Assessing teacher and parent support as moderators in the relationship between black high school students' academic achievement and socioeconomic status

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ASSESSING TEACHER AND PARENT SUPPORT AS MODERATORS IN THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLACK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

By

Natasha N. Little-Harrison

A Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

Black students growing up in the United States are faced with multiple risk factors that threaten their academic careers. Many of these students disproportionately grow up living in poverty, putting them at additional risk for attending inadequate schools, living in unsafe neighborhoods, being in dysfunctional families, and having poor physical health. Despite these risk factors, many Black students do go on to lead academically successful lives. The present study examined the relationships between Black high school students’ academic achievement, parent and teacher support, and socioeconomic status via a secondary analysis of the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 archival data set. This study also explored the role of gender in these relationships. Results indicated a significant positive relationship existed between Black students’ socioeconomic status and academic achievement. In addition, results indicated that parent and teacher support moderated the strength of the relationship between academic achievement and socioeconomic status for Black high school students. These associations did not significantly change across gender groups, suggesting gender did not moderate the effects. These results suggest that parent and teacher support may serve as buffers between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. These findings add to the literature that social support may help change the negative trajectory found between poverty and academic achievement. Based on these findings, schools and other community organizations should consider providing parent trainings in at risk communities on the types of behaviors that parents can engage in to promote their children’s educational achievement. As for teachers, school districts should consider providing trainings on
effective ways to develop the student and teacher relationship and expand their own cultural awareness of others (Flowers & Flowers, 2008).
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my parents, Mamie and Carlton Little, Jr., I can never fully express to you both my gratitude for your unconditional love and the support you have provided me throughout the years. Now that I am an adult, I truly understand the sacrifices that you made so that I would have an opportunity to pursue my dreams in life. You both have been wonderful role models to me and instilled in me the importance of having a personal relationship with God, setting goals for myself, and working hard to achieve them. And to my sister Melissa, thank you so much for encouraging me throughout this process. You truly are my best friend.

Last but not least, I would also like dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Robert. You have been with me through the ups and downs of writing this dissertation. I cannot thank you enough for all the late nights you stayed up with me or accompanied me to the library while I was writing this manuscript so I would not have to be alone, the many times you have assisted me with editing, the times you have wiped away my tears, and the numerous ways you have assisted around the house so that I could devote my time to this project and work. I am truly blessed to have you in my life.
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First, I would like to give thanks and acknowledgement to God. It is because of my faith in God that I have persisted through this journey. I know that without Him none of this would be possible.

I would also like to take this time to thank and acknowledge all those at the University at Albany who have assisted me in obtaining my doctoral degree. My sincerest thanks to Dr. Amanda Nickerson, my committee chairperson and academic advisor, for her support and encouragement throughout this project and my graduate school career. Even after moving to another state, Dr. Nickerson continued to make herself available to me and to encourage me to continue to work toward my goal of completing my dissertation. I cannot thank Dr. Nickerson enough for the countless hours she has spent reviewing, editing, providing me with constructive criticism, and answering my many questions. I will forever be thankful for the guidance I have received from her.

I cannot thank my committee members enough for the support they have provided me. Dr. Marcia Sutherland has been a mentor to me throughout both my undergraduate and graduate career at the University at Albany. She has readily made herself available to help guide me both in and out of the classroom. I have learned so much about myself and life in general under her tutelage. And these life lessons have been invaluable to me.

Dr. Robert McMorris also has played a pivotal role in the completion of this project. I am truly appreciative of all the time he has put into reviewing and editing my dissertation. I am so thankful for Dr. McMorris’ sense of humor, his flexibility in working with me, and his words of encouragement throughout the writing of this dissertation.
Lastly, to my classmates, I am so glad we were able to take this journey together. Although the 8 of us came from different walks in life, we respected each other, diversified our thinking, and in the process became friends. I am so thankful for the lessons I learned with you all both in and out of the classroom. Because of our willingness to be honest, to have open dialogues about our differences, and challenge each other, I am a better school psychologist.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction


Some of the problems that children who live in poverty are faced with include less access to high-quality social services and informal social supports (Zigler, 1994), disengagement from school, chronic tardiness and absenteeism, suspensions and expulsions from school, and grade retention (Finn, 1993; Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000). Schools in poor communities are also unable to provide a competitive education and are overcrowded (Hampson et al., 1998; Taylor, 1991). By the time many
of the Black children growing up in these communities reach fourth grade their academic achievement in math and reading is lagging behind their same grade cohorts of other races (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). Reportedly the gap between Black 12th grade students’ reading achievement test scores and their White counterparts tests scores was approximately 24 points in 1992 and 26 points in 2005 (Flowers & Flowers, 2008).

Many of these Black children attend schools that are essentially segregated (Jackson, 1999) and have teachers who hold lower expectations for them (Herrera, 1998). Black children are also more likely be (a) referred for and placed in special education classes (Herrera, 1998; Hilliard, 1991); (b) retained (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999; Meisels, 1992); (c) punished with severity for school offenses, especially males (Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Oakes, 1995); and (d) excluded from rigorous and gifted classes (Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Oakes, 1995).

A culmination of these risk factors is dropping out of school (Finn, 1993; Kaufman, Naomi, & Chapman, 2004). The risk of dropping out of school is intensified as children move on to middle school and high school (Doll & Lyon, 1998; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995), as secondary schools provide few affective supports for their students (Doll & Lyon, 1998). The negative outcomes for students who drop out of school are joblessness, crime, homelessness, violence, drugs, and negative role models (McMillen & Kaufman, 1996; Zigler, 1994). They earn considerably less money, achieve lower levels of academic achievement, and experience poorer mental health and physical health when compared to their high-school-graduate counterparts (Lunenburg, 1999; Kaufman et al., 2004; McMillen & Kaufman, 1996). High school dropouts also constitute 52% percent of welfare recipients, 82% percent of the prison population, and 85% of
juvenile justice cases. (Kaufman et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 1999; McMillen & Kaufman, 1996).

Despite the disproportionate number of Black children growing up in poverty, many lead academically successful lives in school (Garmezy, 1993). A few research projects have been conducted to attempt to identify variables that help promote competent childhood outcomes in highly-stressed urban children (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Parker, 1991). One of the factors identified has been adult support (Garmezy, 1993; Garmezy et al., 1984; Wyman et al., 1991). Adult support has included students’ engagement in productive activities with supportive adult guidance and mentoring, effective parenting, high expectations, and extra-familial sources of support (Garmezy, 1993; Garmezy et al., 1984; Wyman et al., 1991).

Some researchers have suggested that a child’s or adolescent’s relationship with a supportive caring adult is related to increases in achievement of children who live in poverty (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Hébert & Beardsley, 2001; Masten, Best, Garmezy, 1990; Reis, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1989). Several studies have also suggested that middle and high school at-risk students perceive their parents and teachers as their primary sources of social support (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Richman, Rosenfeld, & Bowen, 1998). This source of support is in contrast to conventional wisdom that would lead one to believe that social support for adolescents comes mainly from peers (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Richman et al., 1998).

The importance of adult support for students holds true across cultures and ethnic backgrounds (Clark, 1983; Jeynes, 2003; Madhere, 1997). In fact, a study by Madhere (1997) found the only consistent predictor of academic success for Black, White, and
Hispanic students was the level of parental monitoring, which is a form of parent support. Also, a meta-analysis showed that parental involvement had a positive impact on all levels of academic achievement for minority children (Jeynes, 2003).

Researchers that have looked more specifically at Black families have noted that Black parents who have children who are high achievers tend to come from homes where parents set clear and consistent limits for their children and have warm and nurturing interactions (Catterall, 1998; Clark, 1983; Slaughter & Epps, 1987; Wang, Haertel, Walberg, 1994; Wyman et al., 1991). Parents of Black high-achieving students also tend to hold high expectations, have interpersonal communication patterns marked by frequent dialogue and strong encouragement of their children’s academic pursuits, and consistently monitor how their children use their time and space (Clark, 1983; Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996; Gutman et al., 2002; Madhere, 1997; Marcon, 1999; Morrison, Robertson, & Harding, 1998; Reynolds, 1989, 1992; Swan & Stavros, 1973).

Similar to the findings presented above on parental support, some studies have also shown teacher support to be related to academic achievement for Black students (Clark, 1983; Goodenow, 1993). Clark (1983), for example, found that Black high achieving students reported having at least one teacher who provided time, attention, and nurturance during the elementary or intermediate grades.

There have been contradictory findings regarding the research on parental and teacher support (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Goodenow, 1993; Philips, 1997). Several studies have found no significant relationship between parent support and student achievement (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Fan & Chen, 2001; Keith, 1991; Mattingly et al., 2002; Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989), and teacher
support and academic achievement (Philips, 1997). Others have found an inverse relationship between social support and academic achievement (Goodenow, 1993).

These findings suggest that the relationship between parent support, teacher support, and student achievement may be more complex than a direct relationship (Fan & Chen, 2001; Mattingly et al., 2002). Instead the relationships between parent support, teacher support, and student achievement may be better explained as indirect (Feldman & Wentzel, 1990; Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002; Grolnick et al., 1991; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). For example, Grolnick and colleagues (1991) found that parental autonomy support and involvement influenced perceived competence in their elementary children, which predicted academic achievement. In a similar study, social competence was noted to mediate the relationship between parent-child interactions and academic achievement (Feldman & Wentzel, 1990); parent-child interactions predicted academic achievement for socially competent students.

In a more recent study, Malecki and Demaray (2006) found social support moderated the relationship between poverty and academic achievement for Hispanic students. For these students, social support was found to be related to their academic achievement in Reading and Language. This study also found that the students with lower parent or classmate support had a higher grade point average if they had a higher SES, and a lower GPA if they had a lower SES. However, no significant relationships were found between social support and academic achievement for students with a higher SES. The students who had higher social support levels had GPAs that were similar regardless of their SES. This study’s findings suggest that social support may play a protective role
in the relationship between SES and academic achievement for students of low socioeconomic status (Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

It is also important to point out that although at-risk adolescents have reported that their parents and teachers are their primary support systems, both parents and teachers have been criticized for being unsupportive to low income Black students (Borman & Overman, 2004; Ferguson, 2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gross, 1993; Mickelson, 1990). For example, in low-income areas, teachers and administrators reported that Black parents are less supportive of the school’s mission compared to other parents (Gross, 1993). It has been suggested that many low income Black families exhibit behaviors that appear to be non-supportive to their child’s educational career because of doubt and ambivalence about education as a route to success in mainstream society due to the history of Blacks in America (Ferguson, 2003; Mickelson, 1990). This doubt and ambivalence about education experienced in the home (Ferguson, 2003) may explain why a study found that Black students reported overwhelmingly wanting to please their teachers (Casteel, 1997), and were reported to be more vulnerable to teachers’ negative perceptions of them (Ferguson, 2003) in comparison to their White counterparts (Casteel, 1997; Ferguson, 2003).

It could be hypothesized that because some Black students may receive mixed or ambivalent messages at home regarding the importance of school, these students may be more sensitive to positive, neutral, or negative messages that they receive from their teachers (Ferguson, 2003). Similarly, regarding teacher support, several studies have also supported the notion that teachers are less supportive of Black students (Ferguson, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Wentzel, 1994). Black students have reported receiving less support from
their teachers than their White peers (Perkins, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Wentzel, 1994), as well as receiving less interaction and contingent praise from their teachers (Noguera, 2003).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to further investigate the relationships between academic achievement, socioeconomic status, and teacher and parent support for Black high school students. A secondary analysis of the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 was conducted to examine Black high school students’ social support and academic achievement.

**Significance of the Study**

Past studies have suggested that both parents and teachers play critical roles in the academic careers for students of all ages (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Jeynes, 2003; Masten et al., 1990). High school students report that they perceive adult social support to be more important than peer social support (Domagala-zysk, 2006), despite the fact that research suggests that students receive less support as they graduate from elementary school and move on to middle and high school (Doll & Lyon, 1998). Yet, Black students, especially Black males, report receiving less teacher support than their White counterparts in schools (Ferguson, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Perkins, 2006; Wentzel, 1994). In addition, administrators and teachers have reported that low income Black parents provide less support to their children and send mixed messages regarding their academic careers (Ferguson, 2003).

The literature contains recommendations for improving the partnership between the home and school (Borman & Overman, 2004); however, most school personnel feel
that they have little control over the homes and families in which children are raised. Therefore, not only is it important to try to improve the home and school relationship, but to also investigate further such relationships that schools can control, such as the teacher-student relationship (Clark, 1983; Goodenow, 1993), and to examine other potential variables of importance such as gender and socioeconomic status (Ferguson, 2003; Gutman et al., 2002). It is especially important to examine these variables with children growing up in poverty, since poverty is the most consistent predictor of negative outcomes in students’ lives (McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Rutter, 1985). Because Black students are more likely than children from other racial groups to live in poverty (Ford, 1994; Gutman et al., 2002; Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Taylor, 1991), it is important that research is conducted with this population. In addition, because Black low income parents have been charged with providing less support and mixed messages regarding their children’s academic career (Ferguson, 2003), and several studies have shown the positive relationship between parent social support and academic achievement (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Hébert & Beardsley, 2001; Reis, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1989), it is important to investigate potential variables that moderate that relationship between parent support and academic achievement.

This study may increase the knowledge base regarding the role of teacher and parent support in Black high school students’ academic careers. The aim of this study was also to provide information on how these relationships interact with gender and socioeconomic status. By considering the role of gender and socioeconomic status, it may help explain the differential relationship that social support plays across groups (Aguinis, 2004). Last, since there has been a traditional focus on the role of the parent(s) in regards
to supporting their students’ academic achievement, the findings of this study may contribute to a new outlook on possible roles for teachers.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Relevant Literature

Overview

Many Black children growing up in the United States are faced with multiple risk factors that threaten their academic achievement at school (Ford, 1994; Gutman et al., 2002). As a result, Black children disproportionately experience a host of negative short-term and long-term outcomes that range from obtaining low grades in school (Gutman & Midgley, 1999; Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Fienman, 1994) to dropping out of high school (Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, & Gober, 2001; Finn, 1989). Black male students are particularly vulnerable to these negative outcomes (Hilliard, 1991; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Oakes, 1985).

Despite the multiple risk factors that face Black students, a number of these children achieve academically and lead successful lives (Garmezy, 1993). There has been some research conducted on Black students who have succeeded academically (Borman & Overman, 2004; Finn, 1993; Gutman et al., 1999, 2002; Taylor, 1991). One variable that has been found to relate to helping students achieve academically is social support (Malecki & Demaray, 2002, 2006; Werner & Smith, 1989). More specifically, research has shown that social support can possibly serve as a buffer for adverse outcomes in relation to academic achievement (Malecki & Demaray, 2002, 2006).

In this study, I examined Black children’s perceptions of the support they receive from their teachers and parents and the relationship that exists between this support and academic achievement. In addition, the variations in these relationships due to socioeconomic status and gender were examined. Several researchers have looked at the
relationships between social support and academic achievement and found mixed results (Clark, 1983; Goodenow, 1993; Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

This chapter begins with a review of the literature regarding risk factors, and includes a discussion on risk factors and negative outcomes faced by male and female children living in America (Crockett, 2003). This is followed by a discussion of risk factors and negative outcomes faced primarily by Black male and female children in the United States, with specific attention given to academic achievement. In the second section of this chapter, the protective factors that prevent children, particularly Black children, from experiencing negative outcomes are reviewed. The third section provides information on the construct of social support as a protective factor for children. Social support is discussed with a particular emphasis on the influence of parent and teacher support on educational outcomes. This chapter concludes with a summary of this review and a description of the research questions for the study. Past and current research is reviewed and discussed in relation to these research questions, and research hypotheses are formulated.

**Risk Factors and Negative Outcomes**

Scholars across many fields are interested in understanding the relationship between risk and protective factors over time and how these interactions affect outcomes (Berenson, 1986; Blum & Ireland, 2004; Resnick et al., 1997; Rutter, 2003). Risk factors have been defined in the literature as variables that can directly increase the likelihood of maladaptive outcomes (Berenson, 1986; Gordon & Song, 1994; Rolf & Johnson, 1990). The concept of risk factors has been widely used in the medical fields to describe certain events, conditions, and behaviors in the life of an individual that modify the probability
of occurrence of death or disease when compared to others of the same age and sex within the general population (Berenson, 1986; Resnick et al., 1997). The concept of identifying risk factors evolved due to the limited effectiveness of efforts to reduce the morbidity in individuals with already established diseases such as heart disease (Berenson, 1986). Researchers found that by identifying individuals who were at risk for a certain disease at an early age and providing intervention, the course of the disease could be altered. For example, identifying individuals at an early age with high levels of low density lipoproteins (LDL) or low levels of high density lipoproteins (HDL), high blood pressure levels, cigarette smoking, sedentary life styles, obesity, and high stress and providing them with treatment helped to prevent the onset of heart disease (Berenson, 1986).

**Principles of Risk**

There are three fundamental principles associated with risk (Berenson, 1986; Bush et al., 1991; Finn, 1993). The first principle is that risk factors are comprised of both status characteristics that are common to certain populations and behavior risk factors, which are individual habits and behaviors. Status risk factors are demographic and historical characteristics used to classify large groups of individuals, these characteristics are difficult or impossible to alter (Finn, 1993). Status risk factors include characteristics such as racial or ethnic origin, socioeconomic conditions, and the primary language spoken in the home (Finn, 1993).

Researchers have investigated the link between status variables, behavior risk factors, and school outcomes. Status variables such as demographics, individual characteristics, psychological and behavioral measures, and family factors are associated
with high school dropout (Rumberger, 1995). However, such broad variables leave much unexplained variance and are not very informative in regards to the processes of dropping out. In addition, these variables are not easily amenable to change (Hunt et al., 2002; Jimerson et al., 2000). Behavior risk factors are a set of behaviors that reduce the likelihood of positive school outcomes. In the earliest grades, these behaviors include not attending school, arriving to school late, not paying attention to one’s teacher, and not completing assigned work. In the later grades, the set expands to include a wider variety of activities that relate to both academic and extracurricular programs of the school. Behavior risk factors are more amenable to influence by parents, school personnel, and school programs (Finn, 1993).

The second principle is that early forms of risk evolve into fully developed forms over time. For example, there is a positive correlation between mild childhood obesity and cardiovascular disease in adults (Berenson, 1986). Likewise, in education, there is a positive correlation between disengagement in school and absences, poor grades, and school dropout. In the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Finn (1993) found a reciprocal relationship between students’ poor grades or low-test scores, having an adversarial relationship with school staff, and their nonparticipation in class and school activities.

The third principle involves the clustering of multiple risk factors in the same individual (Berenson, 1986; Finn, 1993). It is now understood that a positive relationship exists between the number of risk factors in a child’s life and negative developmental outcomes (Rutter, 1979). Risk factors rarely occur alone, but rather tend to cluster in the same individual (Berenson, 1986; Finn, 1993; Masten & Coastsworth, 1998; Werner &
Smith, 1977). Werner and Smith’s longitudinal study, conducted with a multiracial cohort of children born on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, in 1955, found that it was not one risk factor alone that led to a high risk of developing serious and persistent learning and behavior problems in children; rather, the interaction of early biological stress and family instability predicted later problems.

**Risk Factors for Children**

There are many risk factors that affect children living in the United States (Crockett, 2003). These risk factors include poverty, violence, neighborhood stress, low parent education, family abuse and dysfunction, ineffective parenting, poor physical health of the child or parent, bullying and harassment, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and serious mental health issues (Crockett, 2003; Doll & Lyon, 1998; Gutman et al., 2005; Werner & Smith, 1977). Of all of these risk factors, childhood poverty has shown to be the most consistent predictor of dysfunction in childhood (McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Rutter, 1985).

Children living in poverty are at greater risk of experiencing a range of academic, socioemotional, behavioral, and health problems that have harmful effects on their long-term developmental trajectories (McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Natriello et al., 1990). Students living in low-income families are six times more likely than their peers in high-income families to drop out of high school (Kaufman et al., 2004). According to Kaufman and his colleagues, approximately 10.7% of students from low-income families dropped out of high school compared to 5.4% of middle-income students and 1.7% of students from high-income families.
Individuals living in high poverty communities, compared to their counterparts living in communities with lower rates of poverty, are disadvantaged by reduced accessibility to high-quality social services and informal social supports (Kaufman et al., 2004; Natriello et al., 1990; Zigler, 1994). They also have an increased exposure to joblessness, school transiency, crime, homelessness, violence, drugs, and negative role models (Natriello et al., 1990; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Schafft, 2005). These findings are important to note since 12.1 million American children were reported to be living in poverty in 2002 (Proctor & Dalaker, 2003). For racial and ethnic minorities, poverty levels are particularly salient concerns. According to the 2002 U.S. Census Bureau, 29% of racial minority children under 18 lived in conditions considered to be below poverty level compared to 9.5% of non-Hispanic White children. There is also evidence that the number of children living in poverty continues to increase. It is predicted that by the year 2020, approximately 25% of students will be living in poverty (Natriello et al., 1990).

**Risk Factors and Negative Outcomes for Black Children**

Black children, especially young males, growing up in the United States disproportionately face risk factors such as poverty, poor health care, violence, and substandard education (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Ford, 1994; Gutman et al., 2002; Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Taylor, 1991). They unduly live in poverty and in the inner cities (Hampson et al. 1998). In 2002, it was reported that African American children younger than 18 were more than three times as likely to live in poverty compared with non Latino White children (32.3% versus 9.4%; Proctor & Dalaker, 2003).
Risk Factors in the Community

The effects of poverty are compounded by community violence (Garbarino et al., 1992; Hampson et al., 1998). Some have compared the lives of children growing up in the inner city today to war zones in Beirut, Belfast, and Mozambique because of the exposure to daily random acts of violence (Garbarino et al., 1992; Hampson et al., 1998). A survey from the Chicago Community Mental Health Council indicated that nearly 40% of 1,000 Chicago high school and elementary school students had witnessed a shooting and 25% had seen a murder (Garbarino et al., 1992; Hampson et al., 1998). Although only a minority of these children suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, many more experience learning and affective impairments from the effects of growing up surrounded by community violence, especially when the first trauma occurred before the age of 11 (Garbarino et al., 1992). Often children living in such environments seem less concerned with their future, tend to be more anxious, and have lowered self-esteem (Cooley, Cornell, & Lee, 1991; Ford, 1994; Garbarino et al., 1992).

Risk Factors in the Home

Both Black and White children living in poverty are also more likely than their advantaged counterparts to have parents who (a) are generally less supportive of them, (b) value obedience over reasoning, (c) engage in physical abuse, and (d) are less responsive to their child’s socioemotional needs (McLoyd, 1990). According to McLoyd, the environmental stressors contribute to the differences found in parent-child interactions in various social classes. Overburdened and worn-out parents may not have the patience to reward, consult, explain, and negotiate with their children (McLoyd,
However, it is important to point out than there are studies that contradict the above findings (Brown-Rosier, 2000). In an ethnographic study of nine Black single mothers raising families in the inner city, the study found several common themes among the women, including holding high expectations for their children, viewing education as a way for their children to escape their environment, and having complex social networks supporting their family as they raised their children (Brown-Rosier, 2000).

Children living in poverty are also more likely to change schools frequently due to the difficult economic and social contexts in which they live (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Schafft, 2005). Studies have found that students who have changed schools during elementary or high school are more likely to drop out of school. In addition, students who moved frequently (six or more times by age of 18) were more likely to be reported to have a delay in development, a learning disorder, to have repeated a grade, or to have frequent behavioral problems. Student mobility can also affect schools by disrupting classrooms and making it difficult to match needed services to students in a timely manner (Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

**Academic Risk Factors and Outcomes**

**School Dropout**

Current statistics in the United States provide evidence that an increasing number of adolescents (20-40%) are at risk of failing and dropping out of school (Natriello et al., 1990). Research has indicated that in the United States, thousands of students leave school before graduating each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each), one high school student drops out every nine seconds. This means that approximately one in eight

It is difficult to obtain a precise figure for the current national dropout rate because reporting procedures differ across the country (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986), but it can be assumed that at least one-quarter of adolescents in the United States fail to graduate from high school (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). In 2000, it was reported that five out of every 100 students enrolled left school before October without successfully completing a high school program (Kaufman et al., 2004). From 1990 through 2001, it was reported that between 347,000 and 544,000 students in grades 10 through 12 left school each year without successfully completing their high school program.

Students who are members of a minority group and poor are far more likely to drop out of school than their White and Asian counterparts (Christenson et al., 2001; Kaufman et al., 2004). For example, in 1994, Asian youth and White youth between the ages of 16-24 made up 5.1% and 5.7%, respectively, of high school dropouts, compared to 8.4% for Blacks, 14.3% for Hispanics, and 16.9% for Native Americans (McMillen & Kaufman, 1996). Other students not accounted for were noted to have graduated, received alternative credentials, or to still be enrolled in high school (McMillen & Kaufman, 1996). Between October of 2000 to 2001, the drop out rates for students ages 15-24 in grades 10-12 were as follows: 6.3% of Black students, 8.8% of Hispanic students, 4.1% of White, and 2.3% of Asian/Pacific Islander high school students. The rest of the students not accounted for were noted to have graduated, received alternative credentials, or to still be enrolled in high school (Kaufman et al., 2004). In some urban school districts with an overrepresentation of students from minority backgrounds, rates
for dropping out of school are as high as 40% (Kaufman et al., 2004). A number of sources have shown that Black males drop out or are pushed out of school systems at higher rates than other ethnic/gender groups (Kaufman et al., 2004; McMillen & Kaufman, 1996; Narine, 1992; Reed, 1988).

The National Center for Educational Statistics 2001 report on high school dropout rates and completion rates also indicated that students from low income families were six times more likely to dropout of high school than their same age counterparts from high income families (Kaufman et al., 2004). Other important predictors of future dropout include low parental involvement in sixth grade, poor quality of early care-giving, gender (being male), and problem behaviors in first grade (Jimerson et al., 2000).

There are several consequences of dropping out of school. Non-graduates of high school are ill equipped for today’s work force, as a high school education is considered a minimum requirement for entry into the labor market (Christenson et al., 2001; Kaufman et al., 2004). Employment opportunities that once paid living wages and benefits have virtually disappeared for youth who have not completed a high school education (Christenson et al., 2001; Kaufman et al., 2004). According to the 1992 U.S. Bureau of the Census, students who drop out of high school can expect to earn considerably less money, achieve lower levels of academic achievement, and experience poorer mental and physical health when compared to their high school graduate counterparts (Christenson et al., 2001; Kaufman et al., 2004). A study conducted in 1992 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census found that more than one-third of all high school dropouts who were employed full time and year round worked in low wage jobs that paid less than $12, 195 per year (Duany & Pittman, 1991). These high school dropouts also constituted 52% percent of
welfare recipients, 82% percent of the prison population, and 85% of juvenile justice cases. And young Black males were found to be even less likely to find employment than their Latino and European American male counterparts (Duany & Pittman, 1991).

Students who find themselves in this position cost the United States approximately 250 billion dollars in social services, lost wages, and taxes (Kaufman et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 1999; McMillen & Kaufman, 1996). These negative outcomes have become a national concern; under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, secondary schools were faced with the challenge of demonstrating that they were making progress in increasing high school graduation rates and other indicators of student achievement (Stearns, 2002). According to the National Education Goals Panel (1999), the majority of states have not yet reached the desired goal of a 90% graduation rate, and for some populations, the rate of graduation is significantly lower.

School disengagement. By high school, as many as 40% to 60% of students who have not already dropped out have become chronically disengaged from school, and this disengagement occurs in urban, suburban, and rural areas (Sedlac, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick, 1996; Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996). Research on dropouts has shown that a host of negative school experiences serve as red flags to disengagement in school and precursors to eventual school dropout. For example, students who drop out are more likely to have had a history of poor school performance, disruptive behavior, poor attendance, a negative attitude toward school, and early school failure (Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989; Eckstom, Goertz, Pollack, Rock, 1986; Finn, 1993; Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Jimerson et al., 2000; Rumberger, 1995; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1998; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986).
Researchers have examined why students become increasingly more disengaged as they advance through the school system. They have recognized that early childhood and, to some extent, elementary school programs have a well-documented history of infusing affective supports into their daily curricula. Studies examining teacher relationships as early as kindergarten have found that children with warm, close, communicative relationships with kindergarten teachers were better adjusted and had more positive child-teacher relationships in second grade (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). Secondary schools, on the other hand, provide little in the way of affective supports for their students (Doll & Lyon, 1998).

Academic Risk Factors and Outcomes for Black Students Living in Poor Communities

Many Black children living in poverty-stricken neighborhoods are likely to attend impoverished schools within their communities (Hampson et al., 1998; Proctor & Dalaker, 2003). These schools often are overcrowded and lack the adequate resources necessary to provide a competitive education (Hampson et al., 1998; Taylor, 1991).

Segregation

The schools that Black students attend are also more likely to be segregated (Jackson, 1999). Within schools, Black children of all income levels are more segregated than any other racial or ethnic group (Nettles & Pleck, 1993). Since the mid 1970s, American public schools have become more segregated and appear to be regressing to a pre-Brown pattern of segregation (Orfield, 1996). From 1986 to 1991, the proportion of Black students in schools with more than half minority students rose to the level that had existed before the Supreme Court’s first busing decision in 1971 (Orfield, 1996).
share of Black students in intensely segregated (90-100% minority) schools, which had actually declined during the 1980s, also rose. In 1980, 63.5% of Black students attended segregated schools and 33.2% were in intensely segregated schools. By 1999, the proportion of Black students in intensely segregated schools had climbed up to 37% across the nation (Orfield, 1996).

This resegregation of schools has led some demographers to conclude that a system of “American Apartheid” exists, resulting in diminished educational opportunities for Blacks (Massey & Denton, 1987; Orfield, 1996). According to some, the United States Justice Department has done little to force states to comply with desegregation mandates since the Nixon Administration and this has remained constant through the Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and Bush II administrations (Orfield, 1996). The Supreme Court has handed down three re-segregation decisions since 1991. In the 1991 landmark decision of the Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell, the courts ruled that once a school was declared unitary it could be released from its obligation to maintain desegregation. In the 1992 Freeman v. Pitts case, the Court ruled that as long as school districts temporarily maintained some aspect of desegregation for several years and did not show intent to discriminate, minority students could be sent back to segregated schools. The school districts also did not need to prove actual racial equality, nor a narrowing of academic gaps between races. In the 1995 case of Missouri v. Jenkins, the Courts prohibited efforts to attract white suburban and private school students voluntarily through special programs to upgrade the schools. The court ruled that equalization remedies should be limited in time and extent and those school districts need not show any actual correction of the educational harm of segregation (Orfield, 1996).
One theory holds that the problem with Blacks attending segregated schools is the relationship that exists between race and poverty. Black and Latinos are fourteen times more likely to be in a high-poverty school (more than 50% poor), compared to the 96% of segregated White schools that have a majority of middle-class students. It is believed that the actual benefits of integrated schools comes from access to resources and from the expectations, competition, and values of successful middle-class educational institutions that routinely prepare students for college (Orfield, 1996).

*Achievement gap.* The decrease in school desegregation efforts may have contributed significantly to the racial/ethnic achievement gap (Ipka, 2004; McFarland, 1969). The achievement gap refers to African Americans scoring lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, mathematics, scholastic aptitude and intelligence tests (Haycock, 2001). Between 1970 and 1988, the achievement gap between African American and White students was cut in half, and the gap separating Latinos and Whites declined by one-third. The progress came to a halt around 1988, however, and since that time, the gaps have widened (Haycock, 2001). In some subjects and at some grade levels, the gaps started growing; in others they remained stagnant. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) indicated that, in fact, standardized achievement test scores of African American and Latino students have increased significantly in the 1970s and into the 1990s, but the gaps separating them from other students also widened during the 1990s. In fact, by the end of their high school year, Black and Latino students have only obtained skills in both reading and mathematics that are comparable to White students in 8th grade (Haycock, 2001).
The academic achievement gap is evident when examining grades, test scores, course selection, and graduation rates (Flowers & Flowers, 2008; Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). This achievement gap has resulted in public policy initiatives, such as The No Child Left Behavior Act of 2001, which addressed this dilemma in its “Statement of Purpose” for Title 1. It stated that its purpose “is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to gain a high quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on state academic achievement standards and…..assessments.” It goes on to state that “this purpose can be accomplished by closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged and their more advantaged peers.” (Stearns, 2002). According to Stearns (2002), the act forces schools to look beyond questions concerning racial/ethnic differences between students towards how a number of groups are performing in school.

**Placement in Special Education**

According to the 1993 U.S. Department of Education report, Black students make up 16% of the elementary and secondary school population. They comprise 8% of those labeled “Gifted and Talented” but are nearly 25% of those labeled in handicapping conditions. Black students are also more likely to be excluded from rigorous classes, and prevented from accessing educational opportunities that might otherwise support and encourage them (Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Oakes, 1985). According to the 1990 Quality Education for Minorities Project, 35% of those specifically labeled educable mentally retarded were Black (Herrera, 1998). Similarly, another study found teachers were more likely to judge a child as a candidate for special education when told
the child was Black or Hispanic than when the child was described as White (Herrera, 1998; Zucker & Preito, 1977). These findings were replicated in studies from 1988 and 1990 (Herrera, 1998).

Black male students are particularly vulnerable to being referred for and placed in special education (Herrera, 1998; Hilliard, 1991). Black males are three times more likely to be placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded and for students with learning disabilities than in gifted and talented classes (Herrera, 1998; Hilliard, 1991). On average, 1 in 8 Black males are placed into special education (Herrera, 1998).

A relationship has been found between the number of Black male students placed in special education and the number of White teachers in the school system (Herrera, 1998). Cities with the highest percentage of White teachers in the school system had the highest percentage of Black students identified in need of special education services. In cities with the lowest proportion of Black teachers (i.e., New York, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and San Diego), at least 1 out of every six Black male students was in special education. For example, in New York City only 35.7% of the student population was made up of Black children, but 66.7% of the special education students were Black males. Black students were identified as in need of special education almost twice the rate as other children. White teachers accounted for 77% of teachers in NYC. In contrast, cities with the highest proportion of Black teachers (i.e., Atlanta and the District of Columbia) placed Black males in special education at the lowest rates. Cities with an intermediate level of Black teachers placed these students at an intermediate rate (Herrera, 1998).
Grade Retention

Another risk factor for Black children is grade retention (Jimerson, 1999; Meisels, 1992). Black children in the United States are held back in Kindergarten more often than their White counterparts (Meisels, 1992). According to Garibaldi (1988), in 1985 the U.S. Department of Education reported that 44.5% of African American 13-year-old males and 35% of African American 13-year-old females had been retained at least once, compared to the 29% of same aged European American males and females. During the 1986-1987 school years in New Orleans, Black males represented 43% of the public school population, but accounted for 58% of the non-promotions. Several long-term negative outcomes have been shown to be related to grade retention. For example, Jimerson (1999) found that children who were held back were more likely to drop out by age 19 and less likely to receive a diploma by age 20.

Discipline

In addition, Black children are more likely to be punished with severity for school offenses, even for minor offenses (Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Oakes, 1985). According to the 1990 Quality Education for Minorities Project, Black students constitute 31% of corporal punishment cases and 25% of suspensions (Herrera, 1998).

Black male students are particularly vulnerable to severe school punishment. In many school districts throughout the United States, Black males are more likely to be suspended or expelled than any other ethnic or gender group (Herrera, 1998; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). A report in New Orleans underscores the Black male experience in public schools. Specifically examining New Orleans, it was found that
although Black males represented only 43% of the population, they accounted for 65% of the suspensions and 80% of the expulsions (Garibaldi, 1988).

**Teachers’ Expectations**

Another dilemma that Black children face is having teachers who hold lower expectations for them (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Hampson et al., 1998; Taylor, 1991). In a meta-analysis of experimental studies that focused on teachers’ expectations, it was found that teachers had higher expectations for their White students than for their Black students (Baron et al., 1985). Similar conclusions were drawn in an ethnographic study that suggested that teachers evaluate their students on the basis of the children’s parents. Students whose parents who do not appear to be supportive of their child’s education are labeled as less likely to succeed and thus do not receive as much teacher support (Brown-Rosier, 2000).

Educators who expect to encounter academic and social problems from Black students, specifically Black males, may help perpetuate a self-fulfilling prophecy (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996). In Jussim and colleagues’ (1996) study, however, there was no evidence of racial stereotype bias in teachers’ perceptions of current performance, talent, or effort for sixth grade students after controlling for previous grades, previous test scores, self-concept of math ability, self-reported level of effort, and self-reported time spent on homework. They reasoned that if past performance and attitudes explain racial differences in teachers’ current perceptions, then these perceptions can be an important source of the future Black-White test score gap only if teachers’ perceptions affect Blacks and Whites differently. They analyzed the effects of teachers’ perceptions of performance, talent, and effort in October on both math grades and scores on the math
section of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program for May of the spring semester of the 1982 to 1983 school year. For both grades and scores, they found that the estimated impact of teacher perceptions was almost three times as great for African Americans as for Whites. Negative effects were also larger for girls and for children from low-income families. In addition, effects were found to be cumulative across socioeconomic status and race (Jussim et al., 1996). Black children from low-income backgrounds experienced the effects of both race and income.

Similar studies replicated these findings (Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997). These studies found that although self-fulfilling prophecies often have small effect sizes (typically below .30), the effect sizes were more powerful ($\beta=.41$) for low achievers and Black students. It is important to point out that overestimates of low achievers’ abilities resulted in large gains in their academic achievement (Madon et al., 1997). The authors suggested several reasons why low performing students may be more susceptible to negative self-fulfilling. One reason maybe that when students consistently find school to be difficult and unpleasant, they may begin to devalue the importance they place on it. Another reason maybe that teachers may act on their negative expectations (i.e., communicating their negative expectations) and undermine the student’s motivation (Jussim et al., 1996; Madon et al., 1997).

Researchers have also tried to explain the reasons why teacher perceptions affect subsequent performance more for Blacks than for Whites (Ferguson, 2003; Jussim et al., 1996; Weinstein, 1985). It is possible that Black students may respond differently than White students to similar treatment from teachers or that teachers may treat Black and White students differently, or both (Ferguson, 2003). Teachers may be less flexible in
their expectations for Blacks, females, and students from low-income households (Ferguson, 2003). Teachers may rely on stereotypes of Black intellectual inferiority that are reinforced by past and present disparities in performance and may cause teachers to underestimate Blacks’ potential more than Whites’ and search with less conviction for ways of helping Black children to improve academically (Ferguson, 2003).

Several studies have supported the notion that teachers are less supportive of Black students (Brophy & Good, 1974; Coates, 1972; Ferguson, 2003; Taylor, 1979). A study found that in a middle-class White school, student inattention was perceived to be an indication of teachers’ need to arouse student interest, but the same behavior in a lower class Black school was perceived as boredom due to limited student attention (Brophy & Good, 1974; Ferguson, 2003). Other studies (dating from the 1970s to 2003) focusing on teachers’ treatment of Black and White students (Coates, 1972; Ferguson, 2003; McKown & Weinstein, 2002; Taylor, 1979) have found that teachers were less supportive of Black students than White students. Taylor (1979) conducted a research study in which a 6-year-old student was said to be watching from behind a screen as the participants, college students in teacher training, taught a prescribed lesson. The findings from this study were that when the phantom student was Black, they received briefer feedback after mistakes, less positive feedback after correct responses, and fewer helpful “slips of the tongue.” McKown and Weinstein (2002) found evidence that Black fourth grade students perceived that their teachers provided differential opportunities for learning and for classroom engagement for high academic achievers than for low achievers. They also perceived that low achievers had little chance of being successful learners if teachers treated students differently based on their ability levels. Each of the
experimental studies suggested that some teachers may be helping Whites more than Blacks (Ferguson, 2003).

The second hypothesis to describe why teacher perceptions affect performance more for Black students than for White students is that one’s minority status may play a role in students’ responses to teachers’ expectations (Ferguson, 2003; Weinstein, 1985). In other words, the differences found in the cultural values in one’s home compared to at one’s school may either help to immunize some children to the impact of their teachers’ views of them or intensify their susceptibility to their viewpoint. Gross (1993) found that teachers and administrators reported that Black parents were less supportive of the school’s mission than White parents. However, Black parents reported being most supportive of the idea that their children strive for the higher-level math classes, even if that meant lower grades (Ferguson, 2003). In fact, it was suggested in Brown-Rosier’s (2000) study that teachers’ assessment of parent support from low income parents do not take into account the barriers that might prevent a parent from coming to school events (e.g., getting transportation to get across town to meet, getting time off of work).

Ferguson (2003) questioned whether these mixed messages were contributing to some of their children’s ambivalent work habits. One possible explanation for this comes from a study inspired by the work of John Ogbu (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Mickelson (1990) found that Blacks agreed (to a greater degree than Whites) with the optimistic but abstract beliefs about success and the American dream. However, Blacks’ concrete attitudes were less hopeful than Whites. Her measure of concrete attitudes included questions that illicit doubt and ambivalence about education as a route to success in mainstream society (Ferguson, 2003; Mickelson, 1990).
Anti-intellectualism

This ambivalence and disengagement is a risk factor that is unique to children, particularly Black children, living in disadvantaged areas, and has been referred to as the cultural norm of “anti-intellectualism.” This term refers to children believing that excelling in school is “acting White.” According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), because African Americans and low-income families have had limited opportunities in the United States, some have developed an “oppositional” culture that equates doing well in school with “acting White” or “selling out.” These factors are often associated with a decrease in Black students’ motivation and an increase in their feelings of educational disenfranchisement (Ferguson, 2003). Together, these factors serve to pose significant threats to the academic achievement of capable Black students (Ford, 1994; Gayles, 2006; Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Gutman & Midgley, 1999; Gutman et al., 2002).

Researchers have sought to find out whether Black and White children respond to teachers differently (Ferguson, 2003). Casteel (1997) found when eighth and ninth graders were asked whom they wanted most to please with their class work, “teachers” were the answers for 81% of Black females, 62% of Black males, 28% of White females, and 32% of White males. A study conducted in 1972 by Judith Kleinfeld found that high school students’ concept of their ability was more correlated with perceived teacher ratings of ability for Blacks but more correlated with perceived parent ratings for Whites. This finding was replicated in a study by Irvine (1990). One reason that low income Black students may value pleasing their teachers is because of the mixed messages regarding education that may receive from their home (Ferguson, 2003).
Summary of Academic Risk Factors and Outcome

An underlying assumption of research on students who fail to graduate high school has been that a better understanding of the characteristics of dropouts would allow educators to develop policies and implement practices to eradicate this problem (Finn, 1991, 1993; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Eliminating this problem has not occurred, however, because the focus on social, family, and personal characteristics has not provided implications for shaping school policy and practice. Because traditional research has tended to identify characteristics least amendable to change, research may be better directed toward understanding the institutional character of schools and how this affects dropout (Finn, 1991, 1993; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986).

Dropping out is now being viewed as a long-term process of disengagement from school that often begins in the elementary grades and continues throughout the time a student formally withdraws from school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Finn, 1993). Finn (1993) reviewed two alternative models for explaining dropping out. The first, labeled the frustration-self esteem model, argues that the initial antecedent for school withdrawal is early school failure, which leads to low self-esteem and then to problematic behavior such as absenteeism. A study found that 8th graders who were absent 15 to 20% of the time were more likely to drop out of school than their peers who attended school more often (Rumberger, 1995).

The second model, labeled the participation-identification model, argued that the initial antecedent to withdrawal is the lack of participation in school activities, which leads to alienation from school (Finn, 1993). It has also been suggested that educational
engagement and school membership or social bonding jointly influence educational outcomes (Finn, 1993). Both theory and empirical research have demonstrated that students who are not engaged in school and do not attend regularly are more likely to have low-test scores and a higher risk of dropping out (Finn, 1993; Rumberger, 1995; Thomas, 1954; Wehlage et al., 1986).

**Resiliency and Protective Factors**

Despite the multiple risk factors that many Black students face, a number of these children are able to achieve academically and lead successful lives (Cowen, Work, Wyman, 1997; Garmezy, 1993; LaGrange, 2004). Resiliency theory attempts to explain academic achievement among students who encounter negative psychological and environmental situations (Reis, Colbert, Hebert, 2005; Rutter, 1981, 1987; Wang et al., 1994; Waxman, 1992; Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

**Resiliency**

There are many definitions of resiliency. Thus, there is no single definition, standard for its application, or agreement in its role in explanations, models, and theories for the construct of resiliency (Glantz & Slobada, 1999; Reis et al., 2005; Vernon, 2004; Windle, 1999).

The history of the birth of the construct called resiliency begins with Garmezy, who is acknowledged as the founder of resiliency research (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Vernon, 2004). Garmezy and his mentor Eliot Rodnick observed that certain patients with Schizophrenia were quite functional in their daily lives (Vernon, 2004). They had shorter hospital stays, were able to hold regular jobs, and often engaged in long-term romantic relationships (Vernon, 2004). Based on these observations, a study was initiated that
examined children whose parents suffered from Schizophrenia. It was found that 90% of those children did not develop Schizophrenia. These children were described as having good peer relations, academic achievement, commitment to education and life goals, and early and successful work histories (Vernon, 2004).

Several other researchers in the field (Anthony, 1974; Rutter, 1986; Vernon, 2004; Werner & Smith, 1977) found that even when individuals were exposed to the most horrendous situations (e.g., war, incarceration in concentration camps, sexual and physical abuse, and parental drug abuse), 50% to 70% of the affected children survived and went on to have normal lives (Werner & Smith, 1977; Vernon, 2004). These findings helped to change the focus of researchers from risk factors and stressors to what came to be known as protective factors, the hypothesized building blocks of resiliency (Vernon, 2004).

However, the first definitions of resiliency were too ambitious in their claims by equating it with being invulnerable (Vernon, 2004). According to Vernon’s literature review, Anthony (1974) coined the term “invulnerable” to describe resilient children. Then in 1982, Werner and Smith published a series of reports on their longitudinal study in Kauai, Hawaii called *Vulnerable but Invincible*. Subsequent research showed that the invincible child did not exist (Rutter, 1987; Vernon, 2004). The trait-based approach regarding resiliency also began to be criticized in the literature (Rutter, 1987; Vernon, 2004). Critics of this approach reported that it left too much responsibility for obtaining resiliency upon the individual child (Vernon, 2004). Thus, resiliency began to be conceptualized based on contextual and situational variables as well as individual characteristics (Rutter, 1987; Vernon, 2004; Wolff, 1995).
Today the view is that resiliency is not static, but an ever-changing concept that emerges from environmental interactions (Rutter, 1987; Vernon, 2004; Wolff, 1995). The literature emphasizes that behavior cannot be understood without reference to individuals as they interact with their environment (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; Masten, 2001; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). Today, despite the diverse disciplines that have contributed to resiliency research (e.g., developmental psychology, social psychology, counseling and clinical psychology, psychopathology, epidemiology), in its most generic form, most researchers agree that resiliency can be defined as the process whereby people recover from adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1987; Vernon, 2004). It is also recognized that resiliency is not a fixed attribute, nor does the successful negotiation of risk at one point in one’s life mean that individuals will not react adversely to other stressors when the situations change (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1987; Vernon, 2004).

*Protective factors.* Since the origin of the construct called resiliency, researchers have been interested in searching for the exact variables (protective factors) that could explain why some individuals succumbed to risk, while others were able to persevere (Anthony, 1974; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Vernon, 2004; Werner & Smith, 1977). Garmezy (1993) defined protective factors as attributes of persons, environments, situations, and events that appear to temper predictions of psychopathology based upon an individual’s risk. In education, the definition of protective factors can be defined as factors that promote positive outcomes, such as good intellectual ability, problem solving ability, and engagement in productive activities in the face of adversity (Anthony & Cohler, 1987; Doll & Lyon, 1998). Protective factors
can also include a relationship with a caring adult (Masten & Garmezy, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1989).

Research has shown repeatedly that protective factors can lead to positive outcomes, even for children reared in the most adverse circumstances (Masten & Garmezy, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1977). The findings are consistent for children facing difficult circumstances, such as having parents whom are seriously mentally ill (Anthony, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1977) or institutionalized (Rutter, 1987), and children being reared under conditions of severe economic hardship (Conger et al., 1992). Many of these individuals develop into competent, confident, and caring adults. Thus researchers began to ask what characteristics these children have in common that allows them to be resilient in the face of life’s adversities (Anthony, 1974; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Vernon, 2004; Werner & Smith, 1989).

The landmark Kauai Longitudinal study conducted by Werner and colleagues (1977) found that resilient children had many characteristics. As infants, they had easy temperaments. As toddlers, they were advanced in communication, locomotion, and self help skills when compared to students who later developed serious learning problems. In elementary school, they had good social skills, reasoning and reading skills, and engaged in activities and hobbies that were not narrowly sex typed. By the time they graduated from high school, they had developed a positive self-concept and internal locus of control. There were also similarities found within these children’s families. They tended to grow up in families with four or fewer children (with a space of two years or more between themselves and their siblings), and had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one caregiver. Important to note is that some of this nurturing came from
substitute parents such as grandparents or older siblings, or from neighbors and babysitters. Resilient boys were often first-born sons and had males in the family who could serve as role models (i.e., father, grandfather, older cousin, or uncle). Resilient children also had structure in their daily routines, had emotional support outside their own families (i.e., close friend, kin, neighbor, peer or elder, youth leader, minister or church group, or favorite teacher), and participated in extracurricular activities (Werner & Smith, 1977).

Similar findings have been replicated in other studies (Gordon, 1996; Stoiber & Good, 1998). More recent studies have found that connectedness (attachment) with one’s school and parent-family connectedness were protective against every health risk behavior except history of pregnancy (McNeely & Falcì, 2004; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Resnick et al., 1997). Families, schools, and communities that have protected children growing up in adversity are characterized by (a) caring and support, (b) positive expectations, and (c) ongoing opportunities for participation (Benard, 1993). In addition, female guardians who have themselves reported receiving high levels of social support have characterized their adolescents as having a greater sense of self-reliance, less engagement in problem behavior, and higher self esteem. These mothers and female guardians also reported greater acceptance of their adolescent and granting their adolescent more autonomy and independence (Taylor & Roberts, 1995).

There have been notable landmark studies that have focused on the construct of resiliency with individuals of minority status such as the longitudinal study conducted on Kauai children in Hawaii (Werner & Smith, 1989). However, much of the research on positive psychology constructs such as resiliency has focused on predominantly White
samples (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; LaGrange, 2004). Therefore, more research is needed on the construct of resiliency in non-White cultural groups (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004). Some researchers have begun to try to understand resiliency as it incorporates culture and diversity (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004), although studies on protective factors in stressful, multi-problem environments continue to be rare (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; Cowen et al., 1997; Finn & Rock, 1997). A few studies have examined resiliency in culturally diverse populations (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; Capella & Weinstein, 2001; Cowen et al., 1997; Finn & Rock, 1997; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Stoiber & Good, 1998). These studies reinforce the new concept of resiliency of being environmentally driven instead of something that is a trait. Furthermore these studies express that resiliency develops over time with environmental support (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004).

**Educational Resiliency**

Today the concept of resiliency is being applied to systems such as schools (Baker & Sansome, 2001; Borman & Overman, 2004; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Doll & Lyon, 1998; Ford, 1994; Hoyt-Meyers et al., 1995; Resnick et al., 1997). It has been argued that in schools, educational resiliency is needed for some children to succeed. Educational resiliency is a sub area within the larger field of resiliency (De Lisi, 2004). Similar to the larger field of resiliency, definitions and measurement approaches to educational resiliency vary and there is not a unified model that explains education resiliency (De Lisis, 2004; Noam & Herman, 2002; Richardson, 2002). One definition of educational resiliency is “the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences” (Wang et al., 1994 p. 46). The process of resiliency can be
fostered by protective processes (De Lisi, 2004; Arrington & Wilson, 2000; Winfield, 1994) such as family support (Cappella & Weinstein, 2001; De Lisi, 2004; Kenny, Gallagher, Alvarez-Salvat, & Silsby, 2002), teacher support (Borman & Overman, 2004; Borman & Rachuba, 2001), clear, positive, and high expectations (Rutter et al., 1979; Weinstein, 1991), participation in school activities (Borman & Rachumba, 2001; Garbarino et al., 1992), and active engagement in school (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Finn & Rock, 1997).

De Lisi’s (2004) review of qualitative and quantitative studies on educational resiliency identified several common themes. These themes included social support, student optimism, participation in school/extracurricular activities, and personally relevant role models. DeLisi (2004) noted that it is difficult to reach definitive conclusions because the studies vary in term of student background characteristics (age/grade level, gender, race/ethnicity), criteria for educational resiliency, methodology (interview/survey; analytic tool used), and sample size (in some studies sample sizes were small). Another consistent finding has been that parenting styles (Baldwin, 1990; Clark, 1983), parental discipline, parental education (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Grigsby, 2005; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000), racial socialization (Bright, 1994), and family structure (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995) can all play an important part in students’ academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003).

*Theoretical models of educational resiliency.* A few researchers have devoted considerable attention to the issue of educational resiliency and have formulated theoretical models of how schools may foster resiliency in students. Research that has had an impact on these models include the effective school approach, school-effects
approach, and school characteristics that seem to function more clearly as protective mechanisms and processes (Benard, 1993; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Wang et al., 1994). However, little systematic research has formally tested these models or provided other general evidence concerning the processes and characteristics of schools that may affect academic resiliency (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). A brief description of these three theoretical models is further explained below.

**Effective schools approach.** One feature included in the effective schools model is the goal of achieving a safe and orderly school environment. This is well linked to the affirmation of healthy social behavior that is characteristic of resilient children (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Edmonds, 1979). The foundation of the effective schools model is focused on developing students academically, which may in itself shield children from adversity by enhancing self-esteem, efficacy, and a sense of belonging within the school. When discussing the features of schools that foster resiliency, researchers explicitly list effective school characteristics such as strong principal leadership and a clear school mission, but are less definitive about the processes through which these characteristics may be related to the psychosocial phenomenon of resiliency (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Edmonds, 1979).

**School-effects approach.** Another research tradition that has had an impact on models of educational resiliency is the school-effects approach (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). According to this theory, school funding, resources, and the peers a student goes to school with are important predictors of students’ academic outcomes. Some researchers have noted that limited resources in the school environment, and within the community at large, may prevent students from achieving resilient outcomes (Borman &
Rachuba, 2001; Masten, 1994; Wang et al., 1994). It has been suggested that students who attend schools with high concentrations of underachieving, poor, and minority peers may be placed at an increased risk for academic failure (Wang et al., 1994). Similar to the effective schools’ characteristics, few authors have noted clear mechanisms through which a school’s resources and the composition of its student body may help to build educational resiliency within students (Borman & Rachumba, 2001). There are notable exceptions to this, especially regarding how racially integrated schools impact African American adolescents’ academic outcomes (Clark, 1991; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). For example, Clark (1991) reviewed research suggesting that at-risk African American high school students who had interracial friendships developed better academic and social outcomes in high school and in college. He conceptualized these outcomes to be a product of African American students’ mainstream socialization, which is often required to succeed in the middle class culture of school.

School characteristics. According to Borman and Rachuba (2001), school characteristics seem to function more clearly as protective mechanisms for promoting educational resiliency. Resiliency researchers have consistently cited the need for caring and supportive teachers (Bernard, 1991; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Henderson & Milstein, 1996); a safe and orderly school environment (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009; Wang et al., 1994); positive expectations for all children (e.g., Benard, 1993; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Rutter, 1979); opportunities for students to become meaningfully involved and engaged within the school (Benard, 1993; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Finn & Rock, 1997), and efforts to improve home and school partnerships (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Comer,
According to Borman and Rachuba (2001), these school attributes have a much clearer link to promoting the psychosocial process of resiliency building.

**Educational Resiliency and Black Students**

Researchers have also begun to investigate the protective factors that lead to positive educational outcomes in Black children (Baldwin, 1990; Clark, 1983; Connell et al., 1994; Gutman et al., 2002). A salient factor is a child’s relationship with a supportive caring adult, which has been found to increase the achievement of children who live or learn in negative environments (e.g., poverty, violence, deficient resources Cohen & Willis, 1985; Emerick, 1992; Hébert & Beardsley, 2001; Masten & Garmezy, 1990; Reis, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1989). These supportive adults may include parents, extended family members, and fictive kin (“very important” non-parental adults), such as friends, school faculty, church members, or community members (Baldwin et al., 1990; Catterall, 1998; Clark, 1983; Connell et. al., 1994; Gutman et al., 2002; Jimerson et al., 1999; Kohl et al., 2000; Madhere, 1997; Taylor & Roberts, 1995).

*Parents and educational resiliency.* Black high achieving students tend to come from homes where parents set clear and consistent limits for their children, have warm and nurturing interactions (Baldwin & Cole, 1990; Catterall, 1998; Clark, 1983; Deslandes Royer, Turcotte, & Bertranel, 1997; Slaughter & Epps, 1987; Wang et al., 1994; Wyman et al., 1991), hold high expectations, have interpersonal communication patterns marked by frequent dialogue and strong parental encouragement in their children’s academic pursuits, and have consistent monitoring of how their children use their time and space (Bright, 1994; Clark, 1983; Comer et al., 1996; Gutmam et al., 2002;
Kohl et al, 2000; Madhere, 1997; Marcon, 1999; Morrison et al., 1998; Reynolds, 1989, 1992; Swan & Stavros, 1973). In fact, Madhere (1997) found that the only consistent predictor of academic success for Black, White, and Hispanic students was the level of parental monitoring. Students were found to be more likely to obtain their post secondary goals if their parents monitored and supported their academic activities during the high school years (Madhere). This was also found to be the case in a study by Miller, Cribbs, Davis, and Johnson (in press), in which the opinion of family members was consistently ranked as most important in supporting students’ decision to remain in school. And another study found that Black adolescents rated family members as significantly more helpful than did their White or Hispanic counterparts (Cauce, 1982).

In the few studies that have examined the relationship between parental education and parental involvement, better educated parents have been found to be more involved at school and home (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Grigsby, 2005; Kohl et al., 2000). There has been an increase in the number of minorities enrolled in higher education (Constantine & Greer, 2003). For example, African American women make up two-thirds of the total African American population attending college and represent 13% of the total undergraduate enrollment (Constantine & Greer, 2003). Parent support has also been linked to success in other minority groups, such as Mexican Americans (Caterall, 1998; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997).

The parents of high academic achieving students were also found to provide their children with knowledge, attitudes, skills, and exposure (i.e., reading to their children, encouraging their children to visit the library regularly, and enrolling them in enrichment programs; Bright, 1994; Clark, 1983). Two recent reviews of research related to the
underachievement of academically talented students summarized findings that suggested regular patterns of work and practice seem to help talented students develop an achievement model in their own lives. Music, dance and art lessons, and regular time for homework and reading were identified as being helpful for developing positive self-regulation strategies (Reis, 1998; Reis & McCoach, 2000). It is important to note that the relationship between parent involvement, children’s motivation, and academic achievement is bi-directional in nature, with each influencing the other over time. Thus, children who are confident in school may actually elicit more responsive and stimulating care from their parents and others who care for them. These parents and caretakers may then become more actively involved in their children’s schooling (Grodnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Luster, Leskul, & Oh, 2004; Raine, Reynolds, Venables, & Mednick, 2002).

*Family structure.* Research has been mixed on the importance of family structure and its effects on academic achievement. Some studies have found that children from single parent homes are less likely to graduate from high school and have worse academic, economic, and social outcomes (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Sandefur, McLanahan, & Wojtkiewicz, 1992; Wang et al., 1994; Zimilies & Lee, 1991). Such studies imply that living with both biological parents has the most positive impact on adolescent outcomes (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, (1995) found that students living with both parents had fewer suspensions, were more religious, and perceived less negativity in their neighborhood, on average, than those living in other arrangements. A longitudinal study of Black urban youth also supported the importance of family structure, particularly
emphasizing a father’s presence in middle childhood and early adolescence (Brooks-Gunn, Guo, & Furstenberg, 1993). However, a recent study suggests that the negative association between female-headed families and academic achievement among Black children may be associated with the fact that the students are typically surrounded by other schoolmates in a similar situation, leading to a concentration effect (Bankston & Caldas, 1998).

A recent meta-analysis on parent involvement among minority children found that family structure was the most important facet of parental involvement. Since Black children are more likely to come from single-parent families, the impact of the parent(s) actually being involved is likely to be greater than for students that do not come from single family homes (Jeynes, 2003). This is especially true for Black women, given the imbalanced gender ratio and limited job opportunities in their communities (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) found that even when controlling for human capital measures (e.g., socioeconomic status, mother’s education), the presence of the biological father in the home was positively related to high school graduation.

Stressors in one’s environment can have negative effects on Black children’s academic lives (Gutman & Midgley, 1999; Gutman et al., 2005). Fortunately, social support can ease the stress that parents face and promote more adequate parenting practices, which in turn, can foster positive socioemotional development in impoverished children (McLoyd, 1990). Also, although parent support is of great importance, relationships with other individuals besides the family can have a positive impact on adolescents’ achievement. Studies focusing on the achievement of poor and minority
children, in particular, have shown the importance of having other supportive relationships with teachers, peers, or other adults (e.g., Clark, 1983; Comer, 1980; Rutter, 1979.

*Extended family and fictive kin.* The results of several studies have shown that one of the predictors of resiliency appear to be relationships with caring prosocial adults (Greenberger, Chen, & Beams, 1998; Masten, 1998; Masten et al., 1990; Rutter, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1989). These prosocial adults may be “very important” nonparental adults that are extended family members or community members (Greenberger et. al., 1998). In fact, Black males in an elementary school indicated that having the input from adults with homework and projects and having someone take an interest in what they were doing in school helped them to get better grades, complete their homework, and listen more in class (Wilson-Jones, 2003).

Data from in-depth interviews with parents living in highly stressed urban areas identified child care support from extended family (kinship support) and community support to be predictors of resilient children (Wyman et al., 1991). These findings have been confirmed in several other studies that have examined the processes linking kinship support to child and adolescent outcomes in poor Black families (Taylor, Casten, & Flinkinger, 1993; Taylor & Roberts, 1995).
Social Support

To better understand the protective mechanisms that support from these adults provides to children, this section provides information on theories and definitions of social support, as well as a brief literature review of the concept of social support. Sociocultural perspectives of the educational process posit that students need a sense of community or connection to others in order to maximize student learning, motivation, and engagement (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004; Osterman, 2000). As mentioned previously, researchers have found that children who have a supportive relationship with a caring adult are more likely to have positive outcomes despite living in negative environments (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Emerick, 1992; Hébert & Beardsley, 2001; Masten & Garmezy, 1990; Reis, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1989). This type of support has been shown to contribute to an individual’s ability to withstand stress, moderate the effects of stress on an individual’s well being, (Cobb, 1976; Gottlieb, 1979), and enhance their general adjustment and well-being (Campbell, Converse, & Rogers, 1976).

Three major sources of potential support have been identified for children. These sources are family support, formal support (i.e., teachers and counselors), and informal support (i.e., friends and other adults; Cauce et al., 1982). In this section, the different definitions and theories of social support are reviewed. Next, the general findings on parent support, teacher support, and peer support as they relate to educational outcomes are reviewed. Race (specifically Black children) and gender issues are also discussed.
Definitions

There are many definitions of social support that can be found in the literature (Caplan, 1974; Cobb, 1976; Demaray, Malecki, Davidson, Hodgson, Rebus, & 2005; Malecki & Demaray, 2002). An early definition broadly defined social support as the range of significant interpersonal relationships that have an impact on one’s psychological and social functioning (Caplan, 1974). According to Caplan (1974), individuals who had social support are more resilient when faced with stressors in their lives (Caplan, 1974). A second definition of social support is information from others that one is loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and a part of a social network (Cobb, 1976). Cobb explained that social support first originates from members of an individual’s family and then from one’s peers. The definition included members of one’s social network such as family and friends and affiliated non-mental-health professionals such as physicians and clergy members.

Another definition of social support enhanced the previous definitions by adding the idea of one’s perceptions. According to this definition, social support was an exchange of resources between two individuals perceived by the beneficiary or provider as being intended to enhance the well being of the recipient (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). The importance of perceptions has also been included in more recent definitions of social support (Demaray et al., 2005; Malecki & Demaray, 2002). For example, Demaray and colleagues (2005) defined social support as an individual’s perception that he or she is loved and valued by people in his or her social network. This social network helps to enhance personal functioning, deal with stressors, and potentially buffers him or her from negative outcomes. Individuals who perceive themselves as having strong social support
networks are generally more likely to cope more effectively with life’s adversities and experience positive adjustment and mental health outcomes (Billing & Moos, 1982; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Compas & Epping, 1993; Gutman et al., 2002; House, 1981; Turner, 1981, 1983).

Types of Social Support

Theoretical investigations of the construct of social support suggest that various aspects must be taken into account when examining social support as a construct (Winemiller, Mitchell, Sutliff, & Cline, 1993). One conceptualization that features several aspects of social support is set forth by Barrera (1986) who draws the distinction between three aspects of social support: (a) social embeddedness, (b) enacted support, and (c) perceived social support.

Social embeddedness. Social embeddedness is a concept that refers to the connections that one has with significant others in his or her social environments (Barrera, 1986). One approach to measuring social embeddedness has been to use broad indicators of social ties such as marital status (Eaton, 1978; Thoits, 1982), participation in community organizations (Berkman & Syme, 1979; Lin, Simeone, Ensel, & Kuo, 1979), presence of older siblings and contact with friends (Sandler, 1980). Although these indicators are perceived as direct measures of social support, they are used with the rationale that available social ties could be used as social support resources (Sandler, 1980), and potentially provide individuals with support during a crisis (Eaton, 1978). One of the issues of using a social embeddedness measure has been that it does not show the mechanisms through which social support has an influence on stress (Barrera 1986; Gore, 1981; Gottlieb, 1983). It cannot be assumed that all social networks involve the provision
of social support (Wellman, 1981). However, there have been social network measures developed that specifically assess network members who provide social support exchanges such as personal advice, nondirective support, material assistance, and information (Barrera, 1986; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983).

**Enacted support.** Enacted support refers to what individuals actually do when they provide support (Barrera, 1986; Gottlieb, 1979; Liem & Liem, 1978; Tardy, 1985). Tardy (1985) referred to behavioral descriptions of support as “enacted” support to distinguish it from “available” support that is measured by scales of perceived availability and even some measures of social embeddedness. It could be argued that self-report scales of enacted support are actually assessing “perceived-received” support because in the past these measures have relied on retrospective evaluation. Although difficult to do, it has been argued that behavioral observations of supportive transactions would provide a more accurate amount of received support than these self-report methods (Barrera, 1986). It is likely that enacted support would be provided when individuals faced adversity, particularly acute stressors. When these situations occur, measures of enacted support are suitable for assessing the responsiveness of others in supporting individuals that are confronted with stress (Barrera, 1986). Interestingly, reliable measures of social embeddedness, perceived social support, and enacted support show only mild relationships to each other (Barrera, 1986).

**Perceived social support.** Perceived social support is the cognitive appraisal of being reliably connected to others. It defines support as information (Cobb, 1976) and places the emphasis on the feedback function of social support (Cassel, 1976). The concept of perceived social support also fits cognitive models of stress and coping
processes (Folkman, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1979; Lazarus & Launier, 1978) that emphasize the appraisal of potentially threatening situations and resources that can be enlisted in coping efforts (Barerra, 1986).

Perceived social support may influence an individual’s ability to cope with stress (Sandler, Miller, Short, & Wolchik, 1989) and, in general, interpret stressful events as less threatening. It may also help people to respond in such a way to maintain predictable experiences, promote caring social networks, and have higher self esteem (Sandler et al.).

Perceived social support measures often incorporate two dimensions: perceived availability and adequacy of support ties. Other instruments focus more exclusively on the perceived adequacy or satisfaction with support (Sarason et al., 1983). Unlike measures of social embeddedness, perceived social support measures do not quantify the number of supporters or amount of contact. Instead, they focus on attempting to capture individuals’ perceptions that adequate support would be available if it were needed.

It has been evident in research with adults that perceived social support is more strongly and consistently related to fewer adjustment problems than is social embeddedness or enacted support (Barrera, 1986; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Research with children and adolescents is consistent with the adult literature; low levels of perceived social support is consistently related to psychological maladjustment (e.g., Cauce et al., 1982; Piko, 2000; Wenz-Gross & Siperstein, 1998).

_Tardy's model._ Another conceptualization that incorporates several aspects of social support is Tardy’s (1985) model. The multiple types of assistance provided can be divided into the following categories: emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental sources of support (House, 1981; Tardy, 1985). According to House (1981),
emotional support refers to caring behaviors from others such as love and trust. Appraisal support was described as providing someone with feedback or evaluative information (House, 1981; Tardy, 1985). Resources such as time or money provided to someone in need are referred to as instrumental support, whereas providing an individual with guidance and advice is information support (House; Tardy). Based on these categories, Tardy designed a conceptual model that consisted of the following dimensions: (a) direction (i.e., whether one is the giver or respondent of social support); (b) disposition (i.e., whether social support is potentially available or actually used); (c) description/evaluation (i.e., whether an individual is describing or evaluating his or her social support); (d) network (i.e., sources or networks of social support, including parents, teachers, family, friends, classmates, and others); and (e) content (i.e., type of social support provided).

Theories of Social Support

Two specific theoretical frameworks have been used to explain how social support might serve as either a protective factor during times of stress or help promote an individual’s overall psychological health (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Joseph, 1999; Uchino, 2004). These two models are called the buffering model and the main effect model (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Joseph, 1999; Uchino, 2004).

Stress buffering model. The most prominent and widely researched model of social support is the buffering model (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Uchino, 2004). In this model, social support is believed to help diminish or buffer the deleterious effects of stress in one’s life (Uchino, 2004). The stress-buffering hypothesis suggests that social support serves as a mechanism in which the perception of support influences the
individual to use positive coping strategies when a stressful event occurs (Schreurs & Ridder, 1997). According to this theory, stressful situations arise when an individual perceives situations to be demanding or challenging and is aware that he or she must act, but the individual does not have appropriate coping or problem-solving abilities (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Individuals in these situations would most likely exhibit unhappiness, an elevated physiological state, and feelings of helplessness or loss of self-esteem. The ‘stress-buffering model hypothesizes that when individuals are placed in such stressful situations, social support can serve as a buffer to protect them (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

In this theory, social support is thought to influence psychological and adjustment outcomes in two separate ways. First, social support may help to de-intensify an already stressful event. For example, if an individual perceives that he or she has social support, he or she may feel able to tackle the stressful situation (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Malecki & Demaray, 2002). Second, social support can be used to intervene when the individual is first beginning to experience stress by reducing the amount of physiological responses, thus preventing negative outcomes from occurring (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Frey & Rothlisberger, 1996). According to Cohen and Wills’ (1985) review, there is strong evidence for the buffering model of support on adjustment to stress. Even when people are faced with extremely stressful events (e.g., death of a spouse), having individuals who can provide support reduces the intensity of the stress response and facilitates coping over the long term. In fact, social support has been shown to decrease the negative effects associated with a wide range of stressful events, such as unemployment, bereavement, and medical problems (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). With regard to academic achievement, Malecki and Demaray (2006) found in a study of
predominantly Hispanic middle school students, that social support moderated the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement for students of lower socioeconomic status backgrounds.

*Main effect model.* Another model of social support that has received less attention is the main effect model. This model proposes that social resources have a beneficial effect on people regardless of whether or not they are under stress. The evidence for this model derives from the demonstration of a statistical main effect of support with no stress x support interaction, thus called the main effect model (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This model suggests that social support may be related to overall well-being due to the provision of positive affect, a sense of predictability and stability in one’s life, rewarding interactions with others in their community, and a recognition of self-worth (Cohen & Wills; Joseph, 1999).

Integration in a social network may help people to avoid negative experiences or life events (e.g., economic or legal problems) that otherwise would increase the probability of psychological or physical disorder (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Individuals who have social networks available to them are more likely to foster a healthy psychological mental state of well-being (e.g., feelings of security, belonging, stability, a sense of personal worth; Cohen et al., 2000). This view of support has been conceptualized from a sociological perspective as “regularized social interaction” or “embeddedness” in social roles (Cassel, 1976; Thoits, 1982) and from a psychological perspective as social interaction, social integration, relational reward, or status support (e.g., Levinger & Huesmann, 1980; Moos & Mitchell, 1982; Wills, 1985).
Individuals in one’s social network could include, but are not limited to, parents, teachers, classmates, or close friends.

Cohen and Wills (1985) found evidence for both the buffering model and main effect model. For example, they found evidence for a buffering model when the social support measure assessed interpersonal resources that are responsive to the needs elicited by stressful events. They also found evidence for a main effect model when the support measure assessed a person’s degree of integration in a large community social network. Both conceptualizations of social support are evidently correct in some respects. However, according to Cohen and Wills’ study, the evidence does not support buffering effects and main effects occurring together in the same model. The consistent findings on the buffering effect suggests that certain support resources act only in the presence of an elevated stress level; for example, having access to persons to talk to about one’s problem promotes well-being in the face of stress but not necessarily under non-stressful conditions. These results may be attributable either to a more general effect of social networks on feelings of stability, predictability, and self worth or to the effect of extreme isolation for those with very few social connections. According to Cohen and Wills, a central conclusion of their article was that social integration influences well being in ways that do not necessarily involve improved means of coping with stressful events. There is little evidence for the view that embeddedness in a social network is related to well being primarily because it defines a potential for coping action. Cohen and Wills concluded that social integration and functional support represent different processes through which social resources may influence well-being.
Assessment of Social Support

The methods to assess social support vary depending on how social support is conceptualized (Winemiller et al., 1993). For example, one could assess social support through structural, functional, global, or specific measures (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Structural measures describe the existence of the relationship, whereas functional measures directly assess the functions of the relationships (Cohen & Wills). Global structural measures combine a variety of items from different sources of support such as family, neighbors, and community resources. These measures also assess functions of social support such as informational, instrumental, and esteem support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). In contrast, specificity measures assess a specific or combined structure or function of social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

There have been several self-report measures designed to assess children’s perceived support from such sources as parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends (Wolchick, Beals, and Sandler, 1989; Malecki, Demaray, & Elliott, 2000). Several studies have shown that certain sources provide different types of support and that specific subtypes of support are linked more closely to certain outcomes (Cheng, 1998; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Richman et al., 1998).

Cohen and Wills (1985) found in their literature review that depending on how social support is assessed, the results may or may not support a particular theory. For example, if instruments are used that measure the structure of social networks or the degree to which support functions were provided in the past, it is likely that buffering effects will not be shown. However, if instruments are used that tap into the specific functional measures that are matched to the needs elicited by the stressful circumstance.
(i.e., esteem and/or informational support functions), it is more likely that evidence for a buffering process will be found. If the functional measure assesses one’s perceived availability of support, as opposed to one’s recollection of support used in their past occurrences (Cohen & Wills, 1985), it is also more likely that a buffering effect may be found. Likewise, if specific aspects are used to quantitatively measure one’s social connections, it is likely that this method will not lend support for the main effect theory. However, if both social support measures that combine structural items and that measure the construct more globally, outcomes are likely to show support for the main effect hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

**Relationship to Adjustment Outcomes**

Positive outcomes for individuals who have supportive relationships in their lives have been found in numerous studies. For example, social support has been associated positively with psychological and physical health (Berkman & Syme, 1979); mental health outcomes (Billings & Moos, 1982; Holahan & Moos, 1981; Turner, 1981; Williams, Ware, & Donald, 1981), educational outcomes (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Levitt, Guacci-Franco, & Levitt, 1994; Richman et. Al., 1998), social skills (Demaray & Malecki, 2002), and self-concept (Cauce, et al., 1982; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Wenz-Gross & Siperstein, 1998). Social support has also been shown to contribute to withstanding stress (Boswell, 1969; Cassell, 1974, Cauce et al., 1982; Gore, 1974), and enhance one’s general adjustment and well-being (Campbell et al., 1976; Cauce, 1982).

Social support has been widely studied as a variable to promote the development and adaptation of children and adolescents (Barrera & Garrison-Jones, 1992; Demaray &
Malecki, 2002). For example, support has been shown to be useful in working with adolescents with depression (Barrera & Garrison-Jones, 1992), improving academic and behavioral adjustment (Dubow, Tisak, Caucey, & Hryshko, 1991; Ford & Sutphen, 1996), supporting high-risk youths and their families (Tracy, Whittaker, Boylan, Neitman, & Overstreet, 1995), and reducing delinquent behaviors that correlate highly with poor school performance (Zigler, Taussig, & Black, 1992). As mentioned previously, the literature on risk and resiliency suggest that the supportive role of the family, the school, the community, and the peer group predicts the outcomes for students (Benard, 1993; Richman et al., 1998; Wang et al., 1994). Numerous studies have also documented the relationship between social support and positive educational outcomes for students (Cauce, Hannon, & Sargeant, 1992; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Dubow & Tisak, 1989; Dubow et al., 1991; Gutman & Midgley, 1999).

**Academic Support**

Academic support has been defined broadly as an array of direct and indirect resources that socializing agents provide to facilitate students’ academic achievement, including emotional support (e.g., providing encouragement) and instrumental support (e.g., assisting with schoolwork; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Wentzel, 1994). According to Reis and colleagues (2005), to develop resiliency and for achievement to occur, it is necessary for children to have at least one supportive adult for achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gutman & Midgley, 1999; Malecki & Demaray, 2002; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Reis et al., 2005). This was further corroborated in a study that showed junior and senior high students who had strong support from family and friends as well as positive attitudes toward school tended to have higher standardized test scores, which are generally
accepted as measures of academic achievement or success in school (Powell & Arriola, 2003).

**Parents and Social Support**

Parents play a significant role in providing academic support for children (Richman et al., 1998). Research documenting positive relationships between social support and educational outcomes for children has been found in the United States (Richman et al., 1998), China (Chen & Stevenson, 1995), Africa, the Middle East, South American (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994), and Poland (Domagala-zysk, 2006). Researchers across cultures have documented how parents support their children’s education (Bright, 1994; Clark, 1983). This support has included providing intellectual resources and cognitive stimulation (e.g., computers, books), monitoring and structuring their children’s time around academic activities, supervising their homework completion, assisting them with schoolwork; and spending time discussing academic related matters (Bright, 1994; Clark, 1983; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Luster et al., 2004; Raine et al., 2002).

Although there have been mixed findings, some researchers have suggested that parental influences on a child’s education extends even beyond the early years into adolescence (Feldman & Rosenthal, 1991; Richman et al., 1998). For example, a study found that although middle school students perceived their friends to be their primary source for listening support, high school students perceived their parents or adult care caretakers to provide that support. This study also found that high school students perceived their parents and caretakers to be providers of technical appreciation support (found to be related to avoiding problem behavior), emotional challenge support (related
to attendance), reality confirmation support (related to grades), and emotional support (related to school self efficacy) (Richman et al., 1998). Richman and colleagues concluded that though it is a popular belief that support for adolescents comes mainly from peers, middle and high school at risk students perceive their parents and teachers as their primary sources of support. Several other studies have found similar results (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Richman et al., 1998; Ryan & Lynch, 1989, Sarason, Pierce, & Sarason, 1990; Steinberg, Dornbrusch, & Brown, 1992; Wintre, Sugar, & Ben-Knaz, 1988; Youniss & Smollar, 1985), indicating that supportive relationships with parents are essential not only for children, but also for teenagers, as they enable them to deal successfully with developmental tasks, amongst which are school tasks.

More specifically, parental support contributes to improved academic outcomes (e.g., better grades and higher mathematical test scores; Domagala-zysk, 2006; Wentzel, 1998), decreased associations with deviant peers (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Durbin, Darling, Steinberg, & Brown, 1993), and decreased dropout rates ( Teachman, Paach, & Carber, 1996). In contrast, lack of parental support has been linked to adolescents engaging in problem behaviors (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch 1991), and tension in parent-adolescent relations (Domagala-zysk, 2006; Shek, 1998). A study conducted in Poland found that students who succeeded at school reported getting nearly twice as much emotional support from their mothers and fathers than those who failed (Domagal-zysk, 2006). According to Domagal-zysk, the results of this study showed that teenagers mostly wanted to be given emotional support such as help in dealing with personal problems, praise, and encouragement, motivation to do well at school, advice, and love.
It is important to point out that although many studies have shown social support from parents to play a role in positive outcomes for children and adolescents, there have been other studies that have not (Bean, Barber, & Cane, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Milne, Meyers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986; Singh et al., 1995). Some studies have found no significant relationship between parent support and student achievement (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Fan & Chen, 2001; Keith, 1991), and others have found a negative relationship (Fan & Chen, 2001; Milne et al., 1986; Singh et al., 1995). These findings suggest that the relationship between parental support and student achievement may be more complex than the expectation that parent support is positively and directly related to student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). Some researchers have suggested that the relationship between parental support and student achievement may be indirect (Feldman & Wentzel, 1990; Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002; Grolnick et al., 1991). For example, one study found that students’ perceived parental involvement indirectly affected their achievement through inner resources such as self perceived cognitive competence (Grolnick et al., 1991; Wentzel, 1994). In a similar study, findings suggested that the quality of parent-child interactions was related to children’s academic achievement via affecting their social adjustment (Feldman & Wentzel, 1990). Differences have also been found for students of varying socioeconomic status. Malecki and Demaray (2006) found that although there was no significant relationship between social support and grade point average for students in higher socioeconomic status, there were moderate and significant relationships among social support scores and grade point average for students with lower socioeconomic status. According to Aguinis (2004), when there are varying results such as these, it is importance to test the influences of possible moderating variables. The next
section below further explores the relationship between Black parenting styles and academic achievement.

**Black Parents and Academic Support**

*Parent involvement and Black children.* There has been much research conducted on the extent to which parent involvement in school affects children’s academic achievement (Bright, 1994; Catterall, 1998; Clark, 1983; Gutman et al., 2002; Kohl et al., 2000; Madhere, 1997; Marcon, 1999; Morrison et al., 1998; Reynolds, 1989, 1992; Serpell, Boykin, Madhere, & Nasim, 2006; Swan & Stavros, 1973; Wilson-Jones, 2003). Researchers who have looked closely at Black families in context have described them as resilient, supportive, and functionally adaptive (Jeynes, 2003). The literature on Black parents have noted that Black parents at the pre-college level have been concerned about how schools have treated their children, from teaching and interaction with students to mislabeling them as troublemakers (Ford, 1994; Jeynes, 2003).

In a study of gifted Black students, Hrabowski (1991) found that the role of the parent(s) was critical. This study showed that whether the parent was described as strong, assertive, or pushy, they were consistently involved in their child’s schools and schoolwork. In fact, a meta-analysis of the effects of parental involvement on minority children’s academic achievement showed that parental involvement had a positive impact on all levels of academic achievement: GPA, standardized tests, and other measures (Jeynes, 2003), especially for elementary school aged boys (Jeynes, 2003; Reynolds, 1989, 1992).

*Parenting styles.* Parenting styles have also been investigated in relation to Black children’s academic achievement. There are four qualitatively different parenting styles...
that have been identified in the literature ((Baumind, 1989; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mandara, 2006). These four parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive or indulgent, and neglectful defined as follows:

1. Authoritative parents are high in both warmth and control.
2. Authoritarian parents are firm disciplinarians, yet they lack warmth.
3. Permissive or indulgent parents are high in warmth, but they lack the focus on discipline and control of the authoritative parents.
4. Neglectful parents are low on both dimensions, and consequently have been characterized as neglecting their childbearing duties altogether (Baumrind, 1989).

Early studies of parental discipline consistently found that European American children whose parents used “harsh” discipline had higher rates of aggressive behavior at home and at school (Strauss, 2000). The definition of harsh varies from study to study, but it usually included physical discipline (Strauss, 2000). It has been argued that because authoritative parenting styles are associated with higher academic achievement for European Americans, and because Black students, especially males, had the lowest academic achievement of all major American groups, they must receive the least amount of authoritative parenting (Steinberg et al., 1992). This theory was tested by a few large sample studies that contained only a small percentage of Black participants that examined the effects of parenting styles on academic achievement, yielding mixed results (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Black and Latino parents were slightly less likely than their European counterparts to be authoritative, and slightly more likely that the average European and Asian American parents to be authoritarian by
European standards (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996). However, the correlation between authoritative parenting and Black academic achievement was not found (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Radziszewska et al., 1996; Steinberg et al., 1992).

In fact, one of the earliest studies did not find any relationship between parenting styles and Black students’ high school grade point average (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Another study found that across various family structures and economic backgrounds, Black students in authoritative homes did better than students in authoritarian homes on all well-being variables except for academic achievement variables (Steinberg et al., 1992). For example, in one study that included a sample of Black and White children from kindergarten to third grade, physical discipline was positively related with peer and teacher ratings of externalizing behaviors at school for White students but not for Black students (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996). Several researchers began arguing that authoritarianism was not as damaging for Black children’s academic achievement as it was for European American children (Cauce et al., 1982; Deater-Deckard et al., 1996; Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1996; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Henry, & Florsheim, 2000; Gunroe & Mariner, 1997; Steinberg et al., 1992). According to Mandara (2006), the critical flaw in this reasoning was that the researchers did not measure parenting styles in Black families separately from other racial groups. Thus, since the Black families represented a small percentage of each sample, the standards and norms of the largest group in the sample (i.e., European Americans) were applied to the Black families.
Recent studies with predominantly Black samples have re-examined parenting styles in these families (Mandara, 2006). One study that used cluster analysis on a large set of family environmental variables uncovered three prototypical Black family types that resembled Baumind’s authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles (Mandara & Murray, 2002). Mandara and Murray concluded that Black parenting styles are similar to, yet qualitatively different from, European American parenting styles in important ways. Black authoritative parents tended to be more demanding and less acquiescent to children’s demands than European American authoritative parents, which may be considered authoritarian according to European standards (Mandara & Murray, 2006).

Parenting styles have also been associated with children’s school conduct (Gunroe & Mariner, 1997; McLoyd & Smith, 2002). For example, a study found that in children ages 4 to 11, spanking was associated with fewer fights at school and lowered general aggression for Black children (Gunroe & Mariner, 1997). However, the authors of this study concluded that the effectiveness of spanking might depend on the meaning that the child ascribes to it. Similarly, another study found that after income-to-needs ratio and gender were controlled, Black children who received high levels of maternal emotional support had fewer behavior problems across six years of assessments regardless of whether or not they were spanked. Those who had low maternal emotional support showed an increase in behavior problems over time. This was especially true for those who were spanked an average of 2 or more times per week (McLoyd & Smith, 2002). McLoyd and Smith concluded that children might be less likely to view spanking as
harsh and indicative of parental rejection when relations with the parent are warm and supportive.

The effects of parenting styles are also related to the conduct problems and discipline practices in the community (Baldwin & Cole, 1990; Simon et al., 2002). For example, Simon and colleagues (2002) found that the relationship between conduct problems and spanking depended on the frequency of spanking in the community in which the child lived. In communities in which overall levels of spanking were high, child conduct problems were at their lowest, regardless of the spanking frequency of the individual child’s parents. In communities where spankings were rare, conduct problems were high overall, especially for those children whose parents spanked them more often. These researchers concluded that the widespread acceptance of spanking in Black communities may explain its differential effects in Black versus White communities. The reason for this may be that in these communities it is felt that a higher level of monitoring and control is needed to protect children and foster development in more dangerous environments (Baldwin & Cole, 1990).

Thus, these studies suggest that spanking Black children, not excessively harsh or abusive discipline, is effective in reducing Black children’s behavior problems at school. This is true if the child interprets the spanking as an acceptable form of discipline for misbehavior. It is important to note that spanking Black children two or more times per week is excessive and may imply a dysfunctional parent, child, and/or parent-child relationship. Also, spanking should not be the only or even first means by which Black parents discipline their children (Mandara, 2006). Spanking is believed to be more effective if it is done in the context of a warm and supportive home environment.
(McLoyd & Smith, 2002), and is accepted in the child’s social network (Gunroe & Mariner, 1997; Simons et al., 2002).

Gender differences. Studies have also suggested that positive versus negative aspects of parenting may vary according to gender. For example, family support predicted less delinquency and depression among girls, but not among boys (Gutman et al., 2005; Windle, 1992). In addition, parent-adolescent communication problems are significantly associated with depressive symptoms in Black males, but not females (Gutman et al., 2005). According to Gutman and colleagues (2005), these studies suggest that negative parenting behaviors may be more maladaptive for males, whereas positive parenting behaviors may be more beneficial for females. One possible reason for these gender differences may be that because children’s development of self-concept begins through relationships with parents or parent figures, a maladaptive parenting relationship may make Black male students more susceptible to internalizing others’ negative stereotypes of them being dangerous and having lower cognitive functioning (Gutman et al., 2005). Another interesting finding related to gender was that Black boys whose parents were not perceived by their teachers to be actively involved were the group at greatest risk for underachievement, regardless of actual parent involvement (Mandara, 2006).

Overall, these studies suggest that raising Black children with an African American version of authoritative parenting (e.g., more demanding) that is accompanied by a warm and supportive home environment that includes racial/cultural pride, involvement in the child’s education, and support for their child’s involvement in extracurricular activities may lead to positive academic outcomes for Black children.
Teacher Support

According to Doll and Lyon (1998), for students who face multiple risk factors, schools may represent one of the most potentially protective environments. Schools have the potential to encourage the development of good problem-solving and academic skills, individual talents and other productive activities, and social competence among children. Researchers have suggested that favorable school experiences may lessen the effects of stressful home environments (Rutter, 1979, 1990; Werner, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1989). Some researchers have even suggested that for students to take advantage of the high expectations and more advanced curricula, they need support from the people with whom they interact in school (Lee & Smith, 1999; Mendes, 2003; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Parents also have acknowledged the importance of the school context. In a cross-cultural study of children in the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan, teachers were perceived by mothers in all of these countries to be the most important source of support for their children’s achievement (Stevenson & Lee, 1990).

Past studies on resiliency reveal that the ways in which adults assume their caretaking roles hold important potential for children to overcome hardships. This carries special importance for large institutions such as churches and schools that represent ubiquitous caretaking environments for most Americans (Doll & Lyon, 1998). Although church attendance has been reported to be associated with competence and academic achievement among youths (Brown & Gary, 1991; Masten et al., 1990; Werner, 1989; Williams et al., 2002), it will not be discussed further as it is beyond the scope of this study. Schools provide a fundamental context for formal learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997;
Goodenow, 1993; Wentzel, 1997), and the role of the teacher-student relationship is important.

Students have been described as resilient based on their ability to develop much stronger and supportive relationships with their teachers (Borman & Overman, 2004). Past studies have shown that engagement, including working harder on tasks and showing more positive affect, was an outcome of students’ positive perceptions of relationships with their teachers and peers (Goodenow, 1993; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997). Students who had good relationships with teachers and classmates were more likely to display greater emotional and behavioral engagement in school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Students who were engaged in school were significantly more likely to report that their teacher cared about them (Baker, 1998; Goodenow, 1993). Teacher academic and personal supports have been shown to be negatively related to feelings of alienation from school. That is, the more the learners received academic and personal teacher support, the more they perceived they could better adjust socially and psychologically at school (Ghaith, 2002), and thus were less likely to drop out of school (Finn, 1991).

Student perceptions of teacher support. Students’ overall feelings regarding school are positive (Perkins, 2006), although this varies based on age and race. A study conducted in 2006 by the Council of Urban Boards of Education found that approximately 62% of the students said that their teachers respected students. Also, more than two-thirds of the 32,000 students surveyed said they enjoyed learning at their schools, and eight in ten students said they planned to continue their education after high school. However, high school students were twice as likely as those in elementary school to disagree with statements about enjoying learning and planning to continue their
education beyond high school (Perkins, 2006). In addition, children in grades 4-6 felt more positive about issues of trust and respect than did those in higher grades (Perkins, 2006). In the Council of Urban Boards of Education’s study, Black students were more likely than Hispanic, White, or Asian students to say that teachers did not respect them, and of the 20.8% of students who did not believe teachers respected them, 31.5% were African American. Teacher criticism has been associated with children’s feelings of stress, helplessness, and negative self-judgments (Perkins, 2006).

Research exploring reasons for these more negative perceptions of teacher support as students progress in school has focused largely on the transition from elementary to middle school. Some have suggested that middle school exacerbates the difficult adjustments confronting early adolescents due to the departmentalized structure (Hirsch & Rapkin, 2003). For example, middle school students rotate from teacher to teacher without an intact peer group (Lipsitz, 1977), and they have diminished opportunities to establish stable relationships with either teachers or peers (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). Because of this, middle schools have been hypothesized to decrease the opportunity to obtain social supports to help in coping and adaptation (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). This is important to note since at-risk middle and high school students in Richman and colleagues’ (1998) study reported perceiving their parents and teachers as their primary source of support. During this time, a decline has been shown in overall school satisfaction (Epstein & McPartland, 1976), motivation for girls (Goodenow, 1993), engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991), and grades in both sexes (Anderman, 2002; Buote, 2001).
Teacher support and Black students. Similarly, studies have shown that teacher support is positively related to student effort for Black students (Clark, 1983; Kuykendall, 1991; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Taylor et al., 1994). Like their same age White counterparts, Black students’ grade point average has been documented to significantly decrease following the transition to middle school (Gutman & Midgely, 2000). Also, similar to their White counterparts, Clark (1983) found that Black high achieving students in his study reported having at least one teacher who provided time, attention, and nurturance during the elementary or intermediate grades. What differs is that Black males rate formal supports (counselor, teachers, and clergy) as being more helpful than their female counterparts (Cauce et al., 1982). What also differs is that several studies findings have suggested that teacher behaviors may disproportionately interfere with the engagement of Black children (Guerra, Attar, & Weisberg, 1997; Tucker, 1999; Wentzel, 1994). For example, Black students have reported receiving less support from their teachers than their White peers (Wentzel, 1994), as well as receiving less interaction and contingent praise from their teachers (Guerra et al., 1997). A study found that 90% of high school Black male students reported that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements that school was important and that they wanted to go on to college. However, when asked to respond to the statements that their teachers treated them fair and that they work hard to achieve good grades, less than a quarter responded affirmatively (18% and 22%, respectively; Noguera, 2001).

Positive interactions with teachers and other students are critical for Black students’ success (Kuykendall, 1991; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Taylor et al., 1994), and Black students are influenced to a large degree by the social support and
encouragement that they receive from adults (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2000). By virtue of their minority status, Black students may be more sensitive to environmental incongruence (i.e., impersonal and uncaring schools; Booker, 2006; Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Furthermore, minority students educated in majority contexts may regard school as valuable, but negative interactions and experiences with members of the majority group (e.g., low teacher expectations) can prevent feelings of true connection or belonging to the school (Booker, 2006; Noguera, 2001). Some studies have even suggested that for Black students, in particular, affirmative interactions with teachers and other students are critical to their success. Black students may identify with the purpose of school, but be educated in school environments that are unwelcoming and unaccepting of their culture. Therefore, it has been suggested that to actively foster students’ resiliency, supportive relationships with teachers need to be developed (Booker, 2006; Ghaith, 2002).

The findings on the link between Black students’ achievement and teacher social support have been inconsistent (Goodenow, 1993; Massey, Scott, & Dornbusch, 1975; Philips, 1997). Two separate studies found that Black students in middle school (Goodenow, 1993) and high school (Massey et al., 1975) who received low grades were more likely to report that their teachers were warm and friendly (Goodenow, 1993; Massey et al., 1975).

One explanation for the paradoxical relationship between student achievement and social support may be that teachers are likely to spend more time helping students who are earning lower grades in their classes than with their same grade peers (Goodenow, 1993). Another study found no relationship between positive teacher and
student relationships and mathematic achievement and attendance during middle school. They did find a positive relationship between academic achievement and attendance and middle schools that promoted high achievement goals, more homework assignments, and more time instructing (Philips, 1997). Philips (1997) suggested that having highly qualified teachers, providing a demanding curriculum, and holding students to high standards may be more important than the teacher-student relationship for students from ethnic or racial minority groups (Philips, 1997).

Therefore, it is important to examine further variables that may influence the relationships between social support and academic achievement in youth. Research is also needed to explore the relationship between teacher support and academic achievement among Black adolescent students.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teacher and parent social support and academic achievement for Black students. Student and parent surveys and math and reading achievement scores from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 were used for this study. This information was used to answer the following research questions (See Figure 1).
Figure 1 Hypotheses for research questions

Figure 1
1. Is academic achievement for male and female Black high school students related to perceived teacher support and/or parent support?

2. Does perceived teacher support and/or parent support serve as a moderator variables in the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement for male and female Black high school students? (i.e., Is the relationship between academic achievement and socioeconomic status changed based on the level of perceived teacher and/or parent support?)

3. Does perceived teacher support serve as a moderator variable in the relationship between parent support and high school academic achievement for male and female Black high school students? (i.e., Is the relationship between Black students’ academic achievement and parent support changed based on the level of teacher support perceived?).

For the first question, it was anticipated that there would be a positive relationship between teacher support and academic achievement and a positive relationship between parent support and academic achievement among Black students in the study. The research on the relationship between teacher support and achievement has varied in the literature, with some studies finding no relationship (Malecki & Demaray, 1999; Philips, 1997), and others finding a relationship between these two variables (Goodenow, 1993; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). There has also been research suggesting that because some Black children living in low socioeconomic environments may be receiving mixed messages regarding the value of school at home, their teachers’ perceptions and interactions with them at school may affect them more than their White counterparts (Ferguson, 2003).
It was anticipated that gender would moderate the relationship between academic achievement and social support and a stronger relationship would exist between academic achievement and social support for female students. The findings on studies that have looked at social support and gender have suggested that girls report higher levels of perceived social support than boys (Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Malecki & Demaray, 2006; Malecki & Elliott, 1999). These differences have been shown not to occur until high school (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). However, a study with Black students’ found that Black males actually rated formal supports (counselor, teachers, and clergy) as being more helpful than their female counterparts (Cauce et al., 1982). However, it is not known how these Black students ratings of perceived social support from counselors, teachers, and clergy related to their actual academic achievement.

Like teacher support, the research on parent support has been mixed (Nolten, 1994). However, overall, research suggests that there is a relationship between parent support and academic achievement. In fact, a meta-analysis of the effects of parental involvement on minority children’s academic achievement showed a positive impact on all levels of academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003).

It has also been suggested that because Black children who live in low socioeconomic environments may receive mixed messages regarding the value of school at home, their teachers’ perceptions and interactions with them at school may affect them more than their White counterparts (Ferguson, 2003). Thus, it was expected that teacher support would serve as a moderator for the relationship between Black students identified as being from a low socioeconomic background and their academic achievement. In other words, it was anticipated that teacher support would modify the positive relationship
between socioeconomic status and academic achievement, similar to Malecki and Demaray’s (2006) findings with a predominantly Hispanic population. Since Black students disproportionately live in low socioeconomic environments and face similar risk factors that poor Hispanic students face (e.g., lowered academic achievement, poor health, crime, inadequate schools), similar results were expected for the Black students included in this study (Ford, 1994; Gutman et al., 2002; Taylor, 1991).

Similarly, it was anticipated that parent support would moderate the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement in high school. That is, it was expected that parent support would modify the positive relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement, similar to Malecki and Demaray’s (2006) findings with Hispanic students.

Last, it was anticipated that teacher support would moderate the relationship between parent support and academic achievement for Black students in the low SES category. There has been no known study to date that has investigated teacher support as a moderator in the relationship between parent support and grade point average (GPA). Research suggests that there is a relationship between parent support and GPA (Jeynes, 2003). Research also suggests that children from low socioeconomic status may live in homes where they receive mixed messages regarding the importance of schools, making their teachers’ perceptions of them that much more important (Ferguson, 2003). Further, a study has shown that Black males value informal supports such as teachers more than other sources of support (Cauce et al., 1982), and Black students overwhelmingly chose their teachers as the individuals that they most wanted to impress through their school work, in comparison to their White counterparts (Casteel, 1997).
Chapter Summary

Black students are disproportionately affected by poverty; many are faced with a host of risk factors that include academic failure and disengagement from school (Ford, 1994; Gutman et al., 1999; Jackson, 1999; McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Natriello et al., 1990; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Taylor, 1991). Because of the link between academic performance and poverty status, it is crucial to further investigate contextual factors that could potentially buffer the deleterious effects of poverty on children’s performance in school. One such potential buffering factor is social support (Malecki & Demaray, 2006). A caring relationship with an adult has been shown to increase the achievement of students who live or learn in negative environments (e.g., poverty, violence, deficient resources; Masten & Garmezy, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1989).

In order for students to take advantage of the high expectations and more advanced curricula, it has been suggested that they need support from the people with whom they interact in school (Lee & Smith, 1999; Mendes, 2003; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This may be true even for Black children living in poverty-stricken environments for several reasons. First, differences found in the cultural values at home and at school may help to immunize some children to the impact of their teachers’ views of them or intensify their susceptibility to their viewpoint (Ferguson, 2003; Gross, 1993; Mickelson, 1990).

A second reason may be that teachers are consciously or unconsciously treating Black students differently than their White counterparts (Brophy & Good, 1974; Coates, 1972; Taylor, 1979). Black students reported receiving less support from their teacher
than their White peers (Wentzel, 1994), as well as receiving less interaction and contingent praise from their teachers (Guerra et al., 1997).

Another reason why investigating contextual factors such as social support is important is that noncognitive variables such as social support have been shown to be more valid than some standardized tests in predicting Black students completion of college (Powell & Arriola, 2003).

The research on social support and academic achievement among Black students has been inconsistent and contradictory (Goodenow, 1993; Massey et al., 1975; Philips, 1997). There have been studies that have found no or a small relationship (Malecki & Elliott, 1999; Philips, 1997) or a negative relationship (Dornbusch, 1975; Goodenow, 1993) between these two variables.

The relatively small amount and somewhat contradictory nature of the literature on the relationship of social support and academic achievement among Black students suggest that additional study is needed to ascertain the extent to which teachers contribute or do not contribute to Black students’ achievement. In addition, existing research has focused on the transition from elementary to middle school, as opposed to high school. The majority of research on social relationships in high school has focused on the relationship between student engagement and dropping out (Finn, 1993; Wehlage, 1989). There is currently little research that has specifically examined the relationship between teacher support and academic achievement for Black high school students in inner-city schools (Kaufman et al., 2004). This is important since Richman and colleagues (1998) concluded that although it is a popular belief that support for adolescents comes mainly from peers, middle and high school at-risk students perceive their parents and teachers as
their primary sources of support. This is especially true for Black students who were found in a study to overwhelmingly want to please their teachers (Casteel, 1997).
CHAPTER 3

Method

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methods that were used to conduct this study. A description of the participants, instruments, and a detailed explanation of the methodological procedure are provided.

Participants

Data for this study were obtained from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002). The ELS: 2002 was designed to provide trend data regarding student learning, predictors of dropping out of high school, high school correlates of access to and persistence with higher education, and entry into the workforce (Ingels, Burn, Chen, Cataldi, & Charlestone, 2005). The ELS: 2002 used a stratified probability sample of 752 public, Catholic, and other private participating schools and 15,362 students in the Spring term of the 2001-2002 school year to represent the 3,439,490 10th graders in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. These students in the study represented a cross section of 10th graders from all regions of the United States from the following ethnic groups: Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Multiracial, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and White (Ingels et al., 2005).

To ensure that the sample was nationally representative, a two-stage stratified probability sample was used. In the first stage, schools in this study were selected within probability proportional to size (Ingels et al., 2005), which means that they were selected based on their proportion in the population (Ingels et al., 2005). The public schools included in the study were stratified by the nine U.S. Census divisions and urbanicity. Urbanicity is the metropolitan status of urban, suburban, or rural communities. Private
schools, which were defined as Catholic schools or private schools, were stratified by four levels of geography based on the Census region and urbanicity. Private schools were reportedly over-sampled (Ingels et al., 2005).

For the purpose of this study, the participants consisted of the 2,027 participants (1,009 male and 1,018 female) who identified themselves as Black 10th grade high school students and completed the survey questions in the ELS: 2002 study.

**Instruments**

*Student survey.* The student survey used in the ELS: 2002 study was used to analyze students’ perceptions of the support their teachers and parents provide them (Ingels et al., 2005). This student survey includes several questions pertaining to students’ perceptions of their teachers and parents. There are seven Likert-type items that are represented on a 4-point continuum from 1=strongly disagree to 4=strong agree, with higher scores indicating greater overall support. There were seven additional questions pertaining to students’ perceptions of how often their parents engage in behaviors that support their academic careers represented on a 4-point continuum from 1=Never to 4=Often. There were also nine questions regarding how often parents have discussed issues related to their academic careers, which are represented on a 3-point continuum 1=Never to 3=Often (NCES, 2002).

*Math and reading achievement tests.* Students’ academic achievement was measured by math and reading achievement test scores obtained from the ELS: 2002 dataset. These test questions were selected from previous reading and math assessments used by the National Center for Educational Statistics: NELS:88, NAEP, and PISA. The math achievement test consisted of items that measured students’ skills in the areas of
arithmetic, algebra, geometry, data/probability, advanced comprehension, and problem solving. The reading achievement test consisted of reading passages of 1 paragraph to 1 page in length. The passages ranged in topics from literary material, natural science, and social science. This was followed by 3 to 6 comprehensions questions. The questions were organized as recall of detail, comprehension, or inference questions. Several questions also required interpretation of graphs (Ingels et al., 2005).

**Socioeconomic Status.** Students’ Socioeconomic Status (SES) was assessed by using five equally weighted standardized measures. These included fathers’/guardians’ education, mothers’/guardians’ education, family income, fathers’/guardians’ occupational prestige score, and mothers’/guardians’ occupational prestige score. The ELS: 2002 study defined students at the 25th percentile rank for SES as in the lowest SES group. Students whose SES percentile rank was at least in the 25th percentile and below the 75th percentile were identified in the middle SES group. Students at the 75th percentile or above were identified as in the highest SES group, as defined in ELS: 2002 (Ingels et al., 2005).

**Procedure**

The ELS: 2002 study was conducted by the Research Triangle Board (RTI), a non-for-profit organization based out of North Carolina. This study was conducted on behalf of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) of the United States Department of Education. The Educational Testing Services and MPR Associates were contractors to RTI for the ELS: 2002 study (Burns et al., 2003). According to Burns and colleagues (2003), endorsements were first secured from organizations believed to be influential to the parties being asked to participate in the study (school administrators,
librarians, teachers, students, and parents) during the field test of the base-year study. The organizations that provided endorsements include the following: American Association of School Administrators, American Association of School Librarians, American Federation of Teachers, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council of the Great City Schools, National Association of Independent Schools, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Catholic Educational Association (Department of Secondary Schools), National Education Association, National PTA, National Resource Center for Safe Schools, National School Safety Center, Seventh Day Adventist Church, and National School Boards Association. These organizations were included on the ELS: 2002 letterhead that was sent to the state, district, and school levels. In addition, these agencies were listed in an informational brochure on the ELS: 2002 public website (Burns et al., 2003).

Next, ELS project staff began contacting each of the chief state school officers in the five selected states from the field test (California, Illinois, Florida, New York, and North Carolina). These states were all sent information packets that included a lead letter from the NCES project officers, a letter from the RTI project director, a study brochure, and a sample endorsement letter. These packages were sent by Federal Express to ensure that they could be tracked (Burns et al., 2003).

Approximately one week later, the chief state school officers were contacted by telephone to confirm that the package had been received and to find out who had been given responsibility for approving the study for the state. That person was then contacted to answer any questions that they might have had and to discuss participation in the study (Burns et al., 2003).
After the completion of the field-testing, permission was then given to go forward with the study for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A contact person at the state level was assigned to address any issues or questions from the districts about the state’s participation. Each of the 50 states was also asked to write a letter of endorsement. Endorsement letters were received from 40 states and the District of Columbia (Burns et al., 2003).

Next, superintendents were contacted by telephone. During the call, it was confirmed that the package had been received and it was determined who had been given responsibility for approving the study for the district. That person was then contacted to answer any questions and discuss participation within the study. Permission was received from 693 of the 829 districts/dioceses to proceed at the school level. As at the state level, districts/dioceses were asked to send endorsement letters. One hundred forty-eight district/dioceses received these endorsement letters. Packages were then sent out to the school principals. The packages included a letter from the NCES project officer, an informational brochure, any relevant endorsement letters from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) or the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the state or district, and a publication on using the data from ELS: 2002 (Burns et al., 2003).

The school was then contacted by telephone and provided details about the study and questions were answered. If the school then agreed to participate, a school coordinator was assigned to serve as a point of contact at the school and was responsible for handling the logistical arrangements. It was also determined at that time dates for administration of the questionnaire, who would receive the school administrator and
library media questionnaires, and whether the parental consent would be active or passive (Burns et al., 2003). In total, 61.6% (unweighted) of the eligible schools participated. Of the schools that did not participate, the decision to not participate at the district level were 36% and 64% at the school level (Burns et al., 2003).

After school approval was obtained, the coordinator was asked to provide a list of all 10th grade students and to provide information regarding their sex, ethnicity, and whether the student had an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Approximately 135 questionnaire administrators were trained on how to conduct data collection in the schools. Prior to this training, the questionnaire administrators were mailed a copy of the questionnaire administrator manual and instructed to read it prior to training. Training was held for two days in Durham, North Carolina and Los Angeles, California in January of 2002 (Burns et al., 2003).

**Parent consent.** Parents were sent consent letters prior to conducting the study. The schools were encouraged to allow passive (implied consent) unless the school needed active consent. In total, 95 schools (12.6%) required active parental consent for the study. For those schools, information packets were sent out that contained a letter about the study, a consent form, a brochure about the study, and an envelope bearing the school coordinator’s name. In some schools, the principal had written an endorsement letter that was included. The packets were sent out 4 weeks prior to the study. The survey administrator called parents to prompt them to return the forms, if given telephone numbers. Only a few parents returned the forms indicating that they did not want their child to participate. However, many parents did not return the forms at all. Thus only 1,335 of the 2,150 eligible students (62.5%) requiring active permission took part in the
school portion of the study. An additional one hundred and forty eight students were surveyed by telephone at those schools, which resulted in a total participation rate of 68.7% at active consent schools (Burns et al., 2003).

For the remaining schools that allowed passive consent, letters were sent out via mail to all parents for whom mailing addresses were available. The school coordinator distributed packets for those who did not have mailing addresses available. The packets contained the same information as the packets sent to the schools that required active consent from the parents. The passive parent consent letters were sent out 2 weeks prior to the scheduled survey day. Prior to the survey day, the schools were contacted to determine if any parents had sent back forms to refuse participation for the study. If so, the survey administrators attempted to contact those parents by telephone (if the school would provide the telephone number). Few schools returned forms for refusal of their child to participate in the study. Thus, 13, 494 of the 15, 441 eligible 10th grade students (87.4%) in the passive consent sample participated in the ELS: 2002 study. An additional 392 students were interviewed by telephone for a total participation rate of 89.9% (Burns et al., 2003).

The consent forms were provided in English and Spanish. A version of the consent form was also translated into Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog. Before the survey day, reminder post cards were sent out to the sampled students that addresses were provided for (Burns et al., 2003).

*Student questionnaire.* The student questionnaires were administered via group administration. Testing accommodations were provided for students if their IEP stated that they received testing accommodations in school. If the student had neglected to
answer a questionnaire item that was deemed critical, the administrator asked the student to complete it at the end of the test. If less than 100% of the students participated on survey day, the administrator attempted to confirm make-up days that had been scheduled. Of the 15,362 eligible students, 85.4% were surveyed on survey day, 11.1% were surveyed on the make-up day, and 3.5% were surveyed outside school over the telephone (Burns et al., 2003).

If the response rate was suspected to be low, students were offered gift certificates for participating. In schools requiring active participation, a drawing for two $20.00 gift certificates was held on survey day. In schools that only allowed survey administration during hours when the school was not in session, each participant was offered $20.00 gift certificates. In addition, all students in schools that would not release student addresses were offered $20.00 gift certificates (Burns et al., 2003)

*Parent questionnaire.* Questions were asked in the parent questionnaire about income, occupation, and the education of the respondent and the respondent’s spouse/partner. The variables were combined together to construct the variable of SES. Of the 1,018 student respondents, 817 of their parents participated. Also, 36 parents of students who did not participate in the study completed the questionnaires. Of the total 853 parents, 527 participated by mail and 326 participated through interviews. The nonresponse rates for the questions regarding socioeconomic status were under 2% (Burns et al., 2003).

*Procedure for the current study.* Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study was not needed prior to formally conducting this study because it involves the
use of secondary existing data, which is exempt. An exempt form was completed and approved by the IRB.

Unrestricted data files were requested and received from NCES. These files included data from the student questionnaire and parent questionnaire for the Black 10th grade student participants, as well as their math and reading academic achievement scores, from the ELS: 2002 (Burns et al., 2003; Ingels et al., 2005).

**Data Analyses**

As shown in Table 1, data for the first research question were analyzed using simple regression to determine if there was a positive relationship between perceived social support and academic achievement. These analyses were completed to determine how much variance the predictor variable contributed to the total strength and determine whether the relationship was significant. This analysis was then repeated to examine the relationship between parent support and academic achievement. Next, moderated multiple regression analyses (Aguinis, 2004; Baron & Kenny, 1986; Malecki & Demaray, 2006) was conducted to examine the possibility that teacher support serves as a moderator in the relationship between SES and academic achievement for Black students. A product term that consists of the variables SES and teacher support was created and analyzed. This answered the question of whether the relationship between SES and academic achievement would vary according to the level of teacher support. The interaction between SES and teacher support was computed; the $R^2$, $F$, and $p$ value was examined (Aguinis, 2004; Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997). This analysis was then repeated to examine parent support as a possible moderator in the relationship between SES and academic achievement for Black students. This answered the question
of whether the relationship between parent support and academic achievement would vary according to the level of teacher support. The interaction between parent support and teacher support was computed and the $R^2$, $F$, and $p$ value was examined (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997). Additional analyses were completed to determine whether gender differences existed between male and female Black high school students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is there a relationship between perceived teacher support and parent support and academic achievement for male and female Black Students? And if so, does gender moderate that relationship.</td>
<td>Simple linear regression was conducted with teacher social support and parent social support serving as the independent variable and academic achievement serving as the dependent variable. Moderated regression was then conducted, with gender serving as the moderator variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does teacher support and parent support play a moderating role in the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement for both Black male and female students?</td>
<td>Moderated multiple regression was conducted and the independent variable was socioeconomic status, the moderator variable was perceived teacher support and perceived parent support, and the dependent variable was the academic achievement score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does teacher support play a moderating role in the relationship between parent support and academic achievement for both Black male and female students?</td>
<td>Moderated multiple regression was conducted and the independent variable was perceived parent support, the moderator variable was perceived teacher support, and the dependent variable was academic achievement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

Results

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the statistical analyses used to investigate the previously discussed research questions (see Table 1). This chapter begins with a discussion of the methods used to deal with missing data. Following this discussion, the methods used for data screening and transformation, internal consistency, and normality of the distribution are reported. Lastly, the results of the statistical analyses examining the relationships between parent and teacher support and academic achievement for Black high school students are presented.

Missing Data

Prior to the main analyses, all the variables of interest were screened through the SPSS 16.0 program for accuracy, outliers, and missing data. Cases that had originally been coded (i.e., from the original ELS 2002 data base) with negative numbers to reflect missing data, questions skipped, partial interviews, and multiple responses were deleted and the cells were left blank. This was done to reflect accurate ranges of possible scores and computed means. Once this operation was completed, none of the scores was found to be out of range (i.e., not within the range of possible scores). To deal with missing data, the exclude cases pair wise option was chosen to exclude participants only if there were missing data for a specific analysis (Pallant, 2005). This operation also allowed the data to accurately reflect that there were missing data, without inaccurately appearing as outliers. In total, 8 students (.04%) did not complete the academic achievement assessments, 19 students (.09%) did not answer any of the questions assessing parent
support, and 99 students (.5%) did not answer any of the questions assessing teacher support. The normality of the distribution was then assessed. Eighteen outliers for the Teacher Support Scale were noted after examining the Histogram and Box plot. To determine if these outliers had a strong influence on the mean, the new group mean scores and the 5% trimmed means scores were compared by exploring the descriptive statistics output (Pallant, 2005). The comparisons between these two mean scores were found to be nonsignificant; therefore, it was determined that these participants scores would be included in the analyses.

**Data Transformation**

Prior to calculating the total scale scores, the survey was scanned for negatively worded items. One negatively worded question was found (In class I often feel “put down” by my teachers). This negatively worded question was reverse scored to ensure that high scores indicated perceptions of high teacher support. Both the Total Teacher Support scale and the Total Parent Support scale scores were then calculated for each scale by summing 5 items for Total Teacher Support and 13 items for Total Parent Support, respectively.

**Reliability of Measures**

An estimate of internal consistency was examined for the items on the Parent Support, Teacher Support, and Total Parent and Teacher Support scales. The alpha coefficients were as follows: .80 for Teacher Support, .95 for Parent Support, and .91 for Total Parent and Teacher Support. These initial estimates of reliability suggest that these three scales have an acceptable level of internal consistency in this sample (Heppner & Heppner, 2004).
**Descriptive Analyses**

Prior to investigating the main research analyses, descriptive statistics were examined. Out of the 2027 Black students in the study, 2019 completed the math and reading standardized test. Participants’ performance on the math and reading standardized tests were recorded as a 1-4 quartile score. On average, the students in the study performed in the 2nd quartile on the test. The means, standard deviations, and range of possible scores are shown in Table 2.
## Table 2

### Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES Quartile</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Test Quartile</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Test Quartile</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Teacher Support</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>10.04</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Parent Support</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>22.72</td>
<td>13.52</td>
<td>0-45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N= Number of Black Students; M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation
Main Research Analyses

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between perceived teacher and parent support and academic achievement for male and female Black Students?

The relationship between perceived teacher and parent support and academic achievement was investigated using simple linear regression. The students’ perceived parent support scores were entered as the independent variable and the math and reading academic achievement quartile scores were entered as the dependent variable. According to the National Center for Education and Statistics (2005), this combined achievement score was calculated from the average of the math and reading standardized scores, and re-standardized to a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. The results indicated that the model had a good fit, $R^2 = 0.094$, $\beta = .007$, $F (1, 45) = 4.54$, $p < .05$, and accounted for 9% of the variance in the dependent variable (academic achievement) explained by the model. Perceived parent support positively correlated with academic achievement as evidenced by the model (see Table 3).

To examine the possibility of gender serving as moderator in the relationship between parent support and academic achievement, the interaction between perceived parent support and gender was added to the regression equation. The results indicated that gender did not add significant predictive power to the existing model as shown by the non-significant change in $R^2$ ($\Delta R^2 = .000$). Thus, gender did not significantly change the relationship between parent support and academic achievement.

To answer the second part of this research question, the relationship between perceived teacher support and academic achievement was explored. The results indicated...
Table 3
*Research Questions: Regression Analyses of SES and Social Support on Academic Achievement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.094*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES x Parent Support</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES x Teacher Support</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.060*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES x Gender</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support x Gender</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Support</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support x Teacher Support</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $\beta =$ standardized regression coefficient; SES = Socioeconomic Status; *p < .05; $\Delta R^2 =$ how much additional variance is accounted for by the new model
that there was not a significant relationship between those two variables in this data set
\( (\beta=.008, R^2 =.022, p=0.55) \).

**Research Question 2: Does perceived teacher and parent support moderate the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement for male and female Black high school students?**

To answer this question, simple linear regression was again used. Socioeconomic status, (as measured by ELS: 2002) was entered as the independent variable and academic achievement, once again, served as the dependent variable. The results indicated a significant relationship between students’ socioeconomic status and academic achievement, \( R^2=.32, F(1, 17)=10.29, p=.001 \), accounting for 32% of the variance in the dependent variable explained by the model. Next, the interaction between perceived teacher and parent support and socioeconomic status were added to the regression equation. Perceived parent support was found to add significant predictive power to the existing model as shown by the significant change in \( R^2 (\Delta R^2=.034, p=.001) \), and teacher support was also found be significant as shown by the change in \( R^2 (\Delta R^2=.060, p=.001) \). Therefore, both parent and teacher support moderated the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement (see Table 3).

Gender was also added to the equation to determine if it played a moderating role on the relationships between socio-economic status and academic achievement. The results indicated that gender did not add significant predictive power and did not moderate the above variables’ relationships with academic achievement (\( \Delta R^2=.001, p=.829 \)).
Research Question 3: Does teacher support play a moderating role in the relationship between parent support and academic achievement for both Black males and female students?

For question 3, teacher support was added to the regression equation of parent support and academic achievement, along with the interaction between parent support and teacher support. Teacher support did not add significant predictive power, as indicated by a non-significant change in $R^2$ ($\Delta R^2 = .002, p = .411$), suggesting that in this data set, teacher support did not moderate the relationship between parent support and academic achievement (see Table 3).
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Overview

In this study, the variables of teacher and parent support, socioeconomic status, and gender as they relate to academic achievement for Black high school students were examined. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the results presented in Chapter 4. First, the respondent characteristics are discussed. Next, the results of the analysis of each research question are discussed in reference to possible explanations of the findings and their convergence or divergence with previous literature. This discussion is followed by a review of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study and findings.

Respondent Characteristics

The selection of participants in this study came from the 15,362 students that participated in the Educational Longitudinal Survey of 2002 (ELS: 2002). Out of that sample, 2,027 students identified themselves as Black/non-Hispanic. All participants were 10th grade high school students in the United States. The demographic information from the ELS: 2002 database revealed that 1,009 of the students were male and 1,018 were female. Out of those 2027 Black students, 2019 completed the math and reading standardized test and thus were included in this present study. The sample in this study was consistent with several previous research studies that used adolescent student samples to examine the variables that may influence academic achievement among males and females, though many of these studies were conducted at the middle school level (Fan & Williams, 2010; Gutman et al., 2002; Malecki & Demaray, 2006; Werblow &
Duesbery, 2009). This study was also consistent with several previous studies that used large adolescent student samples to examine variables related to academic achievement (N>1000; Fan & Williams, 2010; Gutman et al. 2002).

However, this current study differed in that few studies exist that have focused solely on Black high school students’ academic achievement (Flowers & Flowers, 2010). Most past research has involved racial/ethnic group comparison studies to identify group differences in risk factors and protective factors that influence academic achievement (Fan & Williams, 2010; Radziszewska, 2006), or have conducted studies using a large White sample and small Black sample to generate conclusions about Black children (Dornbusch et al., 1987, Mandara, 2006). According to the literature, these studies are often helpful in identifying group differences but are not helpful in identifying the actual factors that impact Black students (Flowers & Flowers, 2010; Mandara, 2006).

**Perceived Teacher and Parent Support and Academic Achievement**

The first research question sought to determine if a relationship existed between perceived teacher and parent support and academic achievement for the Black students in this study. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between perceived parent support and academic achievement. This was consistent with numerous studies that have found parent support to be a source related to academic achievement across cultural and ethnic groups (Clark, 1983; Jeynes, 2003; Madhere, 1997, Mandara, 2006). Unlike some early studies that used large samples of predominately European American students and small samples of Black students to generate conclusions regarding the impact of parent support on Black students’ academic achievement by comparison to their White counterparts (Dornbusch, 1987, Mandara, 2006), this study included only
Black high school students. By including only Black students, this researcher was able to focus on how different variables relate specifically to academic achievement for Black high school students.

This current study also added to the literature by using a sample of 10th grade high school students, as previous studies have focused on elementary and middle school students. According to a meta-analysis examining the influence of parenting styles on Black males’ academic achievement, Black parents’ positive involvement in school and home was positively related to Black elementary students’ academic achievement (Mandara, 2006). Most other studies that have examined student variables and academic achievement have focused almost exclusively on middle school populations (Booker, 2006; Goodenow, 1993; Gutman & Midgely, 1999; Wentzel, 1997). The majority of research that has been conducted with high school students has focused on school engagement and dropping out (Booker, 2006; Finn, 1989). According to Booker (2006), because the elementary and middle school experience is distinctively different from the high school experience, high school students are a population that would benefit from increased research. This current study examined this population and provided further evidence that parent support may be positively related to academic achievement for Black high school students (Flowers & Flowers, 2008; Sciarra & Seirup, 2008; Fan & Williams, 2010).

In regards to teacher support, the unexpected findings were that perceived teacher support did not positively or negatively relate to students’ academic achievement on reading and math achievement tests. This finding was inconsistent with several studies that have shown teacher support to be related to academic achievement for Black students.
(Clark, 1983; Dubow, 1991). It is important to note that another study that looked at the relationship between teacher support and academic achievement found an inverse relationship (Gutman et al., 2002). One possible explanation for this difference could be that children who are having more academic difficulties are more likely to receive attention and help from their teachers, and thus more likely to perceive their teachers’ actions as being supportive.

One possible explanation for the inconsistency between findings from this study and previous studies finding a positive relationship between teacher support and academic achievement could be the different population used in the sample (Gillock & Reyes, 1999). For example, both Gillock and Reyes (1999) and Malecki and Demaray (2006) studied predominately low-income Hispanic student populations. Both of these studies also stated that due to the sample used, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other understudied groups (Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). Another possible explanation for the inconsistent findings between this study and those that found a positive relationship between teacher support and academic achievement could be due to measurement. This study used standardized academic achievement tests to measure academic achievement, which are stable measures designed to assess a student’s math or reading ability. In contrast, grades or curriculum-based assessments may be more sensitive to the effects of perceived teacher support and changes in student behavior (Gutman et al., 2002; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). For example, it may be easier to see a change in day-to-day grades that are often impacted by completion of homework and classroom participation than a single test that is used to measure a child’s academic knowledge based on age and grade norms (Gutman et al.,
Thirdly, it is important to note that there were not as many teacher support questions (5) used in the study as parent support questions (13), which may have impacted the results of this. However, care was taken to only include questions that related to parents or teachers supporting academic achievement and questions similar to the questions used in the Child and Adolescent Social Support Sale (Malecki et al., 2000).

A separate explanation for the current findings is that these relationships are complex and may be better explained as indirect relationships (Feldman & Wentzel, 1990; Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002; Grolnick et al., 1991; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). There are numerous risk factors (i.e., poverty, community, teachers holding low expectations, etc.) and protective factors (i.e., parental involvement, high IQ, peer support, community support etc.), which might impact a student’s educational experience. Because of these factors and the complexity of all of these variables, teacher support may better be explained as playing a moderating or mediating role. In other words, as discussed below, teacher support may better be explained as impacting the relationship between another predictor variable and academic achievement. Indeed, both studies by Philips’ (1997) and Dubow and colleagues’ (1991) found no relationship between teacher support and academic achievement. Instead, Philips found a direct relationship between school processes and outcomes. Based on these results, Philip concluded that schools are effective when they offer demanding curricula and have teachers who hold high educational expectations for their students. Taken as a whole, the findings from the current study and others suggest that other variables, including
teachers’ level of competency in the classroom and their expectations for their students, may be more important mediators or moderators in the relationship between students’ perceived support from their teachers and academic achievement.

**Perceived Social Support, Socioeconomic Status, and Academic Achievement**

For the second question, it was noted that the impact of socioeconomic status on academic achievement was quite pronounced. In the model, 32% of the variance in Black students’ academic achievement was explained by the students’ socioeconomic status (see Table 4), which is consistent with previous research (Malecki & Demaray, 2006; McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Proctor & Dalaker, 2003; Rutter, 1985). According to numerous studies, of all the risk factors that children face, poverty is the most consistent predictor of dysfunction (McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Rutter, 1985). And Black students are three times more likely to live in poverty when compared to their non-Hispanic White counterparts (Proctor & Dalaker, 2003). This present study was consistent with previous studies in documenting that socioeconomic status is a variable that needs to be considered when developing academic interventions for students.

In this present study, parent support ($\Delta R^2 = .034$) and teacher support ($\Delta R^2 = .060$) were found to moderate the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement for male and female Black high school students. In other words, parent support and teacher support weakened the impact of socioeconomic status on students’ academic achievement (Holmbeck, 1997), and the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement was different based on the level of social support perceived (Malecki & Demaray, 2006). These findings are consistent with the results obtained by Malecki and Demaray (2006) with a predominately Hispanic middle school
sample, in that both studies found that parent and teacher support moderated the relationship between socioeconomic status and students’ academic achievement.

These findings (teacher support serving as a moderator in the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement) were interesting based on the previous findings in this study that teacher support and academic achievement were not related. Again, as stated above, a possible explanation for this finding could be that because of the numerous variables that play a role in students’ academic achievement and the complexity of all of these variables, in this model, teacher support may better be explained as playing a moderating role rather than a direct role (Fan & Chen, 2001). This study may also provide further support for Malecki and Demaray’s (2006) findings that teacher support is more important for students who are of lower socioeconomic status.

The implications of these findings are that teacher support and parent support may somewhat help modify the negative trajectory that low socioeconomic status has on Black students’ academic achievement. Malecki and Demaray (2006) explained that for students of low socioeconomic status, social support might be an important variable that buffers the challenges faced by living in poverty. By serving as a buffer or stabilizer, social support may assist students in benefiting from classroom instruction, although more research is needed to fully understand these relationships.

**Gender**

Gender did not play a moderating role in the relationship between parent support, teacher support, or socioeconomic status with academic achievement. Overall, when Black males’ and females’ reading and math achievement were compared, the scores did not significantly differ from one another (Ingels et al., 2005). These findings were not
expected based on numerous studies that have found gender differences in academic achievement (Dumais, 2009; Mckown & Weinstein, 2002) and levels of perceived social support (Cauce et al., 1982; Malecki & Demaray, 2006; Malecki & Elliott, 1999). However, the studies differed in the sample population used. For example, Malecki and Demaray’s study was made up of predominately Hispanic middle school students and Mckown and Weinstein’s study included 3\textsuperscript{rd}-5\textsuperscript{th} grade students. Nonetheless, it is important to remember Black male adolescents continue to be at a high risk for experiencing negative outcomes (Gutman et al., 2002; Herrera, 1998; Hilliard, 1991), thus more research is needed to fully understand what protective factors work best for Black male students.

**Teacher Support as a Moderator Between Parent Support and Academic Achievement**

Teacher support was again examined to determine whether it served as a moderator between parent support and academic achievement. The reason teacher support was examined in this way was because multiple studies have supported the notion that parental support is directly related to students’ academic achievement (Booker, 2006; Goodenow, 1993; Gutman & Midgely, 1999; Mandara, 2006; Wentzel, 1997), and several studies have found a relationship between Black students’ academic achievement and teacher support (Clark, 1983; Dubow et al., 1991). It was hypothesized that if a lack of perceived parental support could be related to poor academic achievement in school, then perceived teacher support may help change that negative trajectory or vice versa. However, the results relevant to the third research question indicated that teacher support did not serve as a moderator between parent support and academic achievement. These
results suggest that teacher support did not serve as a protective factor or buffer the relationship between parent support and academic achievement.

There are several possible reasons why teacher support did not moderate the relationship between parent support and academic achievement. One assumption is teachers reaching out to children who perceive that they receive social support from their parent(s) may not be necessary. It is also possible that school-level interventions aimed at impacting at risk students’ academic achievement may need to be more complex than providing teacher support. It could also be argued, based on Philips’ (1997) findings, that teacher support is not what schools who predominately educate minority and low income children should be focused on because schools are only effective when they offer demanding curricula and have teachers who hold high educational expectations for their students.

Another idea to consider is that it may be more difficult for high school students to develop trusting relationships with their teachers when compared to elementary school students. Studies examining teacher relationships as early as kindergarten have found that children with warm, close, communicative relationships with kindergarten teachers were better adjusted and had more positive child-teacher relationships in second grade (Pianta et al., 1995). However, secondary schools have had difficulty producing these same results and providing affective supports for their students (Doll & Lyon, 1998). There are many reasons for this. For example, secondary schools are often larger and more departmentalized, and teachers are responsible for teaching more students than at the elementary level. In addition, secondary schools are often characterized by more strict
discipline and less personal attention from teachers. All of these factors can lead to students feeling less connected to their school environment (Gillock & Reyes, 1999).

**Limitations**

As with any study, there were several limitations to this study. The entire sample used in this study was Black 10th grade students throughout the United States. Although this sample was used to fill a gap in the literature, the results can only be generalized to other Black 10th grade students and may not be generalizable to other ethnicities or Black students in other grades.

Also, although the use of the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 allowed for a large sample of students, the use of secondary data provided its own challenges. For example, because the ELS: 2002 was a restricted database, the actual scores the students received on the academic achievement tests and the actual range of socioeconomic status scores were not available. Instead, the scores were converted to quartile scores (ranging from 1-4), which resulted in a significant amount of information being lost due to dealing with a 4-point scale. The use of quartile scores may have prevented the significant findings in this study from being larger in magnitude and prevented more in-depth analyses (e.g., what roles the moderator actually plays in the relationships).

Second, the original study was not developed specifically to measure social support and there were not as many teacher support questions (5) used in the study as parent support questions (13). As stated above, care was taken to only include questions that related to parents or teachers supporting academic achievement and questions similar to the questions used in the Child and Adolescent Social Support Sale (Malecki et al., 2000).
Another limitation was the self-report nature of the study itself. When using self-report measures it is difficult to determine the accuracy of responses. However, this study was purporting to measure students’ perceptions of social support and not actual social support. Lastly, similar to other studies (Malecki & Demaray, 2006), the results from this study are correlational in nature. Causal relationships cannot be deemed from this study nor can it be concluded that social support is a critical factor in the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement.

This study used standardized math and reading achievement tests to measure students’ academic achievement. However, as mentioned above, there may have been other measures of achievement, such as grades or curriculum based measures that may have been more sensitive to the effects of perceived teacher support and changes in student day–to-day behavioral changes (e.g., completion of homework) and academic performance (Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

**Implications for Practice and Future Research**

Although the majority of the present study’s statistically significant findings were small in magnitude, taken in conjunction with the previous literature, the results have important implications for parents and educators. Taken as a whole, the results of this study further support the importance of parental involvement in their children’s education and students’ perceptions of parental support as they relate to academic achievement. Many students in schools across the United States are at risk for school failure (Crockett, 2003; Doll & Lyon, 1998; Hampson et al., 1998; Proctor & Dalaker, 2003), and Black students living in poverty are disproportionately at risk (Gutman & Midgley, 1999; Seidman et al., 1994). Given this, schools and other community organizations should
consider providing parent trainings on the types of behaviors that parents can engage in such as the parent supportive behavior assessed in this study. Examples of these behaviors include checking homework, giving positive reinforcement and privileges as a reward for receiving good grades, limiting privileges for poor grades, limiting the amount of TV and video games, and talking with their child about things troubling them, classes, school activities, future plans, and community and world events.

As for teacher support, many questions remain regarding the role that teacher support plays in Black students’ academic achievement. This study found that teacher support was not significantly related to academic achievement; however, teacher support did moderate (buffer) the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Based on the above findings, it is recommended that programs and school districts consider providing training to teachers on effective ways to develop the student and teacher relationship and expand their own cultural awareness of others (Flowers & Flowers, 2008). However, the primary focus of institutions that have the duty of educating low income and minority students should be to have highly qualified teachers, provide a demanding curriculum, and hold students to high standards (Philips, 1997).

Malecki and Demaray (2006) have suggested that school psychologists consider assessing social support in students’ lives, especially students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, so that interventions can be targeted for these students. One possible approach, created by Pianta, LaParo, and Hamre (2008) for elementary aged students is the Students, Teachers, and Relationship Support program. This program provides a self-report assessment of the relationship between a student and teacher, and helps to identify teacher and student relationships that may need intervention. The teacher is then taught a
set of techniques to create opportunities for positive interaction and to establish a positive relationship with the student.

Another similar program called Check and Connect also assists in designing and evaluating teacher- and student-based interventions for students at risk for low academic achievement in elementary school (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, 2004). In the Check and Connect program, the student is assigned a monitor. This monitor serves as an advocate for the student and his/her family. The “checking” component of this program involves the monitor conducting systematic assessment of their students’ level of engagement in school (e.g., attendance, office referrals, suspension, academic progress). Data are collected on these indicators routinely by the monitor and summarized each month on the Check and Connect Monitoring Sheet. The “connect” component of this program involves the monitor making personal connections with the students, families, and staff (Anderson et al., 2004).

The Students, Teachers, and Relationship Support program (Pianta et al., 2008) and the Check and Connect Program (Anderson et al., 2004) could be adapted for at-risk adolescent students. For example, because students at the secondary level usually have several teachers they see throughout the day, school counselors and psychologists could be responsible for identifying students in need of intervention and assigning them a mentor/monitor to meet with daily/weekly and to monitor their academic progress in school. Research is needed to assess both of these programs’ effectiveness with older students. Schools could also implement systematic school-wide positive behavioral supports that promote a positive and caring school environment for all students which helps to prevent problem behavior from occurring (Walker & Shinn, 2002).
Lastly, it is recognized that there are many other potential confounding variables that may impact Black students’ academic achievement that were not examined during this study. For example, extracurricular activities and level of school engagement (Finn, 1991), peer support and or rejection (Children’s Defense Fund, 2003; Crockett, 2003; Gutman et al., 2005), church and community support (Garbarino et al., 1992; Hampson et al., 1998; Ford, 1994), individual and family mental health (Children’s Defense Fund, 2003; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1977), race/ethnicity of the teachers (Herrera, 1998), teacher education (Hampson et al., 1998), attendance, and motivation (Ford, 1994, Ferguson, 2003) are just a few of the many variables that may be related to academic achievement and may moderate the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement.

Future research should consider replicating this study using a scale that has been specifically developed to measure social support as related to academic achievement. Also, because it has been suggested that teachers’ level of competency in the classroom and their expectations for their students may be more important than students’ perceived support from their teachers, future research on factors related to Black students’ academic achievement should consider examining both social support and teacher competencies.

In addition, it has been shown that people report accurately on self report measures and self report measures can predict future academic performance (McMorris & Ambrosino, 1973). It has also been suggested that non-cognitive variables such as social support may be more valid than some standardized tests in predicting Black students’ completion of college (Powell & Arriola, 2003). Thus, future research should consider exploring the previously mentioned potential confounding variables as they
relate to Black students’ academic achievement. Future research should also examine how the relationships between cognitive ability, perceived social support, and socioeconomic status predict Black students’ academic achievement.

**Chapter Summary**

Researchers, educators, and politicians have attempted to address the national concern of the achievement gap between Black and White students through various theories, pedagogical decisions, and policy changes (Haycock, 2001; Orfield, 1996; Stearns, 2002). Many theories have been tested to attempt to identify both the risk and protective factors impacting Black students’ outcomes (Doll & Lyon, 1998; Garmezy & Tellegen, 1984; Wyman et al., 1991). Of the multiple risk factors that Black students face, poverty has been the most consistent predictor of negative outcomes (McLoyd, 1990, 1998; Rutter, 1985). However, despite the fact that Black students are more likely than children from other racial groups to live in poverty (Ford, 1994; Gutman et al., 2002; Jackson, 1999; Nettles & Pleck, 1993; Taylor, 1991), many Black students go on to lead academically successful lives (Garmezy, 1993).

Some research findings have suggested that a child or adolescent’s relationship with a supportive caring adult, such as a parent or teacher, is beneficial for human development (Benard, 1993; McMillan & Reed, 1994), and related to an increase in the achievement of children who live in poverty (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Grodnick et al., 1991; Hébert & Beardsley, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Masten et al., 1990; Reis, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1989). However, there have also been contradictory research findings (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Goodenow, 1993; Philips, 1997) that suggest no significant relationship between adult support and student achievement (Anderson & Keith, 1997;
Fan & Chen, 2001; Keith, 1991; Philips, 1997). Still other studies have suggested an inverse relationship between adult support and academic achievement (Gutman et al., 2002). These contradictory findings suggest that the relationship between parent support, teacher support, and student achievement may be more complex than a direct relationship (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Mattingly et al., 2002), and may be better explained as indirect (Feldman & Wentzel, 1990; Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Malecki & Demaray, 2006).

The results of this study indicate that perceived parent support is related to academic achievement in Black high school students and may serve as a possible buffer between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Although there was not a direct correlational relationship found in this study between perceived teacher support and academic achievement, this study did support the notion that teacher support can also serve as a moderator in the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement for Black students. These findings add to the literature that social support may help change the negative trajectory found between poverty and academic achievement. Gender did not moderate any of the relationships.

These findings add to the current literature on Black students’ academic achievement. Prior to this study, Malecki & Demaray (2006) had explored these indirect relationships by examining the potential moderating effects of social support on academic achievement and socioeconomic status. However, that study was conducted with a predominantly Hispanic middle–school-aged population. Accordingly, this current study was conducted to examine the relationship between academic achievement and teacher and parent support for Black high school students, with considerations of how teacher
support, parent support, and academic achievement vary in students of different socioeconomic status and gender.

Overall, the results from this study suggest that teacher and parent support somewhat impact the relationships between Black high school students’ academic achievement and their socioeconomic status. The implications of these findings are that social support from parents and teachers may help modify the negative trajectory that low socioeconomic status has on Black students’ academic achievement.
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Appendix A

Retrieved from ELS 2002 Baseline Student Survey

Teacher Support Questions

(MARK ONE RESPONSE ON EACH LINE)

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

20. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your current school and teachers?

a. Students get along well with teachers
f. Teachers are interested in students
g. When I work hard on schoolwork, my teachers praise my efforts
h. In class I often feel “put down” by my teachers

27. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about why you go to school?

h. I go to school because my teachers expect me to succeed

Parent Support Questions

27. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about why you go to school?

I. I go to school because my parents expect me to succeed

85. How often do your parents do the following?

a. Check on whether you have done your homework
b. Help you with your homework
c. Give you privileges for good grades
f. Limit the amount of time watching tv/playing videogames
g. Limit the amount of time going out with friends on school nights

86. In the first semester or term of this school year, how often have you discussed the following with either or both of your parents or guardians?

(MARK ONE RESPONSE ON EACH LINE)

Never
Sometimes
Often

a. Selecting courses or programs at school