

ECOLOGICAL CORRELATES ASSOCIATED
WITH THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
YOUTH
by

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In loving memory of Frank and Inez Smith. Leola Bell, Arimentha Day, and Willie Lee “Buddy” Bell.

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Abstract

ECOLOGICAL CORRELATES ASSOCIATED
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There has long been an achievement gap between African American youth and their European counterparts. This phenomenon has constantly been studied and continues to be a concern in not only the education arena, but also the social work field. The current study was conducted using The Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The Ecological Systems Theory was used in order to guide the current study in order to determine which factors are correlated with the high academic achievement of African American youth. The overall purpose of the study was to analyze ecological correlates that contribute to academic achievement among African American adolescents. The reasoning behind the study is to fill gaps that may exist that will aid in solving the issues of low academic achievement of African American youth and add knowledge that will enable social workers and educators to do what is necessary to help our youth and future productive society members. The sample in the current study consisted of 1619 African American youths, ages 13-17. There were more females (846; 52.3%) than males (773; 47.7%) included in the sample. Linear regression was used, along with Independent t-test and ANOVA in order to analyzed the results of the data. Questions from the original study were analyzed for the results of the present study. Out of all of the

correlates, school connectedness accounted for more of the variance in academic achievement, followed by discipline. Approximately 55% of the total variance was accounted for by the correlates analyzed in the current study. This study presents implications for policy, practice and recommendations for future research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In today's society youth in the adolescence phase face many challenges and are exposed to a number of factors which might positively or negatively influence them throughout the life span. African American youth are even more prone to experiencing adversity which may influence their social and academic achievements during their lives. Tinsley, Nussbaum, and Richards (2007) explain that there is a common portrayal of urban minority youth to experience daily hassles, economic hardships, and might in some cases live in an impoverished community. According to Kaufman, Alt, and Chapman (2001), African American youth ages 18-24 had an 83.7% completion rate in comparison to a 91.8% completion rate of European Americans. African American youth constantly have poor academic outcomes in comparison to students of non-minority status (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002; Mandara, 2006; McLoyd, 1998; Steele, 2003; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992; Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009). What one finds most interesting about this is that African American youth start school with similar test scores as youths (European Americans) who complete high school at a higher percentage (Steele, 2003). One of the most discussed and studied phenomenon in education is the underachievement of African American youth. Cokley, McClain, Jones and Johnson explain that no other ethnic or racial group have received as much negative press referring to education as African-American students, mainly African American males (2011).

Furthermore, it has been noted that African American females outperform African American males when compared academically. African American females have been reported to earn better grades, experience fewer grade retentions as well as have higher graduation rates than African American males (Swinton, Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, &

Okeke-Adeyanju, 2011). Saunders, Davis Williams and Williams (2011) report that it appears as though the educational system has ignored the needs of African American youth as a whole, but the needs of African American males and their achievement in comparison to African American females have been ignored even more. Therefore the current study will lend itself to compare the academic achievement of African American females and African American males when analyzing the variables and the effect on academic achievement. Correlates which affect African American youth must be observed in order to determine the factors that exist that positively or negatively affect African-American youth in the area of academic achievement.

1.1 Background

The United States Department of Education reports that twenty-six percent of the composition of public schools by specific racial/ethnic group (2008) is composed of African Americans. As early as 2003, The United States Department of Education reported that “students of color would represent over 70% of the population in large cities such as California, New York and Texas”. The predictions by The United States Department of Education did indeed become true (2010). Given the previous statistics, it is important for social workers, educators and individuals who work in the social science arena to understand how to support minority students in the education arena.

Burchinal, Steinberg, Friedman, Pianta, McCartney, Crosnoe, and McLoy (2011) state that the substantial gap between African American and White children is “one of the pernicious problems facing American society” (p. 1404). The achievement gap is noted as being undisputable (Burchinal, et al, 2011). Moreover, African American boys and girls vary academically as well (Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin & Griffin, 2010). Stereotypes around race, gender and academics place African American males in negatively when compared to other racial groups and African American females

(Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin & Griffin, 2010). African American males have been known to experience a variety of negative life circumstances during their adolescent years. Furthermore, Gutman, Sameroff, and Eccles (2002) suggest that African American youth begin to experience academic problems during the transitional period of adolescence. Steele (2003) further explains this notion by adding that African American youth have been noted to fall as much as two grade levels behind their non-minority peers. Furthermore, the history of being an African American in American society not only encounters problems in the education arena, but struggles in other areas as well.

African American adolescents struggle with the task of developing an identity in American society and this is often split among racial lines (Monteith & Spicer, 2000; Winant, 1998). The history of African Americans within this country have been shaped by oppression and slavery, dating as far back as the 1600s when African Americans first arrived in the United States and dealing with current issues such as stereotypes and racial profiling (Hudley & Graham, 2001). Unfortunately, experiences such as prejudice, stereotypes and oppression are realities on a daily basis for many minority groups. Education is an area where racism is also seen due to minority groups, such as African Americans receiving a poor education (Patton, 1995). It has also been reported that African American males disengage in the education context due to experiencing racism within the school environment (Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin & Griffin, 2010).

Although, it is known that there are factors that influence academic achievement in the lives of all Americans, the focus of the current study is African American youth in the adolescent years, therefore an overview of the adolescence period is presented next in order to better understand what occurs during the adolescence period and gain a better grasp of everything youth face during this time.

1.2 The Adolescence Period

Gutman and Midgley (2000) describe adolescence as a period of transition.

Adolescence is broken up into three stages according to Hutchison (2011). Hutchison (2011) explains that the three stages are early (ages 11 to 14), middle (ages 15 to 17) and late (ages 18 to 20). There are various biological, psychological and social changes that occur during this time in each of the stages. The adolescence period is described to be a time of great physical change, noted by a rapid growth spurt which occurs in the early years which includes a redistribution of body weight, continuous brain development and maturation of the reproduction system. Biological changes that are associated with the early period of adolescence include hormonal changes, the beginning of puberty, and experimentation with sex and substances (Hutchinson, 2011). Psychological changes that are associated with the early period of adolescence are reactions to physical changes such as early maturation, body modesty and moodiness (Hutchinson, 2011). Social changes which occur during this time are changes in relationships with parents, less school structure, and distancing from culture and tradition (Hutchinson, 2011). Biological changes that are associated with the middle stage of adolescence as described by Hutchinson (2011) are noted to be the completion of puberty and physical appearance and possible experimentation with sex and experimentation. Psychological changes are reactions to late maturation, increased autonomy, increased abstract thought and the beginning of identity development and preparation of college or career. Social changes which occur during adolescence are heightened social situation decision making and attention to one's physical attraction. The late stage of adolescence is associated with biological changes such as slowing physical changes and possible experimentation of sex and substances. Psychological changes associated with this stage are formal operational thought, moral reasoning and continuous identity

development. Social changes include a limited amount of school and life structure, the beginning of intimate relationships and a renewed interest in one's culture and tradition. The adolescence period is affected by the biological, psychological, and social change characteristics in the context of social and ecological environments. The changes that occur within the adolescent stage along with the factors that interfere with academic achievement can result in horrible effects for the life course of youth.

1.3 Problem Statement

Problems faced by African American youth are well documented. African American youth are more likely to live in areas stricken by poverty, violence and instability (Thompson & Massat, 2005). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) reports that only fifty-five percent of all African American students graduated from high school on time with a regular diploma in comparison to seventy-eight percent of whites. The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) report that African American students are disproportionately located in areas determined to be high poverty, equipped with schools not performing up to standards and more vulnerable to poor educational outcomes which in turn inhibits success in life.

As noted by Osgood, Foster, and Courtney (2010), one reason that society should pay close attention to this vulnerable population is that the transition for this group into adulthood poses a greater challenge for minority youth in comparison to other youth. Kerpelman, Eryigit and Stephens (2008) explain that education is a necessity for personal and social success in American culture. African American youth constantly have poorer academic achievement when compared to non-minority youth (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002; Mandara, 2006; McLoyd, 1998; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992; Thomas, Caldwell, Faison & Jackson, 2009; Tinsley, Nussbaum, and Richards, 2007). Although African American youth face similar risk factors, some

overcome the stressors and their resilience allows them to be successful academically and therefore be successful throughout life. Inopportunately, the success stories of the individuals who overcome adversity are sparse. Self-efficacy, parental support and other ecological correlates must be examined in order to examine factors associated with positive academic outcomes of African American youth in order to determine what factors will allow youth to be successful academically.

1.4 Consequences of Non-Academic Achievement to Adolescents

The consequences of being unsuccessful in obtaining an education are unfavorable. Hardships are faced by individuals who are not equipped academically. Hardships include poverty (Bridegeland, Diuilio & Morrison, 2006), unemployment (Eckstein & Wolpin, 1999), substance abuse (Aloise-Young, Cruickshank & Chavez, 2002) delinquency (Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009) and depression (Liem, Lustig & Dillon, 2010).

Depression is one consequence of individuals who are without academic achievements. A study conducted by Liem, Lustig and Dillon (2009) examined depressive and life satisfaction among individuals who felt academically inadequate, meaning they did not have the necessary skills to excel in life (reading, math, writing). Individuals who left the academic environment feeling unsuccessful were found to not be able to properly complete daily life tasks in an efficient manner (Gore, Aseltine, Colten, & Lin, 1997). Research has shown that depression is a result of the inability to function as a complete adult, such as earning a salary that allows them to have satisfaction with life (Hussong, 2000; Liem, Lustig & Dillon, 2009), low self-esteem due to a feeling of inadequacy (McCaul, Donaldson, Coladarci, & David, 1992), and searching for adequate employment and being unsuccessful (Rumberger, 2001). Unfortunately, efforts of job

searches and being unsuccessful lead to criminal activity and delinquency (Balfanz & Legters, 2006).

Adolescents who do not achieve academically are at a higher risk for participation in delinquent and criminal behavior. Some criminal behavior that adolescents who do not achieve academically take part in include illegal drug sales, theft, fraud, forgery and in some cases assault (Lever, Sander, Lombardo, Randall, Axelrod, Rubenstein & West, 2004; Somers & Pilawsky, 2004). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2006) revealed that approximately 79 percent of prison inmates, either did not obtain a high school diploma or did not master objectives as they are prescribed in the educational curriculum. Furthermore, 59 percent of federal inmates and 69 percent of jail inmates did not obtain a regular high school degree. Harlow (2003) revealed that over a third of jail inmates stated that the main reason why they quit school or did not adequately master what was outlined was because of academic problems, behavior problems or loss of interest. Moreover, The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) reported that the days are over where a high school dropout or an individual who is inadequately educated is able to earn a wage suitable for living. Therefore unemployment and low wages are consequences that need to be discussed.

As previously stated adolescents who do not obtain skills that are necessary from the educational system earn less money and are likely to not attain steady employment. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) reported that over the course a lifetime, a high school dropout earns about \$260,000 less than a high school graduate. Rumberger (2001) found that 40 percent of students who do not excel academically are employed at any given time, but the rate of pay is more likely to be below the poverty line as defined at that period of time. Being unemployed and/or earning minimum wage has been found to

have detrimental effects on mental health (McNeal, 1995). There is a strong correlation between education, substance abuse and mental health (Orfield, Losen & Wald, 2004).

Adolescents with low academic achievement were found to use drugs at a higher rate when compared to students with high academic achievement according to the National Survey on Drug Use Among School Dropouts (2003). Heavy alcohol use is also an avenue for individuals who did not attain high academic achievement during high school (King, Meehan, Trim & Chassin, 2006). Alternatively, alcohol and drug use was found to diminish school engagement and increase other behavior and social problems (King, Meehan, Trim & Chassin, 2006).

1.5 Consequences to Society

Not only are consequences faced by adolescents who do not achieve academically, but there are consequences that society as a whole face due to non-academic achievement of adolescents. Since lower academic attainment results in a higher rate of incarceration (The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006) society is faced with spending tax revenues on caring for the inmates. An average of \$22,600 is spent per inmate (The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2004) revealed that the United States spent almost \$50 billion dollars in incarceration rates during 2004; the most recent statistics report that the rate has increased by at least 10 billion dollars due to an increase in incarceration rates (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). The cost of crimes to communities, states, the nation and the world is thought to not be overstated, as a result of not attaining education (Moretti, 2005). The cost of not attaining academic skills can not only result in costs to society due to incarceration, but can also result in costs to society due to lower tax revenues, an increase of public spending for public housing and TANF benefits, and health care.

Low academic achievement is correlated with a variety of multifaceted social issues. Public assistance given to individuals not obtaining academic skills in order for them to be productive members of society would decrease in costs by 1.8 billion if individuals would master educational objectives and complete high school (Waldfogel, Garfinkel, and Kelly, 2008). Waldfogel, Garfinkel, and Kelly (2008) report that nearly half of single mothers with a high school diploma are 24 percent less likely to be on Temporary Aid or Needy Families or TANF. Although poverty has been linked to a number of factors, it is most likely linked with not being educated or low academic achievement (Tram & Cole, 2000).

1.6 Importance to Social Work

Reid, Davis, Davis, Saunders, Williams, and Williams (2005) and Dupper (1993) both explain that the primary task of school social workers is to support a student's ability to complete high school. The Code of Ethics published by The National Association of Social Workers explicitly state that "the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention given to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty." Paying attention to the mission of social work implies that social workers should provide services to help children, especially adolescents, overcome barriers to learning, in order for them to develop the skills to be successful throughout their adult life. According to Erguner-Tekinalp (2009) there have been many efforts to improve the experiences of members of vulnerable groups. Their experiences are shaped by other forces that deny them equal opportunity within society. Education is indeed an area that can deny an individual from being a successful and productive member of society.

Examining the correlates which contribute to successful academic achievement is especially important to the field of social work. By understanding factors that aid students in being successful academically social workers can employ services that promote academic achievement and aid students in avoiding risks. This shows that there is a need to observe factors that either inhibit or enhance achievement among adolescents. Furthermore, the preamble of the National Association of Social Workers clearly states that social workers should pay “attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living”. The effect of not completing high school leads to unemployment, behavior and emotional problems, substance abuse, and early sexual activity (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006). Within American society, education is fundamental for financial, personal and social success (Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, 2008). Dropouts are a drain of the economies of all states and the nation as a whole. Individuals who are less educated and are from low income families drop out of high school at higher rates than their peers from high income families according to The United States Department of Education (2005).

1.7 Purpose of the Study

Noting the current state of education attainment by African American adolescents, it is imperative to explore potential factors to remedy this critical problem (Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGannaro, 2009). The facts and statistics that have been presented validate the severity of the importance of adolescents, especially African Americans need to attain. Understanding how this particular population can be helped through an observation of the correlates that the literature reveals is necessary. The overall purpose of the study is to analyze ecological correlates that contribute to academic achievement among African American adolescents. The study will also explore possible differences in academic achievement between male and female African

American youth while examining the correlates within the study. The reasoning behind the study is to fill gaps that may exist that will aid in solving the issues of low academic achievement of African American youth and add knowledge that will enable social workers and educators to do what is necessary to help our youth and future productive society members. An analysis of differences between African American males and females must be analyzed due to literature constantly noting differences between African American females and African American males. This study will focus on ecological correlates that have been mainly observed analyzing non-minority youth that relate to academic success. The results of the study will aid in identifying factors which may cause African American males to score lower academically when compared to African American females. The implications will aid in efforts to ensure that African American adolescents do not fall beneath the cracks and have the chance to be as successful as non-minority adolescents.

1.8 Rationale for Comparing African Americans Only

The current study focuses on the academic achievement of African American youth. The current study also compares the academic achievement of African American females and African American males. Brown and Bigler (2005) explain that knowledge still lacks in the area of determining why African American males fall behind African American females. The reasoning behind only exploring African American youth is to focus on achievement gaps of not only African American youth, but the achievement gaps between African American females and males. Research has shown that preferential treatment of African American females in comparison to African American males is a possible reason as to why African American males score lower academically than African American females, however according to the theoretical perspective used to guide the current study, a variety of factors will be analyzed in order to determine what

factors result in the lower scores of African American males. Therefore, a variety of correlates are used to not only compare African American males and females, but to explore African American youth as a whole. Chapter 2 will present an overview of the theoretical framework used to guide the study

Chapter 2

Theoretical Review

The underachievement of African American youth continues to be a topic of discussion in all social science frameworks. There are a number of correlates which might influence the academic achievement of African American adolescents. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, which is the theory used to guide the study, its application the study and to provide a review an empirical review of literature. The theoretical perspective used will guide the dissertation.

2.1 Theoretical Review

Historically, Steinberg (1996) and Jencks and Phillips (1998) along with Ogbu (1978) argued that the achievement gap between Black and Whites was due to Black youth thinking that academic success was not linked to the identity of being Black. Ogbu (1978) used an oppositional culture explanation in order to explain why African American adolescents were not exceling in the area of academia or why education was not viewed as a viable goal. Ogbu's explanation held that African American adolescents, "perceive fewer academic rewards, fewer occupational opportunities, and greater social stigma related to academic success than do adolescents who belong to the majority culture" (1978, p. 45). Ogbu and Fordham (1986) and Kunjufu (1985) furthered this explanation by stating that African American children associated characteristics such as receiving good grades and doing well in school as "acting White." Fordham (1988) extended this perspective by providing an explanation that there was a struggle faced by African American students who have high academic achievements when balancing achievement and their racial identity. Eaglin and Karabenick (1993) agreed explaining that African American youth felt a lack of support for achievement, and African American youth

avoided seeking tutoring or help in areas where they needed help, which increased the chances of academic failure. Another theory introduced was the stereo-type threat theory.

The Stereo-type threat theory proposed by Steele (1992) explains that stereotypes effect the achievement of African American students. This theory proposed that stereo-types influence the attitudes and behaviors of African American adolescents (Steele, 1992). As previously mentioned, there have been multiple theories which have been suggested to be the reasoning behind the academic achievement of African American youth. However, Whitaker, Graham, Servertson, Furr-Holden, and Latimer (2011) express that motivational theorists in the psychology field have moved away from individual-based approaches to explain academic success to socio-ecological models to explain academic achievement. The ecological perspective is a social ecological model and is noted throughout decades to help in understanding correlates that lead students to both high and low academic achievements.

The Ecological Perspective is a perspective that is commonly used in the social science arena to determine factors that aid in shaping individuals (Bogenschneider, 1996; Dornbusch et al., 2001; King, McDougall, DeWitt, Hong, Miller, Offord, Meyer, & LaPorta, 2005; Bowman, Prelow & Weaver, 2007). According to Bogenschneider (1996), the ecological viewpoint has gained widespread acceptance in the social sciences including social work. Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed the ecological perspective because he believed that individuals are not only shaped by personal characteristics, but also according to the environments in which they develop. Therefore the ecological perspective is appropriate in order to analyze the correlates that influence African American youth in the areas of academic achievement. The ecological approach to understanding academic achievement allows an understanding of the mechanisms that

increase the likelihood of academic achievement (Steinberg, et. al, 1992). Recently, Stewart (2007) found that ecological factors played an important part in the academic achievement of African American students.

2.1.1. Overview

The Ecological Perspective has long been used in the area of developmental psychology. The originator of the theory is a well-known scholar in the area of psychology, Urie Bronfenbrenner. There are various theories of development which focus on the nature vs. nurture argument pertaining to the development of individuals. However, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that the environment in which an individual dwells has a greater impact on development. The ecological approach to understanding academic achievement allows for a comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms that drive the motivation to obtain positive academic outcomes (Steinberg, et al., 1992).

As previously stated, Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced an ecological framework that identified interconnected systems that influence development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that child development can best be understood through an examination of the interaction between multiple persons and environments that surround the individual during life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) provided a framework that analyzed the family and school context. The development of the model aids in a better understanding of the complex factors that incorporate the family and school context, which in turn influences academic and social support received by youth. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory explains the differences in knowledge, development and competencies through support, guidance that one might receive and the environment in which they live. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that the interactions between a number of overlapping ecosystems influence an individual greatly. The influences are broken up into five systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem.

2.1.2. The Microsystem

The microsystem is described as the smallest of the contexts in which a child is embedded. The microsystem is most proximal to the child. The environment in which the child “directly participates and interacts” (Richman et al., 2004) is considered to be a part of the microsystem. This is the level that also includes individual characteristics and individual factors. For example teachers and peers, immediate family members, childcare centers, neighborhoods, and schools are located within the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner’s theory (Stewart, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1979;1989) defined microsystems as: “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality and systems of belief” (p.1645). Additionally, the student has the ability to influence the microsystem as well. Such as, students or children have the ability to influence their parents. Many of the relevant studies (Kirk, Lewis, Lee, & Stowell, 2011; Monteith & Spicer, 2000; Patton, 1995; Stewart, 2007; Thompson & Massat, 2005; Winant, 1998) pertaining to adolescents and academics have focused on the family, neighborhood, and school system.

2.1.3 The Mesosystem

The second layer is the mesosystem. The mesosystem includes the interactions, linkages, and processes that take place between at least two settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989). The mesosystem is the layer that offers the relationships or connections of the different structures located within the microsystem layer. Factors that are placed in this section can include problems that the student has faced in school or problems that the students have faced between school and home. An example of correlates which can be included in the mesosystem is a youth receiving good grades due to attending tutoring

or a child getting good grades due to parental involvement. Another example is a child's parents going through a divorce and in turn the child displays unwanted actions such as disruptive behavior in the school setting. In other words, the mesosystem is the layer that is a system of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

2.1.4 The Exosystem

The next layer is the exosystem. The exosystem is described by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1989) as the level of a developing person's ecology surrounding linkages and processes between one setting that involves the individual and one setting that does not. A setting that does not involve an individual has the ability to influence them. The exosystem plays a passive role in the influence of a child. For example, an adolescent may not have enough parental involvement at school by their guardian or parent due to the work hours of the parent or guardian, which in turn affects them academically. The parent does not have the ability to help with homework or visit the child at school, due to work hours.

2.1.5 The Macrosystem

The macrosystem is described by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1989) as being the overarching pattern of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem of a culture or subculture with a reference to particular religious ideologies, customs, lifestyle, bodies of knowledge, government laws and hazards. Bronfenbrenner (1986; 1988; 1989; 1993) expresses the fact that one must go beyond labels such as class and culture to specific social and psychological features at the macro level that affect the condition that is being researched. In this instance, the subject being researched is the academic achievement of African American adolescents.

2.1.6 The Chronosystem

The last layer, the chronosystem, extends the environment into a third dimension. The third dimension is historical time. The chronosystem incorporates change or consistency over time to the individual and the environment that the individual is located within. For example, a change in family structure, such as a divorce has the ability to effect human development and the academic process. Also an individual's life has the ability to change daily, which in turn has different effect daily on an individual. Indeed the ecological systems theory is the most appropriate theory to use for the study. An application to the study is discussed next.

2.2 Application to the Study

As previously stated, the Ecological Systems Theory has become the dominant theoretical framework across multiple social science disciplines (social work, education, criminology, and sociology). The theory allows for factors across the different systems to be analyzed and determine the effects of connections between individuals, families and communities on academic achievement. Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1989) explains that the Ecological Systems Theory allows for small changes to be observed that may result in unpredictable developments. For example, an adolescent's family structure might change in a given semester (a parent might be involved in an accident), which might result in the adolescent student having to get a job which in turn leads to a decline in the adolescent's grade point average. According to The Ecological Systems Theory, the end result of a lower grade point average is the conclusion of the interconnections of systems. The Ecological Systems Theory is not a causal theory. It helps to explain how the different systems affect each other as explained in the previous explanation. The Ecological System Theory acknowledges that there is not a single reason that low academic or high academic achievement may occur, but acknowledges there are multiple

factors that might lead to academic achievement. The Ecological Systems Theory accepts the fact that there is more than one route that leads to academic achievement.

As previously discussed, academic achievement develops from the five levels or layers of the Ecological Systems Theory: microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The systems act to influence, accommodate and adapt to each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989). The term reciprocity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989) is used to describe what happens. The Merriam Dictionary (2012) explains the term reciprocity as the quality or state of being dependent on one another. In all, the Ecological Systems Theory includes the whole person in each level, and not just a focus on one aspect.

When observing academic achievement among African American adolescents, a number of correlates located within each of the layers of the Ecological Systems Theory must be analyzed. Researchers have shown that there have been sharp declines in achievement of adolescents (Becker & Luthar, 2002). The declines in achievement have been linked to lowered academic attitudes, self-esteem and motives (Dweck, 2000) which are located in the macrosystem, school related attitudes held by peer groups related to academic norms and behaviors (Murdock, 1999) which are located in both the microsystem and macrosystem as well as parental influence and support (Thomas, 2000; Weinstein, 2002) which are both located in the microsystem. All correlates previously discussed are believed to have an effect on academic achievement and will be discussed in further detail in the literature review. As previously stated, the study will use the ecological systems theory as a guide for the literature review.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Currently, the education system is in crisis, which transfers into American society facing a crisis. Taylor, Casten, Flickinger, Roberts and Fulmore (1994) further emphasize the fact that the underachievement of African American youth is a critical issue faced by society today. Not only do African American youth fall behind in the academic arena (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Hill, 1997; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2005), but African Americans also experienced a variety of factors that negatively affect their academic attainment at high rates as noted by Crain and Moles (1982) and some of those same factors are still seen today as noted by Stevenson (2007). Just so, there are correlates which positively affect their academic achievement. In order to understand what is happening during adolescence, a number of factors must be analyzed. Through the use of the ecological systems theory, correlates will be discussed and defined that are believed to influence academic achievement.

3.2 Empirical Review

In order for articles to be included in the present literature review, the article was required to be published in a peer-reviewed journal. The focus of the article was required to examine factors that were associated with academic achievement in African American adolescents or youth. The main database that was used in order to find the required literature was Academic Search Complete. Academic Search Complete is described as the world's most comprehensive multi-disciplinary database. The other databases that were searched for empirical literature articles were: J-Stor, Education Research Information Center or ERIC, and the Health and Wellness Collection. There were a multitude of search terms used in order to locate relevant articles.

The terms used in order to complete the search included: “African American”, “academic achievement”, “risk factors”, “protective factors”, “youth”, “adolescents”; “adolescence”; “factors”; “teens”; “school”; academic outcome”; “parental involvement”; “peer influences”; “ecological factors”, “environmental factors”; “students”; and “grades”. The terms were used in various combinations in order to yield a significant amount of articles for possible usage in the current literature review. After obtaining articles that were available from the usage of the terms provided, a reference review of those articles were reviewed in order to gather more information about the topic of the study. Only peer reviewed journal articles that were written in the English language were accepted.

Articles that were found to contribute to the review of literature were used in the current review of literature. The most current article used is from 2013. There were some articles used within the current review of literature that were not focused on African Americans, however the information pertained within the articles allowed for usage in the current review due to the few amount of African American only articles available for the current review and the knowledge provided in the subject matter of academic achievement.

There are several factors discussed within the current review of literature that pertain to African American adolescents’ academic achievement, however the factors discussed are not exhaustive. All factors that are discussed are not the focus of the current study however they are included in the literature review in order to provide a more complete overview of factors pertaining to academic achievement of African American adolescents. Factors that have been documented to have positive and negative effects on the academic success of African American youth are located within the layers of the ecological systems. Hence, the ecological theory is used as the overarching framework for the study and therefore the correlates will be presented according to the layer in which

they belong. The first set of correlates will be discussed are located within the microsystem.

3.3 Microsystems

The microsystem, as previously stated, is the layer closest to the child. This includes individuals and individual characteristics of the child. This layer includes parental expectations, peer influences, gender, academic self-efficacy, resilience, depression and school connectedness.

3.3.1 Parental Expectations

Parental expectations are noted to function as a communicator to students that parents value high academic achievement (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). In turn students internalize the value of education and attempt to attain high academic achievement (Davis-Kean, 2005). Historically (Haller & Portes, 1973) the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy was introduced as relating to high parental expectations which leads to high academic achievement among students. This notion still exists today and is concurred by other researchers as well (Benner, Graham & Mistry, 2008; Dumais, 2006). Three of the observed studies (Beutel & Anderson, 2008; Carpenter, 2008; Hao & Bonstead-Burns, 1998) revealed that parental expectations differed across racial and ethnic groups. Beutel and Anderson (2008) reported that the expectations of South African parents of their children was a predictor of student's academic expectations which in turn correlated with the academic achievement of the students. Carpenter (2008) reported correlations of the expectations of parents and the expectations of Latino students were weaker for immigrant parents and Latino students when compared to other minority and non-minority students. Hao and Bonstead-Burns (1998) focused on minority groups (Asian and Mexican immigrants, African Americans, and native born Mexican Americans) and European Americans and noted that within all groups that

parents who had frequent conversations with their children pertaining to education produced higher student expectations and higher academic achievement.

Parental expectations have also been linked to academic self-efficacy in students (Benner & Mistry, 2007). Benner and Mistry (2007) conducted a study among 522 African American and Latino youth in the age range of 9-16 and demonstrated through path analysis that maternal expectations were associated with students' perceptions of their academic skills and their ability levels. In turn this was associated with achievement test scores and academic performance. The findings of Benner and Mistry (2007) are consistent with studies conducted by Holloway (2010) and Lewis (1995).

3.3.2 Peer Influence

Peers have been noted to have an influence on the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents. Peer influence has been documented within the literature, however, as expressed by McKown and Strambler (2008) little is known about peer influence on academic achievement of the minority population. What is known is that African American students receive negative feedback when being successful academically (Moore, Ford & Whiting, 2006) from peers. There are indeed some African American students who want to be successful academically however, but fear of being ridiculed by peers acts as a barrier for academic success (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). Ford and Grantham (2003) support this argument by reporting that African American students who succeed academically could be ridiculed for "acting White". Kinderman (2007) and Ryan (2001) concluded that peers have an enormous effect on adolescents' motivation and engagement and subsequently academic achievement. Academic support from peers is positively related to whether youth decide to pursue higher education goals (Kinderman, 2007). To combat negative ridicule by peers, African American students are reported to

develop a positive racial identity that serves as a coping strategy to fight off negative peer ridicule (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002).

3.3.3 Gender

Gender is a factor that also influences academic achievement of African American adolescents. Irving and Hudley (2008) express the fact that African American males, as a group, have lower graduation rates when compared to African American females due to the fact that African American males drop out of school at slightly higher rates than African American females (Williams et al., 2002), as well as lower standardized test scores when compared to African American females and European males. Moreover, earlier research in this area indicated that boys valued education, but African American youth thought that being successful academically was more noted for African American females (Hudley & Graham, 2001). Unfortunately, boys defined their success, not through academics but through athletic ability (Isom, 2007).

The differences in educational experiences according to gender is thought to begin during the elementary school years, better known as the foundational years of schooling (Williams et al., 2002). During elementary school males typically receive lower grades when compared to females in the area of reading (Alexander & Olson, 1997), repeat a grade more than females (Cairns, Cairns & Neckerman, 1989) and males misbehave more often than females in school (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2001). Compared to African American male students, female students seem to have a far better future regarding their academic future. For example, Brown and Jones (2004) determined that usefulness was associated with grade point average or GPA, which in turn interpreted to mean that female African American females believed that education was useful in more instances than African American males.

3.3.4 Academic Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy has been studied in a variety of areas including reward contingencies (Schunk, 1983), self-regulation (Bandura, 1991), social comparisons (Bandura & Jourden, 1991), anxiety and self-concept (Pajares & Miller, 1994) and academic performances (Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariege, Alvarez, Roces, & Garcia, 2002; Lohan & Billings, 2008; Obach, 2003; Spencer et al., 1993; Zimmerman, 1994, 1995). Bandura's study (1986) supports that self- efficacy mediates the effect of skills and performance by having an effect on student effort, perseverance, and persistence (Bandura, 1991; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1984; Schunk & Hanson, 1985). Results are consistent when analyzing minorities, such as African Americans (Saunders, Davis, Williams & Williams, 2004) and Latinos (Alva & de Los Reyes, 1999).

Spencer and colleagues (1993) found that academic self-efficacy is the most prominent predictor of academic performance for males and females. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1986) is the beliefs that individuals have about themselves of whether they can or cannot complete an academic task. There are a variety of studies that support the fact that the belief of whether students feel that they have academic competence is a predictive factor of future academic success (Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariege, Alvarez, Roces, & Garcia, 2002; Lohan & Billings, 2008; Obach, 2003). Research has demonstrated a link between academic self-efficacy and academic achievement (Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariege, Alvarez, Roces, & Garcia, 2002; Lohan & Billings, 2008; Obach, 2003; Spencer et al., 1993). Building students' beliefs about their academic achievement may influence their academic achievement. African Americans definitely need to be observed in this area in order to determine how self-efficacy influences their academic achievement.

3.3.5 Resilience

Resilience is the ability for one to regain mental health and positive adaptation despite setbacks and adversity (Herrman et.al., 2011; Murray, 2003). It is an important factor that has the ability to affect the quality of life and outcomes in individuals. Youth who have positive outcomes regardless of vulnerability and increased risks are known to be resilient. Moskowitz (1983) explains that the concept of resilience infers that children, even if exposed to extreme conditions can overcome setbacks and have healthy adult lives. Individuals who are labeled to be resilient also have positive personal characteristics such as high self-esteem, high self-efficacy, internal locus of control and positive ways to cope when they face adversity. Tinsley, Nussbaum and Richards (2007) explain that risk and resilience factors at ecological levels are relevant for African-American youth.

3.3.6 Depression

Studies have shown that depression directly affects the academic achievement of African American youth (Barber, 1996; Brackney & Karabenick, 1995; Garber, Robinson, Valentine, 1997; Kudra, 1988) due to both youth not feeling that they are cared about by parents or parents' constant intrusion on the youths' sense of self (Bradford, Barber, Maughan, Olsen, Erickson, Ward, 2003). Measures of adolescent depression showed that some types of parental support were associated to negative youth outcomes, such as low academic achievement (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006). A one year study conducted by Shahar, Henrich, Winokur, Blatt, Kuperminc, and Leadbeater (2006) included a diverse sampling group in order to assess academic achievement. The researchers reported that symptoms of depression resulted in negative effects on the youths' grade point average. Furthermore, the researchers found an interaction between gender and depression which resulted in lower academic achievement. Brackney and

Karabenick (1995) express the fact that depression alone does not affect academic achievement and there are other factors that are combined with the depressive symptoms which in turn affects academic achievement.

3.3.7 School Connectedness

Research suggests that connectedness to one's school helps to enable positive youth outcomes including positive academic outcomes (Blum, 2005; Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, & Bowes, 2007; Davis, 2006; Jia, Way, Ling, Yoshikawa, Chen, & Hughes, 2009; Lonczak, Abbott, Hawkins, Kosterman and Catalano, 2002; Loukas, Ripperger, Suhler & Horton, 2008; Monahan, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2009; Steinberg, 1996). Lonczak, Abbott, Hawkins, Kosterman and Catalano (2002) explain that feeling connected to the school one attends during adolescence is associated with higher levels of academic motivation and a lower level of connectedness is associated with higher levels of school misbehaviors. Steinberg (1996) explains that the school environment impacts the way that students feel about their school and how connected the students are to the school. Students' perception of connectedness has impact on their behavior, both inside and outside of the classroom (Blum, 2005; Davis, 2006). The adolescent transitional period, as previously stated, is marked by the onset of puberty and also marked by negative outcomes for young adolescents (Niehaus, Rudasil, & Rakes, 2012), which includes lower academic motivation (Monahan, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2009) and a decrease in school performance (Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, & Bowes, 2007). Baumeister and Leary (1995) further emphasize that feelings of belonging are a human need and help to impact academic outcomes. Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, and Bowes (2007) found that when students feel connected to school, they like going to school, they like their peers and their teachers and therefore they want to perform well in school by earning good grades and being on the A and B honor roll. Earlier Klem and

Connell (2004) reported that by the time that adolescents reach high school, forty to sixty percent of them are already disconnected from school, which indicated according to Klem and Connell (2004) that they did not like their teachers, lacked interest in school and did not find their school work meaningful or engaging. Monahan, Oesterle, and Hawkins (2009) explain that a “diminished connectedness” to school enables students to be at risk for maladaptive development which includes low academic achievement.

3.4 Mesosystem

3.4.1 Discipline

Recent research (Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott & Cotalano, 2004; Morrison, Anthony, Storino & Dillion, 2001; Nelson, Benner, Lane & Smith, 2004; Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff, 2000) indicates that behavior is associated with academic achievement among youths. Fleming et.al (2004) reports correlations between grade point average and suspensions among boys in the sixth grade. Students who were suspended more than five times had lower grade point averages than students who were never suspended. Roeser, Eccles, and Sameoff (2000) found that the relationship between problematic behaviors that caused suspensions to strengthen over time which indicated that the more problematic behaviors a student exhibited decreased their academic performance. Morrison, Anthony, Storino and Dillion (2004) revealed that the number of suspensions that a student received increased their chances of receiving low standardized test scores. Nelson, Benner, Lane & Smith (2004) concluded that students with severe problem behavior in turn experience large academic deficits when they were compared to their peers. Nelson, Benner, Lane and Smith (2004) further explained that students who externalized their behaviors (fighting, acting out, disrupting class) were strongly related to academic performance deficits when compared to students who internalized their behaviors. Other research has also shown that the amount of time in the instructional

setting is highly correlated with student achievement (Barrett, 2004). When a student acts out in class they lose instructional time due to the fact that they are either suspended or sent to an in-house suspension within the school. Research has shown that minorities are suspended on average more than non-minorities and males are suspended more than females (The United States Department of Education, 2008). African Americans and Hispanics are suspended more than another other minority group (The United States Department of Education, 2008).

3.5 Exosystem

3.5.1 Parental Support

As with other factors that have been discussed, parental support plays a role in the academic success of African American adolescents. The family context is important and a major ecological setting for youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989; Luster & McAdoo, 1991). Family, especially the parent-adolescent relationship, was found to be an important social context for adolescent development which includes academics (Kerpelman, Eryigit & Stephens, 2008). Findings from research has shown adolescents' academic expectations and achievement is associated with their parental attitudes and monitoring of their academics (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Kerpelman & Mosher, 2004; Smith, Schneider, & Ruck, 2005). In a study conducted by Karavasilis, Doyle, and Margolese (1999) it was found that encouraging and supportive relationships with parents fostered a sense of self during the time of adolescence which results in a positive self-concept of youth and the researchers' results are supported by Gutman and McLoyd (2000) and Oyserman, Harrison and Bybee, (2001).

Three studies (Brody, Murry, Gerrard, Gibbons, Molgaard, McNair, Brown, Willis, Spoth, Luo, Chen, & Neubaum-Carlan, 2004; Bean, Bush, Mckenry, & Wilson, 2003; Hill,

Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004) reveal positive findings for parental support and the academic achievement of African American adolescents. Brody et al. (2004) found during a family intervention study of low income families that when parents communicated the importance of education and were involved in the education (P.T.A. meetings and parent conferences) that better youth academic outcomes were predicted and attained. In another study addressing the effect of parental involvement on the academic achievement of African American youth (Hill et al., 2004) results found that among a sample of seventh through eleventh grade students, parental academic involvement showed a positive association between African American youth, but not European Americans, for academic achievement. Finally, a study conducted by Bean et al. (2003) found that support by mothers, in an examination of parental support of African American and European Americans adolescents, predicted adolescent achievement. To summarize, parental support of academic achievement among African American youth indicates that parental involvement plays an important role in academic outcomes.

3.5.2 Community Support

Although research in the area the neighborhood context, community and academic achievement have been limited, a few articles were discovered in this area. An abundant amount of the research conducted used census data in order to characterize neighborhoods and neighborhood structure (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Meyers & Miller, 2004; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006; Woolley, Grogan-Kaylor, Gilster, Karb, Gant, Reischl, & Alaimo, 2008). A growing body of research suggests that social processes of communities and neighborhoods influence school outcomes, including academic achievement (Ainsworth, 2002; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Meyers & Miller, 2004; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006; Woolley, Grogan-Kaylor, Gilster, Karb, Gant, Reischl, & Alaimo, 2008). Social scientists have learned that school outcomes are greatly influenced by a

variety of systems which includes the community (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Meyers & Miller, 2004). The increase in the levels of poverty and unemployment in multiple urban areas for the past 30 years has led to an increase in the interest of social influences of neighborhoods and individual outcomes. Adolescents who live in urban areas face such issues other than poverty; they also face crime and violence. These neighborhood and community factors unfortunately, hinder youth in the areas of academics and emotional well-being (Baur, Sapp, & Johnson, 2000).

Community and neighborhood support have been linked to combat dropout rates (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Somers & Piliawsky, 2004; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Research also suggests that in the African American community, mentors and role models play an important part in academic achievement among African American youth (Meyers & Miller, 2004). Research supports the fact that African American youth who live in disadvantage neighborhoods have adverse effects on adolescent academic achievement by depriving youth of positive influences (Meyers & Miller, 2004) and having limited health care resources (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

3.6 Macrosystems

3.6.1 Church Attendance

There has been an interest in examining the effects of church attendance on academic achievement (Byrk, Lee & Holland, 1993; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Gaziel, 1997). Recently, research has focused more on church attendance and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2007). Lee (1986) found that attending church tends to reduce the achievement gap between African Americans and White students. This finding is supported through findings from Jeynes (1999; 2005). Koenig (2000) and Koenig and Larson (2001) reported that attending church can help individuals deal with

social situations. Research has also shown that church attendance helps to influence students to work harder in school (Gerhards, 1996).

3.6.3 Perceptions of Prejudice

Taylor, Casten, Flickinger, Roberts and Fulmore (1994) reported that the school achievements of African American adolescents is deeply influenced by their perception of prejudice within the school environment in which they are expected to learn. This report was consistent with a previous report produced by Steinberg, Dornbusch and Brown (1992) which indicated that the more aware that African American adolescents were of the issue of prejudice in the school environment, the less engaged they were in completing their school work and making good grades. Brown and Bigler (2005) report that prejudice and discrimination affects millions of children throughout the world in the area of academics. Neblett, Philip, Cogburn and Sellars (2006), Wong, Eccles and Sameroff (2005) and Scott (2009) explain that elements of racism and perceived prejudice which are present at educational and individual levels are detrimental to the academic performance of African American students. Discriminatory practices are found to be in the curriculum and the school culture (Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1992), school funding (Orfield & Lee, 2005) and resources and facilities (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Within the education system students report that African American students perceive prejudice from teachers (Ruck & Wortley, 2002), disciplinary actions (Wong, Eccles & Sameroff, 2005) and peer interactions (Davidson, 1996). Neblett, Philip, Cogburn and Sellars (2006) reveal that students' perceptions of prejudice has the ability to interfere with the academic process within the school altogether, which includes the area attendance. Brown and Bigler (2005) found that students who perceived that they were being judged even before they were given an opportunity to be successful did not even try to achieve in the area of academic and in many cases did not attend school

often. Prejudice is also seen through the educational practice of “tracking”, which students are placed in certain classes based on their perceived abilities (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). The impact of perceived prejudice must be analyzed with other correlates in order to understand the impact that it has on the academic achievement of African American students.

3.6.4 Fair Treatment of Students

Casteel (2000) revealed that African American students complained about unfair treatment in the classroom by teachers. Other studies (Brophy, 1983; Casteel, 1998; Ford, 1995; Orfield & Lee, 2005) report that African American students felt that they were given less attention, praised less and given discipline referrals more than non-minority students. Many educators feel that a positive relationship must be present between the teacher and the student in order for the student to perform academically. Not surprisingly, during the 1990s, there was an increasingly amount of attention given to how students are treated in the classroom and academic achievement (Casteel, 2000). Unfortunately, the amount of research in this area has decreased.

3.7 Chronosystem

3.7.1 Family Structure

Min Lee and Kushner (2008) revealed that half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce and millions of children every year enter into a new type of family structure, which includes that single parent family. Several studies (Ham, 2004; Pong & Ju, 2000; Videon, 2002; Zhan & Pandey, 2004) have been reported to find that students who are members of single-parent families consistently find that there are negative effects on a child’s academic achievement, completion, behavior, and social development. Videon (2002) suggests the research has overlooked the possibilities that households that are headed by fathers compared to single mothers may impact their

sons or daughters academic achievement differently. Ham (2004) supported this argument stating that children who live in a household with a same gender parent (sons living with their father and daughters living with their mother) are more successful academically. Trautner, Ruble, Cyphers, Kirsten, Behrendt and Hartmann (2005) report that children who live in a single-parent household with a parent who is not the same gender exhibit a greater amount of behavior problems when compared with children who live in a single-parent household with a parent who is the same gender. Academic achievement is affected due to the behavioral and social learning (Trautner, et al, 2005)

3.8 Gaps in the Literature

The literature pertaining to the correlates associated with academic achievement among African American youth present some limitations. To begin, the literature tends to focus on African American youth who are from low income families. For example, none of the literature focused on African American youth who are from families where the parents are educated or at least have one degree. This population needs to be studied as well because youths have the ability to “fall through the cracks.” Secondly, none of the literature presented in the literature review focused totally on the African American population. This population is considered vulnerable and direct attention needs to be given to this particular population. Third, the studies generally have only focused on one factor and therefore did not use the ecological perspective, which allows for examination of how factors affect one another. Finally depression needs to be studied in more detail, as a factor in order to determine the association with academic achievement. There has not been a lot of attention given to this area. Any knowledge that can be added to aid this population needs to be discovered and acted upon.

3.9 Research Questions

In all the overarching hypothesis for the study is: There will be a set of ecological correlates that will be associated with academic success for African American youth. The following research questions will guide the research in the study:

Research Question 1: Is there a correlation between academic achievement and the following variables: parental expectations, peer influences, academic self-efficacy, resilience, depression, parental support, community support, church attendance, family structure, school connectedness, equal treatment of students by teachers, perceived prejudice, and discipline?

Research Question 2: Is there an ecological level that is more associated with high academic achievement of African American youth?

Research Question 3: What ecological correlates is most associated with high academic achievement of African American youth?

3.10 Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis 1: Higher parental expectations will be correlated with higher academic achievement of African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 2: Higher academic self-efficacy will be correlated with higher academic achievement of African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 3: Higher resilience will be correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 4: Discipline will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 5: Peer influence will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 6: Depression will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 7: Higher parental support of African American youth will be correlated with high academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 8: Higher community support will be correlated with high academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 9: Church attendance will be correlated with high academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 10: A change in family structure will be correlated with low academic achievement of African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 11: Perceived prejudice will be correlated with lower academic achievement of African American youth.

Research Hypothesis 12: Fair Teacher treatment of African American youth will be correlated with high academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 13: School connectedness will be correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The researcher used an exploratory, non-experimental design. Survey research is described to be the best method to use for researching a population that is too large to be observed directly (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Therefore the survey method is a popular method to use in the social science field (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). An exploratory design allows for the researcher to determine if gender was statistically significant before conducting other tests to analyze the hypotheses within the current study. A cross-sectional design allows the researcher to determine whether a correlation or association exists that might have significant value (Rubin & Babbie, 2008) or add to the body of knowledge that is the focus of the research.

Secondary analysis is described by Rubin and Babbie (2008) to be a form of research that uses collected data from one study and re-analyzed the data in other studies. In most cases the following study is conducted by a researcher to answer different research questions (Rubin & Babbie). Secondary data analysis is growing among the social research field with the help of technology. Datasets are easier to obtain from agencies that share information in order for other researchers who are interested in various topics to analyze existing data (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Sales, Lichtenwalter, and Favola (2006, p.544) further support the use of secondary data by adding that “data always has the potential for revisits.” Therefore a secondary data analysis using data from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health is used in order to answer the research questions presented.

4.2 The National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, also referred to as Add Health, is a longitudinal survey of a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7-12. The study began during the 1994-1995 school year, with the most recent data being taken in 2008. The population studied by The National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health survey has been followed into young adulthood, with the last survey being when the cohort were ages 18-26. The modes of data collection included record abstracts, paper and pencil interviews, on-site questionnaires, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and several types of computer assisted interviews. Add Health combines longitudinal survey data in order to analyze the respondents' social, emotional, economic, psychological and physical well-being, romantic relationships, neighborhood, community, school, friendships, and peer groups in order to provide opportunities to analyze how social environments and behaviors during the adolescent time frame are associated with health and achievement outcomes in young adulthood (The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 2008).

4.2.1 The Original Study

The longitudinal study is broken up into three waves. The first wave (Wave I) began in September of 1994 and lasted until April 1995. Wave I yielded a sample of 90,118 adolescents and used an In-School Questionnaire along with 164 School Administrator Questionnaires. Wave I also yielded 20,745 (78.9 % response rate) adolescent In-Home Interviews, an Add Health Picture Vocabulary Test and 17,700 Parent Questionnaires. Wave II began in May 1996 through June 1996, where 128 School Administrator Questionnaires (80.3% response rate) were given and 14,738 adolescent In-Home Interviews were completed (80.3% response rate). The response rate was considered rather than the attrition or retention rates as the most appropriate

statistic (Harris, Halpern, Entzel, Tabor, Bearman, & Udry, 2008). Wave III yielded 15,197 young adult in-home interviews and biomarkers, and Add Health picture vocabulary test scores and matched the previous data in order to draw conclusion. The survey is a nationally representative sample of youth. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health researchers hope that the research will allow policymakers, researchers, health care providers, social workers and educators to help protect the health of adolescents.

4.2.2 Sampling Design

Schools were selected in order to gather participants from a list of 26,666 schools in the United States from a sample frame organized by enrollment size, census region, urbanization, school type and percent of the population who were European American. A school was determined to be eligible for the study if it included an 11th grade and had a minimum enrollment of 30 students. From this list a list of 132 schools was developed, which included high schools and feeder junior high school and middle schools. If a selected school declined to participate, the school next on the list was chosen. According to standards based for the Add Health study, the sample was representative of United States adolescents. There were a total of 334 Chinese adolescents, 450 Cuban adolescents, 437 Puerto Ricans and 1,619 African American adolescents who participated in Wave I who completed the surveys. The participants were able to be coded using other labels as well. For example, full sibling, half sibling, sibling of twins, twin, and disabled.

4.2.3 In School Survey

In order for a student to participate parental consent was required and a passive or active student agreement was used. A total of 90,118 students completed the survey which lasted for a total of 45 minutes. The participants were not compensated. This

particular portion of the survey pertained to family, friends, school, health questions and school activity participation. Friendship group was also measured due to the participants were asked to name at least five friends who were male and who were female.

4.2.4 In Home Interview

All waves of the original study used in home interviews. The interviews were given in the students' home using computer assisted personal interviews or CAPI. Each survey took between one to two hours to complete. For this part of the study participants were given \$20 for completing the Wave I in home interview and \$40 for the Wave IV questionnaire. Questions again asked participants questions pertaining to relationships, school, behaviors and beliefs.

4.2.5 Parent Interview

At least one parent or guardian of the participants was interviewed. Questions pertained to parent-child relationship quality, school involvement, participant's friends, education and family structure. Parents were not compensated for participation in the interview.

4.2.6 Current Study

For the current study, data (Wave I) from the representative sample of 1619 African American youths, ages 13-17 was analyzed. The dependent variable for the current study is academic achievement. The independent variables for the study are: gender, parental expectations, peer influences, academic self-efficacy, resilience, depression, discipline, parental support, community support, church attendance, family structure, perceived prejudice, school connectedness, and fair treatment by teacher. The items used in order to conduct the analysis are described following a discussion of statistical power.

4.2.7 Statistical Power

In the social science arena, it is routine to accept a confidence interval of 95%. As noted by Rubin and Babbie, in order to achieve this level of confidence, there must be at least 400 cases within the sample. Within the current study, there is a sample of 1,619 African American youth. Secondly, as noted by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006) the rule of thumb in order to conduct a multiple regression analysis, is that the research must include at least 10 cases for each variable that is included within the study. Within the current study, there are 14 independent variables, which would yield a sample size of 140. The current study definitely meets the requirements of the two discussed methods pertaining to statistical power.

4.3 Items to Answer Research Questions

The following items were used in order to answer the research questions as diagramed by the researcher. Questions were taken directly from the questionnaires used in the Add Health study.

4.3.1 Academic Achievement Measurement

In the current study, the dependent variable, academic achievement is defined as the grades that a student receives in core classes. Core classes are defined as English, Mathematics, History or Social Studies and Science. The grading scale for the core classes are A, B, C, D, and F. For the original study, the codes were as follows, A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, Didn't Take Subject=5, Took subject, Wasn't graded in this way=6, Refused=96, Legitimate skip=97 and Don't Know=98. The reasoning behind the current study is to analyze ecological correlates that effect high academic achievement. Therefore, the variables were recoded to reflect as such. As shown in Table 4.1, the grades were re-coded to reflect the order of achievement. For example, an "A" is the higher grade that a student can receive and therefore a grade of "A" was recoded to the

number 4, since this is the highest number given. Other answer choices were: didn't take subject, took subject, wasn't graded this way, refused and legitimate skip, which were all given the dummy code of 0. The answer choice of don't know was recoded as the number 1 because the original research noted that the answer choice of "don't know" was seen to be an "I don't care about school." The reliability test revealed a Cronbach Alpha score of .74. The Cronbach Alpha score yielded good reliability of the item measurement. The scores will be projected to range between 0 and 16, with a score of 16 meaning a higher level of academic achievement or all A's.

Table 4-1 Academic Achievement Measurement

Questions	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
At the (most recent grading period/last grading period in the spring) what was your grade in English Language Arts? (Question 11, Section 5)	A=A B=B C=C D=D or Lower E= Didn't Take this subject F=Took subject, wasn't graded this way G=Refused H= Legitimate Skip I=Don't Know	1=A 2=B 3=C 4=D or Lower 5= Didn't Take this subject 6=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 96=Refused 97= Legitimate Skip 98=Don't Know	A=4 B=3 C=2 D=1 0=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 0=Refused 0= Legitimate Skip 1=Don't Know
At the (most recent grading period/last grading period in the spring) what was your grade in mathematics? (Question 12, Section 5)	A=A B=B C=C D=D or Lower E= Didn't Take this subject F=Took subject, wasn't graded this way G=Refused H= Legitimate Skip I=Don't Know	1=A 2=B 3=C 4=D or Lower 5= Didn't Take this subject 6=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 96=Refused 97= Legitimate Skip 98=Don't Know	A=4 B=3 C=2 D=1 0=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 96=Refused 97= Legitimate Skip 98=Don't Know

Table 4-1-continued

<p>At the {most recent grading period/last grading period in the spring} what was your grade in history or social studies? (Question 13, Section 5)</p>	<p>A=A B=B C=C D=D or Lower E= Didn't Take this subject F=Took subject, wasn't graded this way G=Refused H= Legitimate Skip I=Don't Know</p>	<p>1=A 2=B 3=C 4=D or Lower 5= Didn't Take this subject 6=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 96=Refused 97= Legitimate Skip 98=Don't Know</p>	<p>A=4 B=3 C=2 D=1 0=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 0=Refused 0= Legitimate Skip 1=Don't Know</p>
<p>At the {most recent grading period/last grading period in the spring} what was your grade in science? (Question 14, Section 5)</p>	<p>A=A B=B C=C D=D or Lower E= Didn't Take this subject F=Took subject, wasn't graded this way G=Refused H= Legitimate Skip I=Don't Know</p>	<p>1=A 2=B 3=C 4=D or Lower 5= Didn't Take this subject 6=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 96=Refused 97= Legitimate Skip 98=Don't Know</p>	<p>A=4 B=3 C=2 D=1 0=Took subject, wasn't graded this way 0=Refused 0= Legitimate Skip 1=Don't Know</p>

4.3.2 Parental Expectation Measurement

As previously mentioned in the literature review of the study, parental expectations have been found to correlate with the academic achievement of students. Parental expectations was measured by perceived disappointment level that a student felt that their parent would have if they did not finish high school and college. Four questions lend themselves to be included in the Parental Expectation measurement. The researcher determined that the items were reliable in predicting parental expectations. The scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .777. The scores ranged from 0 to 4, with higher scores yielding higher parental expectations. The codes of 6, 8, and 9 will not affect the scores due to these codes being labeled as missing variables. However, the researcher

will note that the code of 6 means not applicable holds a meaning of the specific parent not being involved in the child's life.

Table 4-2 Parent Expectations Measurement

Questions	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how disappointed would your mom be if you did not graduate from college?	A= Low B= High C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= Low 5= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable	0= Low 1= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how disappointed would your dad be if you did not graduate from college?	A= Low B= High C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= Low 5= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable	0= Low 1= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how disappointed would your mom be if you did not graduate from high school?	A= Low B= High C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= Low 5= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable	0= Low 1= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how disappointed would your dad be if you did not graduate from high school?	A= Low B= High C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= Low 5= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable	0= Low 1= High 6=Refused 8=Don't Know 9= Not Applicable

4.3.3 Peer Influences Measurement

Previous research has shown that the more time that is spent with peers, the greater the influence a peer may have on an individual (Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion and McCord, 2005). Therefore, there is one question in the original study that will enable the researcher to analyze peer influence. The question relates to the amount of time spent with peers or friends. The question is from Section 2, Question 7 and it states, “During the past week, how many times did you just hang out with friends?” The original answer choices were: “Not at all”, “1 or 2 times”, “3 or 4 times”, “5 or more times” and “Don’t Know”. The following items show the original codes, which are the same codes that will be used for the study. The scores range from 0 to 3. A higher score would reflect more time spent with a peer, which in turn will mean greater evidence for peer influence.

Table 4-3 Peer Influence Item

Question	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
During the past week, how many times did you just hang out with friends?”	A= Not at all B= 1 or 2 times C= 3 or 4 times D= 5 or more times E= Don’t Know	0= Not at all 1= 1 or 2 times 2= 3 or 4 times 3= 5 or more times 6= Refused 8= Don’t know	0= Not at all 1= 1 or 2 times 2= 3 or 4 times 3= 5 or more times 6= Refused 8= Don’t know

4.3.4 Academic Self-Efficacy Measurement

There were two questions in the original study which corresponded to academic self-efficacy. Therefore the two questions were chosen to create the academic self-efficacy measurement. The two questions were: “How often do you have trouble paying attention in school”? and “How often do you have trouble getting your homework in on

time”? Academic self-efficacy is developed through paying attention in school and in the end the having the ability to complete homework assignments without any trouble due to understanding assignments presented at school. Academic self-efficacy occurs when students feel that they have the ability to produce a certain outcome, such as homework, because they have the motivation to complete it (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Therefore the chosen questions, which yielded a Cronbach Alpha of .698 is reliable in assessing academic self-efficacy. The scores ranged from 0 to 2, with higher scores indicating a high level of academic self-efficacy.

Table 4-4 Academic Self Efficacy Items

Question	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
How often do you have trouble paying attention in school?	A=Never B=Just a few times C=About Once a week D=Almost everyday E=Everyday F=Don't Know	0=Never 1=Just a few times 2=About Once a week 3=Almost everyday 4=Everyday 6= Refused 7=Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	0= 1 1,2,3,4=0 6=No Answer 7=Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know
How often do you have trouble getting your homework in on time?	A=Never B=Just a few times C=About Once a week D=Almost everyday E=Everyday F=Don't Know	0=Never 1=Just a few times 2=About Once a week 3=Almost everyday 4=Everyday 6= Refused 7=Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	0= 1 1,2,3,4=0 6=No Answer 7=Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know

4.3.5 Resilience Measurement

As previously mentioned, resilience is the ability for one to regain mental health and positive adaption despite setbacks and adversity (Herrman et. al., 2011; Murray, 2003). In the original study, there was one statement that pertained to resilience. In the original survey, the statement was: Difficult problems make you very upset. The students were given six answer choices, which were: "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Disagree", or "Don't know". If a student did not answer the question they were given the label of "refused". The scores range from 0 to 3. A student receiving a score of three is considered to have a high level of resiliency. According to the definition of resilient, a student who is faced with a difficult problem would not be affected.

Table 4-5 Resilience Item

Statement	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
Difficult problems make you very upset.	A= Strongly Agree B= Agree C= Neither Agree nor Disagree D= Disagree E= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2= Agree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4=Disagree 5= Strongly Disagree 6=Refused 8= Don't Know	1=Strongly Agree/Agree 2=Neither Agree or Disagree 3= Disagree/Strongly Disagree 6=Refused 8=Don't Know

4.3.6 Depression Measurement

In the original study, there was a question pertaining to levels of Depression. The question stated, "In the past seven days, how often have you felt depressed." The answer choices were: Never/Rarely (Coded 0), Sometimes (Coded 1), A lot of the time (Coded 2), Most of/All of the time (Coded 3), Refused (Coded 6), and Don't Know (Coded 8). The codes that the original study has in place will not be re-coded. Codes 6 and 8

are labeled as missing variables so that they will not affect the results of the study. The score will range between 0 and 3, with 3 showing a high level of depression, 2 showing a moderate level of depression, 1 shows a low level of depression and 0 reflects no depression.

4.3.7 Discipline Measurement

As presented in the literature review, the number of times that students are suspended from school influences their academic achievement. The original study presented one question that would allow itself to be included in the study as representation of school suspensions or discipline. The question was “(HAVE YOU BEEN/WERE YOU} expelled from school”? The original research labeled the answer choices as yes or no answers. Therefore the original study labeled the variables as dichotomous variable. The codes were 0=No and 1=Yes. In turn the scores were either 0 or 1, with 1 meaning that the student was expelled from school at least one time.

4.3.8 Parental Support Measurement

In the original study, parental support was measures by how much a student felt that their parents cared about them. Therefore, for this analysis the researcher will analyze parental support in the same manner. The question in the original study asks, “How much do you feel that your parents care about you?” The students were given the answer choices as follows: A -“Not at All”, B -“Very Little”, C-“Somewhat”, D-“Quite a Bit”, E- “Very Much”, F- “Does Not Apply”, and G-“Don’t Know”. The original study coded the answer choices as follows, 1= “Not at All”, 2= “Very Little”, 3= “Somewhat”, 4= “Quite a Bit”, 5= “Very Much”, 6= “Does Not Apply”, “96= “Refused” and 98= “Don’t Know”. The researcher recoded the variables as 0=Not at All, 1= “Very Little”, 2=“Very Little”, 3= “Somewhat”, 4=“Quite a Bit”, 5= “Very Much”, 96=Does Not Apply”, 98=Does Not Apply” and 99= Don’t Know”. The codes 96, 98, and 99 were recorded as missing variables in

the same manner as the original study. The scores range from 0 to 5, with higher scores meaning a higher level of parental support.

4.3.9 Community Support Measurement

Three questions were chosen to be included in the Community Support Measurement. The three questions added yielded a Cronbach alpha score of .591. The scores range from 0 to 3. Higher scores indicate a higher level of community support. The codes of 8 and 9 were labeled as missing variables.

Table 4-6 Community Support Items

Question	Original Answers	Original Codes	Re-codes
In the past month, you have stopped on the street to talk with someone who lives in your neighborhood.	A=True B=False C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= True 2= False 8= Don't Know 9=Not Applicable	1=True 0= False 8= Don't Know 9= Not Applicable
People in this neighborhood look out for each other.	A=True B=False C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= True 2= False 8= Don't Know 9=Not Applicable	1=True 0= False 8= Don't Know 9= Not Applicable
You know most of the people in your neighborhood.	A=True B=False C=Don't Know D= Not Applicable	1= True 2= False 8= Don't Know 9=Not Applicable	1=True 0= False 8= Don't Know 9= Not Applicable

4.3.10 Church Attendance

In the original study, there was one question pertaining to church attendance. The question asks "In the past 12 months, how often did you attend religious services?"

students could choose A for “Once a week”, B for “Once a month/less than once a week”, C for “Less than once a month”, and D for “Never”. In the study, church attendance was recoded where “Once a week” = 3, “Once a Month/less than once a week” = 2, “Less than once a month” = 1 and “Never”= 0. Higher Scores indicated a higher level of church attendance. Unanswered questions were treated as missing.

4.3.11 Family Structure

A change in family structure can have an effect on the academic achievement of a student. The original study will enable the researcher to analyze family structure as well in order to determine correlation with academic achievement. There were two questions in the original survey that allow the researcher to analyze a change in family structure. The questions ask, “Did you ever live with your father” and “Did you ever live with your mother.” The answer choices for both questions are as follows: A= “No (skip to Q. 10)”, B = “Yes”, C = “Refused”, D = Legitimate slip” and E = “Don’t Know.” The original codes for both questions are: 0= “No (skip to Q. 10)”, 1 = “Yes”, 6 = “Refused”, 7 = Legitimate slip” and 8 = “Don’t Know.” After researching the question more, the researcher determined that the answer choice “legitimate skip” was to be chosen if the students still lived with that particular parent. Therefore for this particular question recoding is not needed, due to the coding being in a form that is in the correct format for the study. If the student chose yes for either question, the student will be noted to have had a change in life structure.

4.3.12 School Connectedness Items

There were four statements that were used in order to determine school connectedness measurement. The statements used to measure school connectedness were: 1) During the school year you felt like you were part of the school. 2) During the school year you felt close to the people at your school. 3) You felt happy at your school.

4) You feel safe in your school. The statements chosen yielded a Cronbach alpha score of .753, which is reliable in assessing school connectedness. The answer choices ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The answer choices were re-coded as shown as shown in the table below. Codes 6, 7, and 8 were treated as missing values. The scores ranged from 0-16, with higher scores indicating a higher level of school connectedness.

Table 4-7 School Connectedness Items

Question	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
During the school year you felt like you were part of the school.	A= Strongly Agree B=Agree C=Neither agree or Disagree D= Disagree E=Strongly Disagree F= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither agree or Disagree 4= Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	4= Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Neither agree or Disagree 1= Disagree 0=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know
During the school year you felt close to the people at your school.	A= Strongly Agree B=Agree C=Neither agree or Disagree D= Disagree E=Strongly Disagree F= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither agree or Disagree 4= Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	4= Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Neither agree or Disagree 1= Disagree 0=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know

Table 4-7-continued

During the school year you felt happy at your school.	A= Strongly Agree B=Agree C=Neither agree or Disagree D= Disagree E=Strongly Disagree F= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither agree or Disagree 4= Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	4= Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Neither agree or Disagree 1= Disagree 0=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know
During the school year you feel safe in your school.	A= Strongly Agree B=Agree C=Neither agree or Disagree D= Disagree E=Strongly Disagree F= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither agree or Disagree 4= Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	4= Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Neither agree or Disagree 1= Disagree 0=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know

4.3.13 Perceived Prejudice

One statement from the original study was used in order to measure perceived prejudice within the school environment. The statement within the original study was “Students at your school are prejudice.” The answer choices were presented as a likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scores ranged from 0-4, with higher scores indicating higher levels of perceived prejudice. The original codes, original responses, codes and re-codes are presented in Table 4-8.

Table 4-8 Perceived Prejudice Items

Question	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
Students at your school are prejudice.	A= Strongly Agree B=Agree C=Neither agree or Disagree D= Disagree E=Strongly Disagree F= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither agree or Disagree 4= Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	4= Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Neither agree or Disagree 1= Disagree 0=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know

4.3.14 Teacher Treatment

There was one statement within the original survey that allowed for equal and fair treatment of students by teachers to be measured. The statement was as follows, "Teachers treat students fairly." The answer choices were presented as a likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scores ranged from 0-4, with higher scores indicating higher levels of equal and fair treatment. The original codes, original responses, codes and re-codes are presented in Table 4-9.

Table 4-9 Fair Teacher Treatment Items

Question	Original Responses	Original Codes	Re-Codes
Teachers treat students fairly.	A= Strongly Agree B=Agree C=Neither agree or Disagree D= Disagree E=Strongly Disagree F= Don't Know	1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Neither agree or Disagree 4= Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know	4= Strongly Agree 3=Agree 2=Neither agree or Disagree 1= Disagree 0=Strongly Disagree 6= Refused 7= Legitimate Skip 8=Don't Know

4.4 Reliability and Validity

The items within the study were analyzed for reliability and a Cronbach Alpha analysis is included in order to ensure internal consistency. The policies of the IRB have been observed in all phases of the study. The definitions used and scales used during the original study are used for the present study which will ensure validity (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Restating, this study uses items that are located within the original study in order to probe underlying constructs that are to be measured. The researcher understands that measurement error is present in every piece of research, however due to having a good Cronbach Alpha score, measurement error is able to be reduced (Waltz, Strickland & Lenz, 2005). The items were used to gather correlates that are associated with academic achievement which again, will add to the body of knowledge in order to aid both the social work and education field in order to aid the population studied, African American youth. The data obtained in the original study was taken from the direct source, the participant, who are a nationally representative of the population.

4.5 Data Analysis

The overarching or guiding hypothesis for the purposed research study is the following: There will be a set of ecological correlates that will be associated with academic success for African American youth. The hypothesis research question was developed as well as other hypotheses in order to accept the research hypothesis. In order to accept the guiding hypothesis, the researcher analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health that was analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software or SPSS, version 21. The researcher ran descriptive statistics and frequencies on all correlates, which allowed the researcher to further describe the characteristics of the sample and the relationships among the variables in the sample (Rubin & Babbie, 2008).

In order to test the 13 hypotheses, first an Independent t-Test was used in order to analyze gender and the various variables in order to determine if first a significant difference was found in academic achievement scores. Then if a significant difference was found in analyzing gender, a regression was then used to analyze the variance in scores when gender was added to the model. If a significant difference was not found, gender was not added to the model.

The researcher used the statistical analysis tool, multiple regression, in order to analyze the results for the overarching hypothesis and the three research questions. Multiple regression is used in order to explain the relationship of the independent variables included in the dissertation. Since this study has multiple independent variables, multiple regression is appropriate to use (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). An explanation of a data analysis of each hypothesis is discussed next.

Research Hypothesis 1: Higher parental expectations will be correlated with higher achievement of African American youth.

First in order to test hypothesis 1, the researcher conducted an Independent t-Test which included an analysis of gender and parental expectations in order to determine if there was a difference when gender is observed. Then in order to determine whether higher expectations were correlated with higher academic achievement of African American youth, the researcher conducted a liner regression analysis.

Research Hypothesis 2: Higher academic self-efficacy will be correlated with higher academic achievement of African American youth.

First in order to test hypothesis 2, the researcher conducted an Independent t-Test which included an analysis of gender and parental expectations in order to determine if there was a difference when gender is observed. Gender was found to be significant. Therefore hypothesis two was further evaluated by using regression in order

to determine whether academic self-efficacy affects academic scores. Next gender was added to the model in order to determine the variance of academic achievement when the variable, academic self-efficacy, gender and academic achievement were analyzed.

Research Hypothesis 3: Higher resilience will be correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

Hypothesis three was evaluated by conducting an Independent t-Test in order to determine whether gender was statistically significant when analyzing academic achievement. There was no significant difference therefore the researcher then conducted a linear regression in order to determine whether being resilient influences academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 4: Discipline will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

The researcher first used an Independent t-Test which included gender and academic self-efficacy in order to determine if there is a significant difference between males and females when observing resilience in the area of academic achievement. Since there was a statistically significant difference research hypothesis four pertaining to discipline was then analyzed through the use of a regression analysis alone and then with gender added to the model.

Research Hypothesis 5: Peer influence will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

Research Hypothesis five pertaining to peer influence was analyzed through the use of a linear regression analysis as well. The researcher first used an Independent t-test which included gender as an independent variable in order to determine if there was a difference when gender and peer influence were analyzed. A significant difference was not found according to the results on the Independent t-Test.

Research Hypothesis 6: Depression will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

The researcher first analyzed depression along with gender through the use of an Independent t-Test. Then depression was analyzed through the use of regression, since there was not a statistically significant difference found through the analysis of an Independent t-Test, gender was not added to the regression model when depression was analyzed using the regression model.

Research Hypothesis 7: Higher parental support of African American youth will be correlated with high academic achievement.

The researcher used an Independent t-Test in order to determine if there was a significant difference between academic achievement of males and females when gender and parental support were observed. A linear regression was used in order to determine whether parent support influences academic achievement. Gender was not added to the model because it was determined that there was not a significant difference in academic achievement when gender is observed.

Research Hypothesis 8: Higher community support will be correlated with high academic achievement of African American youth.

The researcher first analyzed academic achievement by including gender along with community support using an Independent t-Test. A significant difference was not found, therefore gender was not placed in the regression model. In order to determine whether community support is correlated with high academic achievement of African American youth, a linear regression was conducted.

Research Hypothesis 9: Church attendance will be correlated with the high academic achievement of African American youth.

. The researcher first used an Independent t-Test in order to determine whether there was a statistical significant difference between males and females when observing church attendance and academic achievement. There was not a statistical significant difference found. Next, church attendance and academic achievement was analyzed through a linear regression analysis

Research Hypothesis 10: A change in family structure will be correlated with low academic achievement of African American youth.

The researcher first used an Independent t-Test in order to determine whether there was a difference between males and females when observing family structure and academic achievement There was not a statistical significant difference found. Next a linear regression analysis was used in order to analyze the effects of family structure on academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 11: Perceived prejudice will be correlated with lower academic achievement of African American youth.

First, the researcher used an Independent t-Test in order to determine whether there was a difference between males and females when observing perceived prejudice and academic achievement. A statistical significant difference was not found. Next, a linear regression analysis was used in order to analyze the effects of perceived prejudice on academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 12: Fair Teacher treatment of African American youth will be correlated with high academic achievement.

First, the researcher used an Independent t-Test in order to determine whether there was a difference between males and females when observing fair treatment by teachers and academic achievement. A statistical significant difference was not found.

Therefore, a linear regression analysis was used in order to analyze the effects of fair treatment by teachers on academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 13: School connectedness will be correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

The researcher used an Independent t-Test in order to determine whether there was a difference between males and females when observing school connectedness and academic achievement. The results indicated that a statistical significant difference existed. Therefore, school connectedness was analyzed using regression and then gender was added to the model.

4.6 Limitations

Using a large nationally representative sample, the study overcame some limitations however there are certain limitations that are still present. First of all, the study was conducted using a secondary data analysis. The researcher understands that the data set was originally composed to answer questions pertaining to the health of adolescents over time. However, the variables used to collect that data lends itself to be analyzed in other to determine answers to other subjects that need to be studied, such as correlates of academic achievement pertaining to African American youth. Rubin and Babbie (2008) express the fact that some data sets are extremely large and not all of the variables can be “feasibly analyzed in the original study” (p. 392).

Secondly, the research is based off of data that currently exists. Therefore the study is limited to variables that are included in the current data set. It is understood that there may be other variables which contribute to the topic of academic achievement pertaining to African American youth.

The original study is a longitudinal study. Although longitudinal studies are of great value in assessing predictors of risk of developing problems over time there are

threats that exist when using longitudinal data. Events that occur over time during the study can have an effect on the results. Just as individuals who are tired of answering questions or participating in the study may drop out or choose not to participate anymore, which might in the end cause valuable data to be lost.

Finally, as previously stated, the measurements and items are derived from secondary data. This does not mean that the analysis of the data will be inaccurate, but information may be limited. Limited data may cause a decrease in reliability and validity. The researcher is aware that problems may exist in the area of reliability and validity however Rubin and Babbie (2008) express that awareness is the first protection against reliability and validity issues.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the results of Chapter 4. The purpose of the study was to analyze and investigate correlates which contribute to academic achievement among African American youth and analyze differences between African American males and African females. In order to complete the study, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 21, was used to analyze items taken from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, also referred to Add Health.

Research Hypothesis 1: Higher parental expectations will be correlated with higher achievement of African American youth.

In order to test hypothesis 1, gender was first analyzed along with academic achievement and parental expectations using an independent T-test. There was not a significant difference ($p=.083$) when comparing academic achievement with the independent variables gender and parental expectations. However Table 5-1 below gives the percentage of males who had parental support versus females. As shown in the table, males had lower levels of parent expectations than females. According to the results of the Independent t-Test, gender did not make a significant difference when analyzing academic achievement when observing parental expectations. Therefore, gender was not analyzed in the next analysis which examined parental expectations. A linear regression analysis was then conducted in order to evaluate the effects of parental expectations. The analysis concluded that approximately 1.5% ($R^2=.015$) of variation in academic achievement was accounted for by parental expectations. This correlation was significant ($\beta=.22$, $p=.000$). A two unit increase in parental expectations ($B=2.20$) will result in a one point increase in academic achievement. As hypothesized, higher

parental expectations were correlated with higher achievement of African American youth.

Table 5-1 Parental Expectation Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	T
Male	17.5	N=773	3.82	-.908
Female	17.7	N=846	3.72	

Research Hypothesis 2: Higher academic self-efficacy will be correlated with higher academic achievement of African American youth.

In order to test hypothesis 2, first an Independent t-Test was used to first determine whether there was a significant difference in academic achievement scores when gender was analyzed along with academic self-efficacy. According to the results of the Independent t-Test, there was a significant difference ($p=.000$) in academic achievement scores when analyzing academic self-efficacy and gender. This is outlined in Table 5-2. Next regression was used in order to determine the amount of variance could be accounted for by gender and academic self-efficacy. Approximately, 3% ($R^2=.031$) of the variance in academic achievement scores was accounted for by academic self-efficacy. The correlation was significant ($\beta=.211$, $p=.000$). A unit increase in academic self-efficacy resulted in a 4 point increase in academic achievement scores ($B=.403$). Gender was entered in the next step of the analysis. Gender and academic self-efficacy accounted for approximately 2% ($R^2=.016$) of the variance. Females scored higher ($M=.92$) when examining academic self-efficacy when compared to males ($M=.76$). A unit increase in gender resulted in a 1 point increase in academic achievement scores ($B=.108$). Academic self-efficacy remained significant ($\beta=.221$, $p=.000$) when entered with gender. In all, as hypothesized, African American youth who

exhibit academic self-efficacy achieve higher academic scores than youth who do not exhibit academic self-efficacy.

Table 5-2 Academic Self Efficacy Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	T
Male	.76	N=724	3.45	.206*
Female	.92	N=831	4.72	

*denotes $p < .05$

Research Hypothesis 3: Higher resilience will be correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by first using an Independent T-test in order to determine if there was a significant difference in academic achievement when examining resilience along with gender. The Independent Samples t-Test revealed that there was not significant between males and females ($p = .084$). However, it was determined from the sample that more females exhibited resilience more than males, as shown in Table 5-3. Next a regression analysis was used in order to determine whether resilience was correlated with high academic achievement. Approximately 2% ($R^2 = .022$) of the variation in academic achievement scores was accounted for by resilience. Resiliency was significant ($\beta = .120$, $p = .001$) when analyzing academic achievement scores in African American youth. A unit increase in resiliency resulted in a 1 point increase ($B = 1.09$) in academic achievement scores. As hypothesized, higher resilience is correlated with higher academic achievement.

Table 5-3 Resilience Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	.01	N=636	.238	.075
Female	.03	N=707	.236	

Research Hypothesis 4: Discipline will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

In order to test hypothesis 3, an Independent t- Test was performed in order to determine whether there was a significant difference in academic achievement scores when analyzing gender and discipline. The Independent Samples t-Test revealed that there is a significant difference ($p=.000$) when gender is analyzed along with discipline. Next a regression analysis was performed in order to determine how much of the variance could be explained by gender and how much of the variance could be explained by discipline. The analysis revealed that 5% ($R^2=.052$) of the variance in academic achievement scores could be explained by discipline. A unit increase in discipline will result in a 3 point decrease in academic achievement. Next gender was added to the model and 3% ($R^2=.03$) of the variance in academic achievement scores can be accounted for by gender and discipline. A unit increase in gender will result in a 2 point ($B=2.01$) decrease in academic achievement. African American males ($M=.11$, $SD=.31$) were reported to be expelled more than African American females ($M=.05$, $SD=.22$). As hypothesized, discipline is correlated with lower academic achievement.

Table 5-4 Discipline Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	.11	N=771	.31	3.31*
Female	.05	N=844	.22	

*denotes $p<.05$

Research Hypothesis 5: Peer influence will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

In order to analyze hypothesis 5, first an Independent t-Test was used to analyze whether there was a significant difference in academic achievement when analyzing

gender and peer influence. The independent samples t-test revealed there is not a significant difference ($p=.067$) in the area of academic scores when observing gender and peer influence. However, the data did reveal that males (78%) are influenced more by peers than females (72%), as shown in Table 5-5. A linear regression was then used to further analyze hypothesis 5. Approximately 1% ($R^2=.012$) of the variation of academic achievement scores was accounted for by peer influence. A unit increase in peer influence resulted in a 2 point decrease in academic achievement scores ($B=2.09$). This finding was significant ($\beta=.170$, $p=.000$). As hypothesized, peer influence is correlated with lower academic achievement.

Table 5-5 Peer Influences Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	.72	N=760	.245	.084
Female	.70	N=842	.206	

Research Hypothesis 6: Depression will be correlated with lower academic achievement for African American youth.

First in order to analyze hypothesis 6, an Independent samples t-test was used to analyze whether gender impacted academic behavior when analyzed with depression. Females ($M=.44$, $SD=.496$) showed a higher level of depression than males ($M=.33$, $SD=.472$). However, the t-test did not reveal a significant difference between the academic achievement of males and females who were depressed ($p=.674$). Since, there was not a significant difference between males and females when analyzing academic achievement and depression, gender was not entered into the regression model. Research hypothesis 6 was tested using a linear regression analysis. Approximately 1 % ($R^2=.008$) of the variance in academic achievement scores can be explained by depression. This association was significant ($\beta=.90$, $p=.000$). African

American youth who are not depressed tend to score .65 points higher than students who are depressed ($B=.65$). As hypothesized, depression is correlated with lower academic achievement.

Table 5-6 Depression Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	.33	N= 775	.472	3.58
Female	.44	N=843	.496	

Research Hypothesis 7: Higher parental support of African American youth will be correlated with high academic achievement.

In order to analyze hypothesis 7, an independent samples t-test was used in order to determine whether there was a significant difference between males and females when observing parental support and gender. The Independent t-Test revealed that there was a statistical significant difference ($p=.001$) between males and females in the area of academic achievement when analyzing gender and parental support. Females who had parental support scored higher academically than males who had parental support. Another interesting finding was that males who had parental support had higher scores than males who did not have parental support. However, this finding was not significant ($p=.056$). In the next step of the analysis linear regression was used in order to further test hypothesis 7. This analysis revealed that approximately 4% ($R^2=.042$) of the variance in academic achievement scores was accounted for by parental support. This association was significant ($\beta=.260$, $p=.001$). A unit increase in parental support resulted in a 5 point increase in achievement scores ($B=5.08$). Next gender was added to the model. Gender accounted for approximately 2 percent of the variance in academic achievement scores ($R^2=.022$). One unit increase in gender resulted in 1 point increase

in academic achievement scores ($B=.131$). A frequency analysis then revealed that females (86%) had more parental support than males (67%), as shown in Table 5.7. As hypothesized, higher parental support was correlated with higher academic achievement.

Table 5-7 Parental Support Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	4.81	N=761	.547	-.295*
Female	4.82	N=844	.569	

*denotes $p<.05$

Research Hypothesis 8: Higher community support will be correlated with high academic achievement for African American youth.

In order to analyze hypothesis 8, first an Independent t-Test was used in order to analyze whether there was a significant difference between African American males and African American females. There was not a significant difference when analyzing gender, however, the analysis revealed that females received more community support ($M=3.54$) than males (3.73). Next, a linear regression was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 8. According to the analysis, community support accounted for 3% ($R^2=.032$) of the variance of academic achievement scores. This association was significant ($\beta=.322$, $p=.000$). A unit increase in community support accounted for a .088 ($B=.088$) increase in academic achievement scores. As hypothesized, community support is correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

Table 5-8 Community Support Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	3.54	N=759	.794	5.63
Female	3.73	N=828	.923	

Research Hypothesis 9: Church attendance will be correlated with high academic achievement for African American youth.

First an Independent t-Test was used in order to determine if there was a statistical significant difference between the academic achievement scores of males and females who attended church. The t-Test revealed that there was not a statistical difference between academic scores of males ($M=.92$, $SD=.267$) who attended church and females ($M=.94$, $SD=.229$) who attended church, as shown in Table 5-9. However, females did have higher academic scores than males when analyzing church attendance, although the difference was not significant ($p=.072$). Next, a linear regression was used in order to test this hypothesis. Approximately 2% of the variance in academic achievement scores were accounted for by church attendance. This finding was significant ($\beta=.139$, $p=.000$). A unit increase in church attendance accounted for a 2 point increase in academic achievement scores ($B=1.9$). As hypothesized, church attendance was correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

Table 5-9 Church Attendance Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	.92	N=736	.267	2.37
Female	.94	N=842	.229	

Research Hypothesis 10: A change in family structure will be correlated with low academic achievement of African American youth.

First, in order to analyze gender, family structure and academic achievement, an Independent t-Test was used in order to determine if there was a significant difference in academic achievement scores. An Independent T-test showed that there was not a significant difference ($p=.121$) when analyzing gender and a change in family structure.

However the results of the Independent t-test showed that males (M=9.64) who experienced a family structure change scored higher academically than females (M=8.59) that experienced a change in family structure. A linear regression was then used to further analyze hypothesis 10. The linear regression analysis revealed that African American youth who have had a change in family structure were no different significantly ($\beta=.237$, $p=.064$) by a change in family structure in comparison to youths who did not have a change in family structure. Hypothesis 10 was not supported therefore this hypothesis was not further analyzed.

Table 5-10 Family Structure Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	9.64	N=776	.459	.062
Female	8.59	N=842	.493	

Research Hypothesis 11: Perceived prejudice will be correlated with lower academic achievement of African American youth.

First, in order to analyze hypothesis 11, an Independent t-Test was used to analyze whether a significant difference would be shown when observing gender. The results indicate that females (M= .34) perceive prejudice less than males (M=.35) students, however this finding was not significant ($p=.059$). A linear regression was then used in order to further analyze hypothesis 11. The results of the linear regression analysis revealed that approximately 1% ($R^2=.007$) of the variance was accounted for by perceived prejudice. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant finding ($p=.004$) when analyzing perceived prejudice within the school. One unit increase in perceived prejudice resulted in a .060 unit ($B=.060$) decrease in academic achievement. As hypothesized, perceived prejudice resulted in lower academic achievement for African American youth.

Table 5-11 Perceived Prejudice

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	.35	N=594	.477	-.227
Female	.34	N=641	.475	

Research Hypothesis 12: Fair Teacher treatment of African American youth will be correlated with high academic achievement.

In order to analyze hypothesis 12, an Independent t-Test was used to analyze whether there was a difference in male and female academic achievement scores in relation to teacher treatment. The results showed that females (M=3.39, SD=1.3) believed that teachers treated them fairly in more instances than males (M=3.35, SD=1.45). The academic achievement scores of females were higher than the academic achievement scores of males and the finding was not significant (p=.753). Next, a linear regression was analyzed hypothesis 12. The results of the analysis revealed that 8% (R²=.008) of the variance in academic achievement scores was accounted for by teacher treatment. The results were significant (β=.007, P=.000). For every unit increase in teacher treatment, academic scores increased by .055 (B=.055). As hypothesized, fair teacher treatment resulted in higher academic achievement of African American youth.

Table 5-12 Fair Teacher Treatment Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	3.35	N=636	1.45	-.315
Female	3.39	N=707	1.3	

Research Hypothesis 13: School connectedness will be correlated with higher academic achievement for African American youth.

First, an Independent t-Test was conducted in order to determine whether gender had an effect on academic achievement scores when analyzed with school

connectedness. The results of the Independent t-Test indicate that there is a significant difference when analyzing academic achievement scores, school connectedness and gender. Females (M=9.43) showed a higher level of school connectedness than males (M=8.91), as shown in Table 5-13. School connectedness was then analyzed in order to determine the variance in achievement scores when analyzing academic achievement scores. Approximately 7% ($R^2=.074$) of the variance in academic achievement scores was accounted for by school connectedness. This finding was significant ($\beta=.437$, $p=.000$). A unit increase in school connectedness resulted in a 6 point increase in academic achievement scores ($B=6.09$). Next, gender was entered into the regression model in order to determine the percentage of variance. Approximately, 4 percent of the variance in academic achievement scores was accounted for by gender and school connectedness. This finding was significant ($\beta=.232$, $p=.001$). A unit increase in gender resulted in a 2 point increase in academic achievement scores ($B=2.09$). Multiple frequency analyses were used to analyze different portions on the questions that were a part of the school connectedness measurement. Table 5.14 reveals the results of the frequency analysis. A frequency analysis revealed that 74.7% ($n=1209$) of the students felt that they were a part of the school. A portion of school connectedness is also measure by being happy at school. A frequency analysis revealed that 63.4% ($n=1033$) of African American youth reported being happy at their school and 65.1% ($n=1039$) report feeling close to individuals at their school. Seventy-two percent of the students felt safe at their school. This shows that although some students feel that they are part of the school, some of them do not have high levels of school connectedness. As hypothesized, school connected was correlated with higher academic achievement scores.

Table 5-13 School Connectedness Demographics

	Mean	N	SD	t
Male	8.91	N=636	.238	2.32*
Female	9.43	N=707	.236	

*denotes a significant difference

Below Table 5-14 gives the frequencies of each question answered that created the school connectedness measurement.

Table 5-14 African American Youth and School Connectedness Findings

	Percentage	N
Percentage Felt a part of the School	74.7%	1209
Percentage Felt Happy at School	63.4%	1033
Percentage Felt they were Close to people at School	65.1%	1039
Percentage Felt Safe at School		1109

Research Question 1: Is there a correlation between academic achievement and the following variables: parental expectations, peer influences, academic self-efficacy, resilience, depression, parental support, community support, church attendance, family structure, school connectedness, equal treatment of students by teachers, perceived prejudice, and discipline? Twelve of the thirteen variables listed were all associated with high academic achievement. Family structure was found to not be statistically significant when analyzing high academic achievement.

Research Question 2: Is there an ecological level that is more associated with high academic achievement of African American youth? The ecological level most

associated with high academic achievement is the microsystem level, according to the data analyses conducted in order to analyze the hypotheses.

Research Question 3: What ecological correlates is most associated with high academic achievement of African American youth? A multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to evaluate which correlate was most associated with high academic achievement for African American youth. Approximately 55% ($R^2=.555$) was accounted for by the combination of the correlates. As shown in Table 5-15, School Connectedness ($B=5.517$) correlated the most with high academic achievement, followed by Discipline ($B=2.172$).

Table 5-15 Regression Model

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	
Academic Self Efficacy	.590	.423	.161	1.318*
Community Support	.781	.356	.240	1.590*
School Connectedness	5.517	.406	.118	1.245*
Parental Expectations	.581	.606	.518	1.960*
Depression	.498	.857	.407	.047*
Fair Treatment by Teachers	.170	.073	.099	-2.375*
Discipline	2.172	.545	.279	4.17*
Perceived Prejudice	2.048	.209	.265	1.929
Parental Support	1.547	2.528	.322	2.455*
Church Attendance	.092	.390	.089	6.90*
Resilience	-1.047	.197	.256	10.46*
Family Structure	.457	2.393	.088	.299

*Denotes $p < .05$

5.1.2 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The current study was guided by three research questions and thirteen hypotheses. In order to analyze the research questions and hypotheses, frequencies and descriptive analyses were used, along with linear regression, independent t-tests and analysis of variance.

The evaluation of research question 1 revealed that all of the variables listed, except for family structure, were correlates of high academic achievement. The evaluation of research question 2 resulted in the microsystem level of the ecological system being the ecological level that most affects high academic achievement among African American youth. The research of research question 3 revealed that school connectedness is the primary variable of all of the variables tested that correlates the most with high academic achievement of African American youth. The secondary variable that is most correlated with academic achievement is discipline.

Hypothesis 1 was supported and higher parental expectations are correlated with higher academic achievement of African American youth. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 2 was supported. Academic self-efficacy is correlated with higher academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant. .

Hypothesis 3 was supported. Resilience is correlated with high academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 4 was supported. Discipline is correlated with lower academic achievement scores. This correlation was significant.

Hypothesis 5 was supported. Peer influence is correlated with lower academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 6 was supported as well. Depression is correlated with lower academic achievement. This correlation was significant.

Hypothesis 7 was supported. Parental support is correlated with academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 8 was also supported by the data analysis of the current study. Community support is correlated with higher academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 9 was supported as well. Church attendance is correlated with high academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 10 was not supported. A change in family structure is not correlated with lower academic achievement.

Hypothesis 11 was supported. The perception of prejudice within the school environment is correlated with lower academic achievement scores. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 12 was supported. Fair treatment of students by teachers is correlated with higher academic achievement scores. This correlation was significantly significant.

Hypothesis 13 was supported. School connectedness is associated with high academic achievement. This correlation was significantly significant

5.2 Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed description of the sample used in order to complete the dissertation. The results of the tested hypothesis are also revealed within the current chapter. Results revealed that school connectedness was most correlated with high academic achievement of African American youth and Discipline was the next correlate which was associated with high academic achievement among African

American youth. A further discussion of major findings, implications for practice, the need for social workers in schools, implications for policy and future research is discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 6

Findings Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 5 presented the hypothesis findings, analyses used and the results of the analyses. The present chapter, Chapter 6, presents an overview of the dissertation findings. This is followed by a discussion of research findings, implications for practice, the need for school social workers, implications for policy and lastly a discussion for future research.

The purpose of the study was to analyze correlates that affect the academic achievement of African American youth, while exploring and comparing the academic achievement of African American youth. The African American population, both youth and adults, face many challenges within society as explained in Chapter 1 of the present study. There are several variables that impact an adolescents' ability to attain high academic achievement during the time that they are in school. The hypotheses presented observed multiple factors that are located within the various levels of the ecological systems theory, which guides the study. Academic achievement was analyzed along with multiple variables in order to determine which variables were correlated with high academic achievement scores of African American youth.

The data was taken from a sample of 1,619 African American youth was analyzed. The data analyzed was taken from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health or Add Health as it is frequently called. The African American sample was 25% of the original randomly selected population studied in the Add Health sample. The research presented in the current study is important because the African American population is a vulnerable population that has also constantly been noted as being oppressed. Education is an area that has the ability to aid populations by allowing populations to gain the knowledge needed in order to be successful and supersede any

adversity that is placed before them. The next section presents a discussion of the findings of the study.

6.1 Discussion of the Findings

As previously stated in Chapter 1, African American youth face many challenges of adversity throughout their lifespan and face many obstacles that are tied to the oppression that has interfered in the lives of African Americans. Multiple researchers have longed to find the reasoning behind why African American youth score lower academically than their European American counterparts, when they begin school on the same academic level (Steele, 2003). The current study adds to the literature by not only revealing correlations but also by revealing differences between African American males and females in the area of academic achievement. The current study also supports findings from other researchers in the area of academic achievement of African American adolescents. There were several significant findings that were found through an analysis of the data examined from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The data examined was taken from 1619 African American youth, grades 7-12 who were ages 13-17. There were 773 (47.7%) males and 846 females (52.3%) included in the study.

Overall when analyzing the data, females ($M=10.62$; $SD=3.37$) scored higher academically than males ($M=9.63$; $SD=3.56$), which corresponds with previous research (Entwistle, Alexander & Olson, 1997; Hudley & Graham, 2001; Williams et al., 2002).

6.2 Major Findings

6.2.1 School Connectedness and Academic Achievement

The findings of the current study indicate a strong relationship between school connectedness and academic outcome. Females ($M=9.43$) had a higher level of school connectedness than males ($M=8.91$). This finding is consistent with the findings of the

literature review. Previous research suggests that strong school connectedness is important to a students' academic achievement (Blum, 2005; Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, & Bowes, 2007; Davis, 2006; Jia, Way, Ling, Yoshikawa, Chen, & Hughes, 2009;; Lonczak, Abbott, Hawkins, Kosterman and Catalano, 2002; Loukas, Ripperger, Suhler & Horton, 2008; Monahan, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2009; Steinberg, 1996). School connectedness is measured to have an influence on high academic achievement as far back as kindergarten (Carlin, Glover, & Bowes, 2007). It is interesting that African American females score higher academically when compared to African American males and females also have a higher level of school connectedness when compared to males. School connectedness has been labeled as one of the "developmental assets" (p.467) that has the ability to equip students to overcome the challenges of life and have continued academic success, even through college (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Gaenzle, Kim, Lin, & Na, 2012).

Students that have high levels of school connectedness also feel that they are a part of the school. As previously stated, among the African American sample taken analyzed for the current study 74.7% (n=1209) of the students felt that they were a part of the school. This shows that although some students feel that they are part of the school, but some of them do not have high levels of school connectedness. Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Gaenzle, Kim, Lin, and Na (2012) report that although some students participate in school activities and feel that they are members of the school community, that it takes more than the "feeling" of being in the school community to be connected to the school, although belonging is part of the process.

Students that are connected to school have been known to also be happy at the school that they attend and feel close to people at their schools (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Pellegrini and Bartini (2002) report that students who feel close to individuals at

their school report having high levels of connectedness and report being happy due to positive influences from their peer group. Peer influence was also found to be significant within the study. Safety is also a factor when analyzing school connectedness.

School connectedness has been linked to having a healthy and safe school environment (Blum, 2005). Research also shows that schools that students sense to be a punitive environment, school connectedness is low (Blum, McNeely & Rinehart, 2002; McNeely, Nonnemaker, Blum, 2002). Only 8.1% (n=131) of the African American sample reported being disciplined at school. This finding is clearly lower than the amount of students that responded that they felt connected to their schools. This finding is also interesting because discipline is ranked to be the second correlate out of the correlates analyzed that impact academic achievement the most.

6.2.2 Discipline

Although school connectedness had the highest correlation among the variables tested, discipline followed and deserves a brief discussion of the findings. Although only 8.1% of the students within the current study reported being expelled from school, this finding was shown to be correlated with academic achievement. African American males were reported to be expelled more than African American females. This finding is consistent with the findings of Roeser, Eccles, and Sameoff (2000). Roeser, Eccles, and Sameoff (2000) report that males are suspended at a greater rate than females and African American and Hispanic males are suspended more often than any other minority group (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameoff, 2000; The United States Department of Education, 2000). This is one finding that helps to explain why males score lower than females in the area of academic achievement scores. If a student is expelled, they are not in the classroom learning the material that is presented for the day and therefore they fall behind academically. As stated in the previous section, school connectedness is

correlated with high academic achievement. If a student is expelled, it is hard for them to become connected to the school where they attend. Nelson, Benner, Lane and Smith (2004) report that students who do well academically are less likely to engage in risky activities which have the ability to lead to suspension. Again, if a student is not attending class due to suspension, it is less likely for them to be successful academically.

6.2.3 Family Structure

Surprising, family structure was found to not be significant when analyzing academic achievement and family structure. This finding is not consistent with the current literature and research findings of other researchers (Min Lee & Kushner, 2008; Ham, 2004; Pong & Ju, 2000; Videon, 2002; Zhan & Pandey, 2004; Trautner, et. al, 2005). Min Lee & Kushner (2004) report that students who have had a change in family structure score lower academically than students who have not had a change in family structure. According to the data used in the current study 213 students reported no longer living with their mother and 803 students reported no longer living with their father. More students reported separation from their father when compared to separation from their mother. This finding is consistent with the literature presented by Min Lee and Kushner (2004). Min Lee and Kushner (2004) found that more African American youth live with their mother or mother figure. In the current study 72% of the males included in the sample lived with their mothers and 9% lived with their fathers only. Eighty four percent of African American females reported living with their mothers. While only 22% of African American females reported living with their fathers. As the literature suggests (Ham, 2004; Videon, 2002) children who live in the same household with a same gender parent score better academically, as shown in the present study. Previous research could hold part of the answer as to why African American males have lower achievement

scores than African American females. Next the findings pertaining to parental expectations and support will be discussed

6.2.4 Parental Expectations and Parental Support

Both parental expectations and parental support were found to make a significant difference in academic achievement scores. According to research conducted by Blum, McNeely and Rinehart (2002), the abilities of children as well as adolescents is shaped by how well they perceive that adults in their lives care about them and involvement that adults have in their lives. In the current study, 99.5% (n=1605) of African American youth felt that their parents cared about them. Blum, McNeely and Rinehart (2002) further state that children and adolescents who feel supported score higher academically and are more likely to be engaged in school instruction. One would expect with such a high number of students to feel that their parents cared about them, only 82.3% of the students felt that their parents supported them. After further analyzing the data set, it was found that some parents worked multiple jobs in order to provide for their children. In some cases, children and adolescents don't understand that in order for needs to be met, parents much work more than one job which sometimes results in children and adolescents feeling that they are not shown the attention or care that they want from their parents.

Parental expectations serve as a communicator of what parents expect from their children (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Parental attitudes have the ability to influence how children and adolescents perform academically (Benner & Mistry, 2007). Students within the study were asked how disappointed do they feel that their mom would be if they did not graduate from high school and how disappointed do they feel that their dad would be if they did not graduate from high school. One thousand one hundred ten (76.8%) African American students answered that their mom would be disappointed if

they did not graduate from high school. Out of 787 students, 85.3% answered that their father would be disappointed if they did not graduate from high school. Again, the number of students who answered this particular question is low, due to a low number of fathers within the household. From the sample presented over seventy five percent of the participants were expected to finish high school. This finding is consistent with the level of academic achievement of the African American sample included in the study. As previously stated, parental expectations have also been linked to academic self-efficacy in students (Benner & Mistry, 2007). Findings in academic self-efficacy are discussed in the next section.

6.2.5 Academic Self Efficacy and Resilience

Resilience was measured in the current study by whether the students were upset by difficult problems. As presented by the data, African American females showed higher levels of resilience in comparison to African American males. Research shows that when females are faced with difficult problems they are able to publically express their feelings, while males are to remain “tough” and not express their feelings, which can hamper the ability to be resilient (Herrman et.al., 2011). Academic self-efficacy was measured based on the ability to complete homework and pay attention in class. Again females have a higher level of academic self-efficacy than males. This is interesting due to the fact that African American males also lower levels of resiliency in comparison to African American females. One problem faced by adolescents is not understanding how to complete homework assignments and some would rather not complete them rather than ask for help. Females are more likely to ask for help with homework assignments (Obach, 2003; Spencer et al., 1993).

6.2.6 Teacher Treatment and Perceived Prejudice

Fair treatment is essential in establishing a positive school environment. When students are treated fairly, teachers are able to build relationships with students, which aids in the area of academic achievement (Benner & Mistry, 2007). As previously documented in Chapter 3, African American students complained about unfair treatment in the classroom by teachers (Casteel, 2000). This is consistent with the findings from the current study. Over half (67.5%) of African American students felt that teachers treated them unfairly in the classroom. Unfair treatment in the classroom has been linked to negative outcomes, which include low academic achievement (Casteel, 2000; Benner & Mistry, 2007). Adolescents who perceive unfair treatment or discrimination have a greater chance of experiencing psychological distress (Gibbons, Gerrard, Cleveland, Wills & Brody (2004) and less academic engagement (Casteel, 2000). Historically, African Americans experienced racism and oppression. When this is perceived to occur within the school environment academic achievement can be low.

In the current study, 26.3% (n=426) of the students within the study believed that students within the school were prejudiced, while 50% (n=809) did not. When looking at the results the data shows that African American students felt as though they were not treated fairly in the classroom, but there were not many students within the school environment who were perceived as prejudiced. When observing gender more males perceived other students were prejudiced than females. Just as more males felt that they were not treated fairly by teachers when compared to females. Again the findings correspond to the literature. When prejudice is perceived and unfair treatment by teachers is felt, lower academic achievement is more likely to occur (Castell, 2000; Benner & Mistry, 2007; Orfield & Lee, 2005).

6.2.7 Church Attendance

Research has started to focus on religious commitment, which can include the number of times that an individual attends church (Jeynes, 2007). Church attendance has been correlated with academic achievement among adolescents (Jeynes, 2005; Koenig, 2000; Lee, 1986). Church attendance was proven to be significant when observing the academic achievement of African American youth. Since church attendance has been labeled as helping students to react appropriately to social situations one believes that students who attend church understand how to deal with difficult social situations which may affect their ability to achieve academically.

6.3 Implications for the Social Work Profession

The results of the study indicate that there is a need for both social workers and education practitioners to understand that a variety of factors have the ability to influence adolescents not only socially, mentally and emotionally, but educationally as well. Social workers have the ability to address problems that interfere with “students’ ability to function and make academic progress” (Bye, Shepard, Partridge & Alvarez, 2009). Although school level variables (fair teacher treatment of students, school connectedness, perceived prejudice, and discipline) were analyzed within the study, there were some variables (community support, parental support, parental expectations, resilience, peer influence, academic self-efficacy, church attendance, depression and family structure) that go beyond the realm of the educational system.

Parental support and parental expectations both impact the academic achievements of African American youth. When children know that their parents expect for them to graduate and make good grades in school, the results show that they have higher academic scores. However, as noted by Davis-Kean (2005), parents must communicate with their children the expectations that they have which in turn in many

cases will be internalized as support. Family social workers have the ability to teach parents strategies on how to communicate with their children. As previously noted, by Kerpelman, Eryigit and Stephens (2008) the family context is most important in helping youth to internalize what is expected academically. Family social workers are noted to assist families in improving their well-being and the academic functioning of the child involved (Kerpelman, Eryigit and Stephens, 2008). Although family structure was not shown to impact academic achievement significantly, ensuring the family well-being has the ability to ensure cohesive family structure. The field of social work has constantly noted that one of the keys to academic success is the need for effective parenting and the need of caregivers to be involved in the child's life from the very beginning.

An analysis of the data reveals that community support plays a part in the academic achievement scores of African American students. Social work practitioners have the ability to aid in uplifting the community by helping the individuals within the community build up low impoverished areas. Social workers can handle this task by advocating for areas that are primarily minority and or low income areas. Social workers can help by encouraging community members to volunteer to assist adolescents that are in the neighborhood in which they live with homework, tutoring or just showing that they care. Tutoring will enable students to improve in the area of academic self-efficacy (Hirschman & Lee, 2005) due to the student achieving extra help after school in order to complete assignments. The results of this type of activity include the fact that social workers will empower individuals, which leads to empowering neighborhoods and funneling down to the children within the neighborhood academically. The results of the study also indicate that church attendance has an effect on academic achievement.

Although the public school system does not include prayer within the school, social work practice understands that some clients view beliefs as important (Jeynes,

2005). Social workers are able to build upon the beliefs that the students possess. When students show that they have certain beliefs, spiritual, cultural or personal, school social workers can build upon those beliefs in order to empower the student. It is necessary for both teachers and social workers to understand the beliefs of the students that they are serving in order to build upon those beliefs and incorporate them into academics.

At the school level (fair teacher treatment of students, school connectedness, perceived prejudice, and discipline), social workers are able to aid teachers in order to partner with them in increasing academic achievement for African American youth. Social workers have the ability to collaborate with teachers in a variety of ways, which includes counseling educational professionals to support students' social and behavioral needs (Berzin, O'Brien, Frey, Kelly, Alvarez & Shaffer, 2011), providing interventions to aid minority youth in being successful academically (Franklin, 2001) and cultural awareness and diversity training (Cuglietto, 2007). Welch (2000) explains that cultural, linguistic and ability differences all have the ability to lead students to believe that they are not being treated fairly. The cultural, linguistic and ability differences present challenges within the classroom and in turn may effect academic achievement. Providing cultural awareness or diversity awareness training will allow teachers to understand the background of not only the African American culture, but other cultures as well. This will increase the teachers' knowledge and skills in order to benefit students, lower the chances of prejudice being perceived (Franklin, 2001), and lower the chances of students feeling as if they are not being treated fairly (Welch, 2000). Social work interventions have also been linked to decrease discipline problems (Porter, 1998), which in the end results in higher academic scores. Berzin, O'Brien, Frey, Kelly, Alvarez and

Shaffer (2011) report that the school system is the main point of entry and service provider for students to receive help when suffering with issues such as depression.

Social workers are able to assist students who are battling depression. Social workers are not only able to help students, but they are also able to share evidence based interventions that will help teachers to empower students who are depressed or showing signs of depression. The social worker must ensure that the teachers thoroughly understand how to use evidence based practices in order for the strategies to be effective at helping the students in need. Kelly, Raines, Stone, and Frey (2010) explain that using evidence based practices requires an understanding and correct application that have worked for the type of student that the teacher or social worker is attempting to assist.

Today's school system serves a more complex set of individuals, communities and families and new intervention models must be implemented in order to ensure that the student needs are being met. In sum, social workers and education practitioners must work together in order to ensure that evidence based practices are being used to support the African American population in endeavors to succeed academically. Collaboration between school personnel and social work professionals is crucial for providing adequate services for students (Berzin, O'Brien, Frey, Kelly, Alvarez & Shaffer, 2011). There is definitely a need for social workers in the school system.

6.3.1 The Need for Social Workers in Schools

School Social work has been noted to be one of the specialized fields in the area of social work practice (Allen-Meares, 2007). The primary function of school is to provide education. As noted by Allen-Meares (2007) when interactions that students have within a variety of environments interfere with goals of obtaining an education, a problem exists. School social workers bring a multitude of unique knowledge and skills to the education

system. School social workers have the ability to be instrumental in furthering the purpose of the schools, which is to educate the students. School social workers play a variety of roles within the school system which includes targeting certain groups of students such as students who are at risk and experiencing difficulties in learning.

Social workers have the ability to help students to benefit from all of the educational opportunities that are available to them by helping the students develop life skills and listening to students whenever they are experiencing a problem. When students have the ability to talk about their situations or problems that they are experiencing, the problem will be less likely to interfere with them academically (Allen-Meares, 2007). As discussed in the previous section, social workers have the ability to make an impact on the lives of not only students, but aid teachers, parents and the community as well.

6.4 Implications for Policy

Policy changes must be implemented that will not allow funds to be eliminated from the education budget. Oliff, Mai, and Leachman (2012) reveal that states have made drastic cuts to education funding since the beginning of the recession and cuts are still occurring. Twenty six states, during the 2012-2013 school year, were receiving less funding than they did during the 2011-2012 school year and 35 states have school funding that stands below the funding received during the 2008-2009 school year. Unfortunately the act of decreasing education funds has consequences that effect the school system and its students.

As shown in the data analysis school connectedness is the correlate that has the most impact on academic achievement scores, followed by discipline. As previously stated, school connectedness has the most influence on academic achievement out of the correlates analyzed in the present study, which means that introducing policies that

will enable African American students to be more connected to their school will help the school connection process. Some actions to increase school connectedness are small, but some are broader long term goals. For example, school funding has impacted the manners in which the school environment is able to connect with the students. In some areas programs have been cut due to budgetary constraints. Policies should be implemented that will not allow funding to be cut from the education system, due to the impact that the education system has on the children being served. Programs that allow students to participate in school activities that are of interest to the students must be continued and not dropped because they help students to connect to the school in which they attend (Centers for Disease Control, 2009). The Centers for Disease Control (2009) also reports that efforts must be closely monitored in order to chart and evaluate the efforts to increase school connectedness.

Policy implications also include creating different policies for disciplining students so that students are not excluded from the classroom and missing instruction. Although some schools implement In-School Suspension programs, many are shown to be ineffective (Morris & Howard, 2013) and headed by uncertified teachers (Elliott, 1991). During the 1990s many of the in school suspension programs were labeled to be punitive and not academic, unfortunately, the same is true today (Morris & Howard, 2013). Policies should be implemented at not only the local and state levels, but the national level as well that require for any type of in school suspension program to focus on academics in order to ensure that students are not missing out on any assignments. In order for the students to be successful in an in school suspension program, the program should have not just a teacher's aide as the facilitator, as in school suspension program currently have, but also a certified teacher in order to teach the academics at grade level, so that the students will not fall behind their peers. Again funding has an impact on in

school suspension programs. Hiring a certified teacher to facilitate an in school suspension program costs more than hiring a teacher's aide or assistant.

In addition, due to budget restraints, some schools do not have full-time social workers available within the building that will aid when issues arise with that include diversity training, student depression, religion tolerance or students going through domestic problems. Schools can not afford to have social workers hired full time. If social workers were available full time in order to assist when assistance is warranted, interventions can quickly be applied and more students would be able to concentrate on their school work, which would result in higher academic achievements. Oliff, Mai and Leachman (2012) report that policy experts believe that more student learning time has the ability to improve achievement. Social workers must continue to advocate for policies that aid when certain populations are facing a dis-service, which includes African American youth.

6.5 Limitations

Although the current study presents valuable results, limitations must be considered when interpreting the results. As previously stated in chapter 4, secondary data analysis presents limitations when used to find information pertaining to other topics that it was not intended to analyze, such as the multiple correlates that were developed in order to complete the current study. Although the main intention of the Add Health study was not to focus solely on the academic achievement of African American youth, the current study focuses on the academic achievement of African American youth and comparing males and females.

The length of the original survey also presents limitations. The original survey was taken in home and consisted of 39 sections. Each section had at least 10 questions. During the survey, students could have experienced fatigue and basically bubbled

anything in order to complete the survey as given. A fatigue rating was not included in the survey however one can infer that the students experienced a feeling of tiredness after answering the questions that were included in the survey.

Finally, family structure was not found to be correlated with academic achievement. The literature that focuses on family structure is mainly focused on non-minorities. The findings of this item must be interpreted cautiously.

6.6 Future Research

Although the current study adds knowledge to the understanding of correlates that impact academic achievement, further research needs to be conducted. Future research should include an analysis of socioeconomic status among the correlates that are analyzed within the current study. Poverty has been linked to a number of negative outcomes for African American adolescents (Brendgen, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 2000). One of the negative outcomes has been found to be low academic achievement. Unfortunately, living in low income environments and surroundings, some African American youth fail to understand the connection between academic success and adulthood work environment success (Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2006). The current dataset did not include in-depth information containing pertaining to the socioeconomic status of the African American sample included in the original study.

Future research should also include comparing other ethnicities that are included within the sample to the African American sample population in order to determine if there is a significant difference in academic achievement when there is a comparison group to the African American sample included in the current study. This will mean that the comparison group will have been subjected to the exact same survey as the African American sample.

6.7 Conclusion

The results of this study reconfirm that academic achievement scores can be influenced by a variety of factors that occur in a student's life. This is disturbing because some factors can harm a student's academic achievement while other factors have the ability to enhance achievement. The academic achievement of African American youth has been a subject analyzed and researched, however the analyses have focused on single factors and not multiple factors analyzed together in order to shed more light on the problem of low achievement for African American youth. Therefore the study was guided by the ecological systems theory. The current study analyzed multiple correlates in order to determine the effects correlates were shown to have on the academic achievement of African American youth. The sample consisted of 1619 African American youths ages 13-17. There were more females (846; 52.3%) than males (773; 47.7%) included in the sample. According to the results, the researcher recommends several strategies and suggestions in order to improve the academic achievement of African American youth. Although the field of social work cannot handle the task of educating minority youth alone, social workers can advocate for change.

Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Administration
Regulatory Services
817-272-3723
regulatoryservices@uta.edu
<http://www.uta.edu/research/administration>

**Institutional Review Board
Notification of Exemption**

June 19, 2013

Latoya Smith
Dr. Maria Scannapieco
School of Social Work
19129

Protocol Number: 2013-0721

Protocol Title: *ECOLOGICAL CORRELATES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH*

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

The UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, or designee, has reviewed the above referenced study and found that it qualified for exemption under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced at Title 45CFR Part 46.101(b)(4)

(4). Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

You are therefore authorized to begin the research as of **June 19, 2013**.

Pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(iii), investigators are required to, "promptly report to the IRB any proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject." Please be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services within 24 hours of the occurrence or upon acknowledgement of the occurrence. All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented Human Subject Protection (HSP) Training on file with this office. Completion certificates are valid for 2 years from completion date.

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human subjects in research. Should you have questions, or need to report completion of study procedures, please contact Robin Dickey at 817-272-9329 or robind@uta.edu. You may also contact Regulatory Services at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

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Biographical Information

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Dr. Smith truly believes that failure is not an option. Dr. Smith has worked over ten years in the education system as both a teacher and administrator. Her research interests include special education (inclusion and policy), academic achievement gaps, juvenile justice, social justice, domestic violence and child welfare. Indeed, Dr. Smith thinks of herself as a well- rounded individual and has a diverse range of research interests.