold some jurisdiction and decision-making authority over the child. Guardians were subjected to ongoing supervision by the court and did not have the same reciprocal rights of inheritance as birth or adoptive parents.

Hegemony--Domination demonstrated by one group to exercise power and control over another group.

High-performing school--Schools which demonstrated (a) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (b) challenging goals and effective feedback for students, (c) parent and community involvement, (d) safe and orderly environment and (e) collegiality and professionalism among school staff members (Marzano, 2003).

Inferential statistics--A process of drawing conclusions about a given population based on information drawn from a sample study.

Low-performing schools--Schools where community poverty and stress on the institution was evidenced by low expectations of student achievement, high teacher absenteeism, and high rates of teacher turnover (Corallo & McDonald, 2002).

Mathematics--The study of the measurement, properties, and relationships of quantities and sets through the use of numbers and symbols.

Mean (Standard Deviation)--A measure of variability used to show the amount of dispersion from the average or expected value; expressed as $M(SD)$. A low standard deviation indicated that data points tended to be close to the mean.

Minority--A U.S. citizen identified as “something other than non-Hispanic White” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)--A performance-based assessment program designed to identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies Missouri students should acquire by the time they completed high school and used to evaluate student progress toward those academic standards (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007).

Paired sample t-test--A quantitative test used to compare the means of two variables. Paired sample t-tests computed differences between two variables and determined whether or not average differences were significantly different from zero.

Parent--A father or mother who gave birth to a child.

Parent/guardian survey consent form--A document designed to obtain permission for students to participate in the survey process from parents and guardians. Students were not permitted to participate in the survey process without their parents' or guardians' written consent (see Appendix E).

Pearson correlation coefficient--A statistical value, also referred to as degree of dependence and denoted as r , used to measure the relationship between two or more variables ranging in value from -1 to +1 (Perdue, 2011).

Perception--The mental processes by which the brain interpreted and assigned meaning to information received from an individual's sensory organs.

Primary caregiver--An adult who (a) lived in the home with and (b) provided personal care, shelter, financial support, and supervision in the best interest of the child.

Quantitative study--A systematic investigation designed to employ statistical analyses to determine relationships between variables and whether or not hypotheses are true.

Reliability--The statistical consistency of a measuring instrument to perform a required function and produce the same or similar results at different times in repeated trials under comparable circumstances (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Roysand & Hoyland, 2004).

Resiliency--Student's ability to experience academic success despite low socioeconomic conditions and challenges.

Role model--A person who served as a positive example of values, attitudes, and appropriate behavior within a community and distinguished themselves in such a way that others admired and wanted to emulate them.

Self-efficacy--Person's judgment of their own capabilities to organize and execute courses of actions required to attain designated types of performances (Bandura, 1986).

Socioeconomic status--A broad term used to describe factors about a person's lifestyle including occupation, income, and education.

Student perception--A student's understanding, reasoning, and appraisal of a given set of circumstances.

Student survey assent form--A document designed to obtain students' written willingness to participate in the survey process. Students were not permitted to participate in the survey process without their parents' or guardians' written consent and their personal assent (see Appendix F).

Support systems--System of accessible external resources which included friends, family, and additional resources, especially in times of need.

Survey--An instrument developed for the collection of data designed to extract and analyze information from a specific population.

Survey moderator--Sixth grade teachers at each elementary school who distributed surveys and monitored the completion process among student participants.

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VITA

Julie Ann Connor was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1958. Her family moved to St. Louis, Missouri and she attended Corpus Christi Elementary School. She attended ninth grade at Corpus Christi High School, a parochial high school for girls. After Corpus Christi High School closed in 1972, she attended and graduated from Jennings Senior High School, a public high school in north St. Louis County. She was active in the theater, drama, and music departments and a member of the National Honor Society.

Ms. Connor received a scholarship to the University of Central Missouri (UCM) in 1976. She was president of the student government association and participated as a student representative on several university leadership committees. Julie was the first student representative on UCM's presidential search and selection committee. She was nominated by her sorority, Alpha Sigma Alpha, as outstanding Greek student in 1979 and 1980 and received a Panhellenic national scholarship.

Julie's first teaching position was in a third and fourth grade combined classroom at Holy Rosary Elementary School in Clinton, Missouri. She became director of religious education in 1986. Ms. Connor returned to UCM as a teaching graduate assistant in the science education and safety departments in 1990. She received a master's degree in curriculum and instruction in 1991. Julie's teaching certifications in Missouri and Kansas included elementary education, science, communication arts, and speech/theater. She earned an education specialist degree in elementary and middle school administration in 2009. Her research related to urban students' perceptions and education is used as a research model at UCM. Julie was a recipient of the Mees Scholarship in Educational Administration and the School Administration Student Scholarship at UCM. She was a member of Delta Epsilon

Iota Academic Honorary Society, Golden Key International Academic Honour Society, and the National Scholars Honor Society.

Ms. Connor was also a youth minister and education director at several parochial parishes in the Kansas City/St. Joseph diocese. She was program director and consultant for *God's Light City*, a creative arts and education nonprofit organization. She was a teacher and instructional coach in the Kansas City, Missouri School District until 2011.

Julie continues to be a presenter at local workshops and national conventions. She is a passionate advocate of multicultural inclusion, celebration of cultural diversity, and promotion of the creative arts in schools and communities. Her areas of expertise include team-building, mission and vision development, transformational leadership training, communication and conflict management, and crisis intervention.