

THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY ON ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
OF SELECTED MIDDLE SCHOOL AFRICAN
AMERICAN GIRLS

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Graduate College of
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in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
July, 2000

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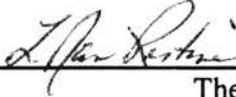
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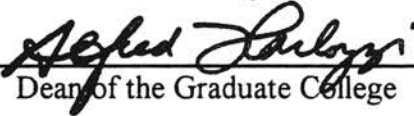
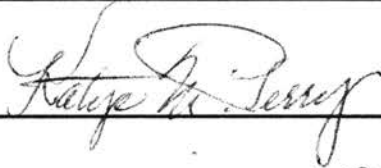
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In everything give thanks for this is the will of God concerning you (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). I am most thankful to God for his omniscient wisdom, guidance, and indwelling presence during my time of need for physical strength, dedication, perseverance, and endurance granted to me to see the completion of this work.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my chairperson, Dr. David England for his consistent supervision, continuous nurturing, and fatherly advice. Mere words cannot express my gratitude to you and your family, but from the depths of my heart, I am most appreciative. My gratefulness is extended to Dr. Nan Restine, for your unique sense of humor and for giving me a strong foundation which enhanced this finished product. I am appreciative to Dr. Katye Perry whose encouragement was indispensable, judgment precise, and timing accurate. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Dr. Natalie Adams whom I am forever so grateful for your prolific wisdom, and gracious spirit that you constantly shared toward me. Your expertise, thought provoking classes, and rich intellect gave me the confidence to pursue my goals. You will always be my mentor. Special thanks also to your family for becoming my family.

My deepest appreciation is extended to my parents, Rev. David and Queen Hart for their unselfish love, prayers, support and encouragement throughout my entire life. Words cannot express how much I love you both. To my dad, you cannot even imagine how grateful I am for your strong belief in education and encouraging me to continue to

reach my highest potential. To my mom, you are a true proverbial woman who believes in the power of prayer intermingled with faith. You all have always believed that I could do anything I ever set my mind to do. My brother Joe, sisters Tundra, Mardra, and Doffree echoed that same faith in me and for that I say thank you. To my nieces and nephews, thanks for being so understanding during those times I could not attend your special events. I am most grateful and love you all.

I would like to thank my other “mother” Mrs. Agnes Virginia Williams. What would this journey have been like without you? Special thanks for your unconditional love, kindness, and generosity you share with me and so many others. To my friend, Mr. George Williams for making me laugh when so many times I wanted to cry. To Ms. Renae Parker, my dearest friend, for your encouragement and invaluable support during my darkest and horrendous moments. Thank you for being my listening agent who provided me with empathetic support and untiring love.

Special thanks to my former teachers in Wisconsin, former professors, colleagues, and mentors. To Dr. Louise Latimer, Dr. Joy Flasch, and Dr. Clyde Montgomery for being true servants representing “the art of caring” and believing in “life-long learning.”

An expression of thanks is extended to Frances Griffin and Joyce Gazaway for your countless hours of editing. To Kay Porter and Donna Christenberry thanks for ensuring me that the layout design for this manuscript would be one of quality.

Moreover, I am particularly indebted and eternally grateful to Dr. Jayel Jacobs Jr., my pastor, his wife Joyce, and the Christian Life Missionary Baptist Church family for your steadfast love, devotion, prayers, and support during this endeavor.

To God Be The Glory!

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to the memory of my late husband, Dennis Garland Pearson. I wish to dedicate this work to the legacy he leaves behind — A legacy of being studious, striving for excellence, believing in dedication and possessing a spirit of true discipline.

He always said that I would and could reach this milestone and his words did not go void. He is my true “diamond in the rough” and although he is sadly missed, he will never be gone from my heart.

“ . . . He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.”

– Philippians 1:6

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written and spoken in recent years about academic achievement of today's youth. In a competitive global society that demands an informed populace and a highly skilled labor force, educational achievement is increasingly important for success. In particular, the country has become increasingly aware of the critical issues facing African American youth. Many African American adolescents do not perform well in school, as evidenced by lower grade point averages (GPAs) and higher dropout rates (Entwisle, 1990; Haynes & Comer, 1990; Kazdin, 1993). Issues of concern are national in scope, and include teenage pregnancy, promiscuity, drug use, gang violence, elevated drop out rate, and low academic achievement and performance (NAEP, 1998).

Poor academic achievement has been a serious problem for African American youth. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1998) report confirms that academic proficiency in reading, math, and science is lower for Black children than for White children as early as age nine. African American students "generally earn lower grades, drop out more often, and attain less education than do Whites" (Mickelson, 1990, p. 44). Many researchers who have studied these students and the measurements of student achievement have expressed a major concern for this specific target group (Graybill, 1997; Kunjufu, 1988; Ogbu, 1987). On the other hand, a small segment of

literature explores reasons for poor academic achievement among African American students. These reasons include disbelief in social and economic mobility, belief in racism, and inferior academic preparation (Dornbusch, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Mickelson, 1990). Thus, academic success and failure among African American students is not clearly understood, and the problem warrants additional research. Even though a number of researchers agree that ethnic and racial differences in school performance occur, there is little agreement about what causes these differences (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992).

The school performance of African American youth is an especially grave issue in urban school districts (Sanders, 1998). Academic performance, which is used in measuring the progress toward an educational milestone, not only includes academic competencies, but also the ability to recognize and cope with interpersonal human problems (Butler & McNeely, 1987). Boykin (1983) proposes that becoming academically successful requires mastering three patterns of behaviors and suggests that the academic achievement and performance of African American students is influenced by their ability to come to terms with the mainstream experience, the minority experience, and the African American cultural experience. He concludes that African American youth are socialized completely into mainstream society; they develop a behavioral style that stems from their African heritage; and they experience racial and economic oppression. Boykin (1983) refers to the necessity to master these three distinct patterns as the “triple quandary” which African American students face, but he also maintains that African American students need to fully understand these three patterns while seeking to define their own identity.

Clark (1991) suggests that African American adolescents form certain identities for academic success, which include a raceless identity, a bicultural identity, and an oppositional identity. With a raceless identity one becomes oblivious to issues concerning race, while at the same time becoming isolated and ostracized from his or her own race. Fordham (1990) discusses the concept of “racelessness” as an identity that forces Blacks to distance themselves from the Black community. Biculturalism occurs when a person is capable of identifying with the dominant culture and socializes into mainstream society while at the same time retaining his or her own cultural identification. Finally, oppositional identity occurs when adolescents react with anger, resistance, and rebelliousness, contrary to the social expectations of mainstream society (Comer, 1976; Fordham, 1990; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1988). Particularly during adolescence, African American students may take on certain characteristics whereby they disregard the notion of being identified as academically proficient. In addition, inappropriate behavior may be demonstrated in school performance due to the influence of peers. Peer pressure that is aligned with academic excellence poses intriguing consequences among African American students.

Wetzel (1996) emphasizes that adolescents usually display a decrease in both interest in school and effort to achieve academically. Researchers argue that for many African American youth, not only is academic achievement perceived as antithetical to being African American, but it is inconsistent with one’s African American self-concept or beliefs (Marryshow & Boykin, 1992; Ogbu, 1985, 1990). The need for Black youth to define their own identity may lead students to reject the values of academic achievement in fear of losing racial membership with their own peers (Fordham, 1988; Gregory, 1992).

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) vividly explain the plight of the high achievers whom they observed and interviewed in a predominantly Black lower-class, inner-city high school. The high achievers in this school were called “brainiacs,” an undesirable label which was associated with being a wimp, a nerd, or a geek. In addition, “brainiacs” were accused of “acting White” and renouncing their ethnic heritage in an effort to become accepted by the dominant group in society. Academic achievement for Black teens was not a reliable path to occupational success unless it was accompanied by the rejecting of one’s cultural background in favor of White, middle class values (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fordham, 1988). This belief system was common among many Black teens. While educators have recognized the existence of an anti-achievement culture for at least a decade, it has only recently emerged as a dominant theme among the troubles facing urban schools (Gregory, 1992; Hemmings, 1998).

Signitha Fordham (1993) in “Those Loud Black Girls: [Black] women, silence, and gender ‘passing’ in the academy,” argues that female students are compelled to “pass” as the male dominant other if they desire to achieve academically in school, especially if they are not a part of the dominant culture. African American females use two strategies in order to succeed in school. Gender passing, defined as impersonation, or “acting as if one is someone or something one is not” is a strategy used by African American girls (Fordham, 1993, p.81). The second strategy, silencing strategy is an act of defiance or resistance rather than a form of compliance. Brown and Gilligan (1992) identify silencing as taking one’s knowledge underground, a strategy girls employ to remain accepted by others. African American girls invoke silence as a critical rejection of the low expectations of African American students in schools. Michelle Fine’s Framing Dropouts: Notes on

the Politics of an Urban Public High School (1991) argues that students and teachers were silenced when attempts to critique the school system were made.

Although several studies investigated the relationship between racial identity and academic performance of African American students in high school, (Allen, 1985; Baldwin, Duncan, & Bell, 1987; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fordham, 1988; Witherspoon, 1997), a literature review failed to uncover a single study of African American students at the middle school level. This study focuses on early adolescents, specifically a group of selected African American females, and the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and performance.

Background of Study

Many people assume that the academic deficiencies of African American students are due to either genetic inferiority or cultural deprivation (Neisser, 1986). Cultural deprivation theorists such as Bereiter and Englemann (1966) emphasize several factors to consider. They propose that within certain cultures, there are factors that inhibit academic success, such as lack of resources, no family history of educational achievement, and a lack of opportunity to deter low achievement. Early work on achievement focused on the motivation of African Americans to succeed academically, rather than on influences that may affect achievement-related beliefs (Graham, 1989; 1994). McClelland (1961) and Atkinson (1964) have defined the need for achievement as an “acquired, relatively stable, and general feature of personality that impelled individuals to strive for success whenever their performance at a task could be evaluated against a standard of excellence” (Jones, 1991, p. 2). The general perspective on achievement has been that children’s beliefs about

their academic outcomes are critical determinants of their academic performance. Hence, the belief about academic achievement has been examined from three disciplinary perspectives: sociology, psychology, and anthropology.

Sociologists suggest several barriers that presumably undermine academic achievement among African American youth (Mickelson, 1990). For instance, sociologists assert that African American students' opportunity structure is different from that of any other ethnic group in American society. Economic and social disadvantages cause many African American students to believe that their efforts in school will pay relatively few dividends (Mickelson, 1990). African American students' achievement ideologies or beliefs about the relationship between schooling and success have been found to affect their views about the value of academic achievement and therefore influence their academic performance (Brookover & Schneider, 1975; Ford, 1992; Mickelson, 1990).

Psychologists are concerned with the relations between African American students' self-esteem and motivation in school. Graham (1994) stated that the relationship between self-esteem and school achievement reflects a flaw among African American students. Many students not only desire to be accepted by their peers, but also to be appreciated and respected, which brings about self-fulfillment. Graham (1994) proposes that Black students often seek substitutes or alternatives to academic achievement in order to feel good about themselves. They explore other options such as music, sports, and other areas of entertainment, rather than becoming successful through educational attainments. This belief for many African American students may be

due to the prominent role models that are most influential, particularly, in these career areas.

Anthropologists' focal point has been directed toward the historical circumstances and cultural forces that impact African American youth. Due to colonization, slavery, and defeat, African Americans have been considered an involuntary minority group, especially since they became part of the American colonization without having a choice (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1987). Anthropologists believe that the history of African Americans plays a major role in the decisions about academic success for many students: "One consequence of this history is that acceptance of mainstream values about hard work and school success may be perceived as threatening to one's social identity" (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998, p. 607). Thus, the history of African Americans is reflected in students' beliefs about academic achievement and success. The three perspectives presented by sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists can explain why some African American students may devalue, diminish, or reduce their efforts in academic work.

In order for African American students to become academically successful, it is imperative that they show evidence of effective effort, determination, endurance, fortitude, resilience, and self-efficaciousness (Bandura, 1986). Thus, success becomes a matter of one's belief that he or she can achieve, one's ability to self-regulate, and one's self-efficacy to produce a desired outcome. If students' beliefs are important to produce a successful academic outcome, then understanding what influences their beliefs is important.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

Many theories have been proposed over the years to explain human behavior. Bandura's (1977b) theory is primarily concerned with how individuals operate cognitively on their social experiences and how these cognitive operations influence their behavior and development. He believes that people conceptualize and integrate the information they encounter through a variety of social experiences. Learning through observation of others and the environment in which one may find oneself was once called "social learning theory." Now the term to describe this view is referred to as "social cognitive theory" (Bandura, 1986).

Social cognitive theorists acknowledge that much of human thought and action stems from one's social beginnings. The theory draws on the notion that interaction is based on a triadic reciprocity (Bandura, 1977b). The term "reciprocal" refers to mutual action between causal factors. Human motivation, affects or influences, and behavior serve as causal contributors to the thought process and function as the cognitive component of social cognition. People are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather, "human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other" (Bandura, 1986, p. 18).

The nature of an individual is defined in terms of the number of basic capabilities the individual decides to activate. According to Bandura (1986) there are five basic

capabilities. “Symbolizing capacity” can best be described as the capacity of an individual to use symbols as a method to adjust or alter his or her environment. “Forethought capability” is aided autonomously by the individual and then translated into action. When an individual is able to reduce the impact of immediate influences, forethought can be a supportive behavior, especially when adversity arises. “Vicarious capability,” the capacity to learn through observation, can also be very important as a preventive measure.

Vicarious capability can enhance an individual’s developmental and survival skills. “Self-regulatory capability” can be explained as the ability or motivation to generate the desired outcome, that is, to self-regulate the behavior that will cause one’s aspirations to become a reality. Finally, “self-reflective capability” enables people to think about their experiences, analyze their experiences, and concentrate on their own thought processes. Through self-reflection, one is able to gain knowledge about oneself and make adjustments for improvement.

Maximizing and increasing students’ beliefs about their capabilities to attain academic success is a major consideration for promoting successful experiences in schools. Bandura asserts that “theorists who view humans as possessing capabilities for self-direction employ research paradigms that shed light on how people can affect their own motivation and actions” (1986, p. 1). When students possess these capabilities, they are exhibiting self-efficacy in their pursuit to become academically successful. Therefore, self-efficacy theory is the theoretical foundation for examining whether one’s beliefs about his or her capability to produce a desired outcome will influence academic success.

Self-Efficacy Theory

In the literature, the term “efficacy” describes an individual’s objective ability to perform specific behavior. According to Bandura (1977a), self-efficacy is a cognitive mechanism that regulates behavior. Self-efficacy deals with how proficient an individual feels to accomplish specific tasks and produce a desired outcome. Bandura (1977b) described self-efficacy as the basis for explaining competency. Efficacy may be modified depending on the feedback from environmental factors and previous experiences relating to performance. Self-efficacy has been used as a schema for clarifying questions associated with achievement motivation, particularly in academic settings. Academic self-efficacy refers to one’s perceived capability to perform academic tasks at desired levels (Schunk, 1991).

According to (Bandura, 1977a) efficacy beliefs refer to how people think, feel, and act in motivational settings. For example, a person must know how to do the behavior (skills), want to do the behavior (motivation), and have the capability to manage and perform successfully in spite of adversity (efficacy). Schunk (1994) emphasizes that this is particularly true in academic areas. Students’ academic efficacy has been associated with motivation, cognitive engagement, and performance (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Schunk, 1994). Students who feel efficacious about their ability to master their schoolwork are more likely to select challenging activities, expend effort, persist when tasks become difficult, be resilient to failure or setbacks, have high cognitive engagement, use effective task strategies, and regulate their own learning (Bandura, 1990, 1993; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992; Schunk, 1991, 1994).

Bandura (1990) further declares that students who exhibit efficacy beliefs are influenced according to four types of influences. “Enacted mastery influence” provides tangible evidence that one can accomplish the behavior, “vicarious influence” involves modeling and watching others perform the desired behavior, “physiological and emotional influence” refers to the state of the individual and how that state affects the behavior, and “social and verbal persuasion influence” convinces the individual that he or she is capable of accomplishing the task.

For African American girls, vicarious influence is said to be the most authentic type of influence (Hackett, 1995). Modeling, for example, is influential when individuals model a behavior that is personally relevant to the observer (Hackett, 1995). Historically, African American women have successfully faced challenges and overcome stereotypes and barriers. Therefore, the vicarious influence of self-efficacy and resiliency is intensified by the long history of African American women who serve as models of being victorious in the face of adversity. In this study, the self-efficacy theory as a component of social cognition was the theoretical lens for data collection and analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The influence of academic self-efficacy has been investigated in four high schools in Los Angeles County, California (Bong, 1997). Of the five hundred and eighty-eight students, 49% were males and 51% were females. The ethnic composition was 20% Caucasian, 7% African American, 55% Hispanic, 16% Asian, and 1% Native American. Strengths of self-efficacy were measured in six school subject areas. Confirmatory factor analyses revealed that students’ academic efficacy perceptions prevailed beyond the

boundaries of specific problems. A similar study on the influence of academic self-efficacy warrants research at the middle school level among a larger target group, one that consisted of more than the 7% of African American students in the previous study.

The literature also proposes that African American students often choose not to succeed in school because achievement is often viewed as “acting White,” a term coined by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) to describe how African American high school students are perceived by their same-race peers when they strive to do well in school (Fordham, 1988, 1990; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Witherspoon, 1997). Studies have shown not only the impact of peer pressure and that students resist academic achievement in order to be accepted by their peers, but also how peers view each other as well.

Graham, Taylor and Hudley (1998) examined 304 African American middle school students selected from 10 classrooms in predominately Black schools. Findings suggested that minority girls valued high-achieving female classmates whereas minority boys least valued high-achieving male students. Minority boys were reported to perform more poorly than their female counterparts and devalued academics (Eccles & Wigfield, 1994; Osborn, 1997). This study implicates a need for understanding the plight of ethnic minority males and the relationship between achievement values, gender, and ethnicity. In addition, this study clearly focused on gender differences associated with the weaknesses of African American males but specifically ignored the strengths related to the academic achievement of African American females (Garibaldi, 1989; Kunjufu, 1985, 1988).

Some differences among Black adolescents' academic success are related to gender. African American girls face barriers in school that are well known; they are “doubly marginalized” due to race and gender (Beale, 1970; Clark, 1991; Collins, 1991;

Cruishank, Sidney, Smith, & Ned 1992; Davis, 1981; Doughty, 1980). The stereotypes and barriers Black girls face in school may perhaps stem from their history. Black girls use resistance as a strategy when they learn that their academic efforts are not equitably rewarded and if they perceive anything that is unfair, unjust, and oppressive (Fuller, 1980; Mickelson, 1990; McLaren, 1998; Ogbu, 1987; Weiler, 1988; Willis, 1977). African Americans girls use protective mechanisms and silencing as additional strategies in order to be perceived as academically proficient and to succeed in school (Boykin, 1986; Clark, 1991; Fordham, 1988, 1993; Grant, 1981; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Ogbu, 1988).

Although African American girls tend to do significantly better academically than their male counterparts, limited research focuses on what influences Black girls to be successful in school. Over the years there has been ample research on the academic success and failure of African American males. More importantly, comparative studies have been done on academic achievement of Black and White boys; however, very little research has been done in regards to African American girls who, according to the National Center for Education Statistics report (NCES, 1997), experience higher academic success than African American males. Henderson (1979) argues that the greatest academic achievers among African Americans are females. Thus, it is extremely vital to understand what influences and contributes to the academic achievement and success among African American adolescent girls.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study focused on the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and performance of early adolescent African American girls. The problem

defined for this study, was to explore, describe, and explain the underlying beliefs about school and learning that influence academic achievement and performance of African American girls. In this study, the researcher sought to gain a better understanding of the factors that may help determine why some girls choose to be identified as academically proficient or accept challenges in spite of adversity. Implicit in this research was the nature of self-efficacy as a behavioral factor that influences academic success.

Because of the scant data on this subject, the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Thus, the main thrust of this research study was to provide a body of verified information about a limited phenomenon, that is, the influence of self-efficacy. The findings may perhaps contribute to the development of a useful theoretical orientation for those concerned with educational issues, especially those related to African American females or gender related areas.

Definition of Terms

To understand the terminology used in this dissertation, the following terms are defined:

Academic Achievement – May be defined and measured in a variety of ways. Most measures of academic achievement include grade point average (GPA), and/or the results of standardized achievement test scores (Butler & McNeely, 1987).

Academic Performance – Refers to a measure used in relationship to progress or movement towards completion of an educational milestone. It also includes factors such as the ability to recognize and cope with interpersonal and common problems related to the pursuit of education (Butler & McNeely, 1987).

Self-System – Bandura (1978) defined the self-system as “cognitive structures that provide reference mechanisms to a set of subfunctions for the perception, evaluation, and regulation of the behavior” (p. 348).

Self-Concept – The set of ideas that the person has about himself/herself though these beliefs may not be equivalent to behavior. Individuals usually have beliefs about themselves regarding skills they perform well or poorly, their preferences, their likes or dislikes, roles they act out, principles they believe and standards they hold (Bandura, 1986).

Self-Regulation – A cognitive structure in which the major functions include self-regulation through internal standards and self-evaluative reactions to one’s own behavior (Zimmerman, 1995).

Self-Efficacy – A belief that one can activate the self-regulatory system to bring desired behavioral outcome. Self-efficacy is an ongoing achievement concept in which participants internalize their perceptions of competency through feedback, which are modified depending on the information obtained from environmental factors, previous experiences, and cognitions related to performances (Bandura 1977b, 1982; Feltz, 1992).

Academic Self-Efficacy – One’s perceived capability to perform given academic tasks at desired levels (Schunk, 1991). Students with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy have been proven to willingly undertake challenging tasks (Bandura & Schunk, 1981), expend greater effort for accomplishing a given task (Salomon, 1984; Schunk, 1983), persist longer in the presence of difficulties (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Schunk, 1982), use more effective learning strategies (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) and self regulate better than others (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

Resilience – A framework of positive individual responses to adverse conditions (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1991). The term resilience is used to describe a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity (Benard, 1991).

Mastery Influence Experience – The most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy by which one's behavior is apparent. This experience provides the most authentic evidence of whether one can master whatever it takes to succeed (Bandura, 1982; Biran & Wilson, 1981; Feltz, Landers & Raeder, 1979; Gist, 1989).

Physiological and Emotional Influence Experience – The emotional state of individuals and how that state affects their behavior. Moods affect people's judgments of personal efficacy. A positive mood increases perceived self-efficacy; a negative, despondent mood diminishes it (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985).

Vicarious Influence Experience – Vicarious influence is being able to see other people similar to oneself succeed by perseverant effort. The vicarious influence experience raises observers' beliefs that they too, possess the capabilities to master comparable activities (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1987).

Social Persuasion Influence Experience – Verbal persuasion is when a person possesses the capabilities to master given activities. People who experience this type of persuasion are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise (Litt, 1988; Schunk, 1989).

Research Question

The following research question guided the completion of the study:

How does self-efficacy influence the academic success of selected African American middle school girls?

Significance of the Study

School is the business of children and every child should be allowed to develop to his/her full potential in an optimum educational setting. Education is the key to success; however, the dropout rate in large urban school districts remains high, although it has decreased slightly in the last few years. Although, the dropout rate appears to be declining, nearly two-thirds of the dropouts leave before the tenth grade and 20 percent drop out by the eighth grade (Coley, 1995).

This study contributes to the body of research concerning early adolescents, thereby improving practice and refining theory. Academicians can incorporate the findings of this study as they grapple with understanding African Americans' beliefs about academic success, particularly African American females. It is a popular belief that "all practice is based on theory" (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 26) and theory "provides a general mode of analysis of practical events" (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 7). Self-efficacy provided a theoretical framework through which the experiences of African American girls were examined. The influence of Bandura's self-efficacy theory as it relates to academic achievement was explored. Researchers have argued that some children come into the world with an innate ability to achieve and consequently possess the intellectual capability

of succeeding academically (Bandura, 1997; McClendon & Wigfield, 1998). On the other hand, some children, particularly African American girls, achieve through being self-efficacious and resilient enough to overcome barriers, adversities, and obstacles.

Data Collection and Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to answer the research question that guided this study. Quantitative research involves the collection of numerical data in order to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena of interest; data analysis was mainly statistical. For this study, quantitative data were derived from responses of the participants to The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES). Qualitative research properly seeks answers by examining various social settings and the individuals who occupy these settings.

Qualitative researchers, then, are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their setting and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth. (Berg, 1989, p. 6)

In addition, this type of methodology permits researchers to "share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives" (Berg, 1989, p. 6). Thus, qualitative and quantitative approaches are considered to be complimentary components of the scientific method (Gay, 1996).

For quantitative measurement, the validity is the degree to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure and, consequently, permits appropriate interpretation of the scores. The quantitative approach was used at the beginning of the study. Each participant or respondent completed The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey

(CSES) and the results were interpreted according to Dr. Albert Bandura's Children's Self-Efficacy key.

Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to investigate and understand the perceptions of participants or respondents and how they make sense of themselves and their environment and also allows the voices of those studied to be heard (Berg, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Weiss, 1994). The qualitative research design selected for this particular study was exploratory and descriptive in nature based on the responses obtained from The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES). Specifically, informal observations, and in-depth interviews were conducted in order to acquire a better understanding of the possible factors that may help explain why some girls choose to be identified either as academically challenged or as successful. Implicit in this research study is the nature of self-efficacy and resilience as behavioral factors that enhance academic success. A similar study has been done with high school students, but the topic warrants research during the earlier adolescent years. Therefore, this study examined the academic achievement and academic performance of African American girls at the middle school level, in particular, eighth graders.

Organization of the Study

A review of literature, the results presented in the next chapter contains a discussion of academic underachievement and performance among African Americans, which has been a major national concern. Nevertheless, African American girls have found a way to be high achievers, formulating coping strategies in order to succeed academically. Chapter II also includes a discussion of protective mechanisms and/or strategies used by

African Americans and barriers they face which are relevant to academic success or failure. In addition, it provides a historical account of the African American woman's experience and how this history impacts the lives of African American girls. Their resilience and self-efficaciousness may perhaps stem from their history. In addition, the influence of self-efficacy may serve as the main component of the African American girls' academic success. Chapter III, the methodology section, contains explanations of the instruments and methods of inquiry used in this study to collect rich, thick data from the respondents. Chapter IV presents the research findings and analysis of the data. Finally, Chapter V provides a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature provides an overview of research concerning academic achievement, academic performance, protective mechanisms, and social identities as these topics relate to the study of African American adolescent girls. This chapter begins with a discussion of the middle school early adolescent years as a time when decisions about academic achievement and performance are heightened significantly. Many African American girls have been successful in their academic pursuit despite race, gender, and stereotypes serving as barriers.

A discussion of the factors that may contribute to the African American girls' academic success also includes coping strategies such as gender passing, silencing, and resistance strategies. In addition, African American girls benefit from numerous role models both historical and modern.

Finally, the literature review discusses social cognitive theory and the construct of self-efficacy as a theoretical foundation for this study of African American adolescent girls.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement and academic performance among African American youth remain issues of great concern. Sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists have been reviewing the academic achievement and performance of African American youth from many perspectives, incorporating factors that may affect their educational outcome (Graham, 1989). Researchers have, to a large degree, focused on academic underachievement, examining factors such as high crime, juvenile delinquency, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, socioeconomic status, dysfunctional homes, and even parental educational backgrounds as some of the major causes for academic failure (Boyd, 1991; Dunn & Griggs, 1988). In addition, ecological influences, such as peer environment and the aspects of the neighborhood in which a child is reared, have been related to the underachievement of African Americans (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

While there is a high/strong correlation between academic achievement and family status variables (e.g., parental education, socio-economic status, parenting styles, and family demographics) which are consistently predictive of achievement for European American youths, such variables have been less predictive of academic achievement among African American students (Dornbush, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991; Goffredson, 1981; Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). In addition, parental values regarding achievement have not been successful in explaining the academic success among Blacks (Mickelson, 1990; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992;

Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Some African American students excel in school regardless of the variables that might predict academic underachievement.

African American students as a group have made significant strides in educational achievement and academic attainment. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Report for the Nation indicates that at both the fourth grade and eighth grade levels the average reading score for African American students increased between 1994 and 1998 (NAEP, 1998). Likewise, African American teenagers have also substantially increased their efforts in high school. More African American students are graduating from high school and continuing their education at either a university or a vocational school as they realize the importance of receiving a quality education in order to secure better job opportunities and higher earnings. In recent years, The American Council on Education (1995-1996) reports that 77% of African Americans who attended high school finished, and 83% of European Americans who attended high school finished. Yet, while these gains are positive and a reflection of progress, they reflect only a small segment of research on academic achievement. When research data are broken down by gender, differences in academic achievement emerge within the same African American race/ethnic group (NAEP, 1998).

African American Girls

The African American girl's achievement in school differs from that of the African American boys. Black males are as much as two grade levels behind Black females. Over the past decade, the number of degrees granted to African American males has declined more than in any other subgroup in society (American Council on Education, 1995-1996; Ogbu, 1990). Why do African American females tend to show a higher interest in

academic achievement than African American males? What is the African American girls' inspiration to receive a quality education in spite of adversity? The African American girls' resilience and apparently strong determination to succeed academically seems to be nothing short of a miracle. Therefore, it is necessary to understand why African American girls tend to succeed at a higher rate than African American boys and how some girls survive unforeseen circumstances and yet do well in school. In fact, the African American girls' accomplishments are often made silently or strategically, without even being noticed (Lightfoot, 1972, 1976).

Sara Lightfoot (1972, 1976) conducted an ethnographic study of the status structure of the classroom at Blackton Elementary School, which had over a 90% Black population, in the city of Watercress located in the Northeastern section of the United States. She analyzed how teachers determined formal and informal categorization and discrimination in the classroom through their own behaviors and attitudes. Two second-grade African American teachers in this urban elementary school were selected for the study. These teachers revealed divergent ideologies and encountered different levels of conflict in combining personal and institutional goals. The teachers were placed in Black, self-contained classrooms where students were heterogeneously grouped in terms of ability levels. Lightfoot (1972) used three major sources of data collection to conduct this study: participant observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews. The study suggests that boys were primarily seen as leaders, which convinced Lightfoot to do further research on sexism.

While preparing the appropriate questionnaires and the instruments for her study, Lightfoot decided to visit White suburban schools to determine how to tailor her questionnaire to meet the needs of her specific target group. During this experience,

Lightfoot was able to determine the differences in classroom status structure. The research revealed ideal images of White boys, White girls, and Black boys. White boys were described as aggressive, dominant, and less likely to comply with the high demands of society. White girls were described as perfect, obedient, and easily adaptable to societal norms. Black boys were depicted as lazy, defiant, rebellious, withdrawn, and usually in opposition to societal norms. Research on the African American girl was reported to be a moot issue. The findings in this study indicate that the African American female has been overlooked, ignored, neglected, and disregarded. Lightfoot later wrote an article entitled “Socialization and Education of Young Black Girls in School” (1976) where she discusses the need for educators to be cognizant of the Black girls’ educational experience.

Gender Equity and Barriers of African American Girls

Opportunities in school can be different for girls based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender in school (Orenstein, 1994). Schools perpetuate views of race and gender that are problematic by not giving credibility to the value of cultural contexts and the complexities of multiple statuses (Pollard, 1996). According to Asante (1993), the relationships between race and gender equity are distinctive for African Americans due to the oppression of African Americans in general in this country. Therefore, he argues, educational institutions must consider both race and gender equity. In addition, research on adolescent girls is a challenge that is not solely theoretical. Research also reveals the need to implement gender equity in schools focusing on teenage girls (Johnson, 1997).

David Johnson, a leading psychologist makes the following statement in Minorities and Girls in School: Effects on Achievement and Performance:

Members of some ethnic and racial minority groups and girls have often found the social institutions in which they are educated to be obstacles, not aids, to enablement. Through much of our history, obstacles to enablement have been placed willfully before citizens. It is also true that other obstacles have been inadvertent: For much of our history, we have not known in any scientific way what helps and what hinders the academic success of girls and minority group members. Taken together, those facts have made the relative lack of success for our schools in educating girls and minority students well both a scientific and a political issue. (1997, p. vii)

The term “gender equality” goes beyond educational opportunity. Maxine Green (1985) makes the following argument.

To work for sex equity in education and the social order as a whole is to move to alter the oppressiveness that makes individual autonomy antithetical to social concern. It is to rediscover what it signifies to be a person and a woman, while discovering what it signifies to transform. (p. 42)

The barriers in education for minorities and females are well known; however, solutions are not well known (Butler & McNeely, 1987). A major obstacle confronting those who attempt to implement educational equity programs for students from diverse backgrounds is the lack of “identifiable, readily accessible sources of data” (Lewis et al., in Klien, 1985, p. 380). Educators need sources of information that lead them to understanding the barriers that can affect the actual abilities and performance of women and minorities. The stereotypical gender ideas or notions that people adopt have a long-term effect on how they perceive and process social information and how they implement capabilities (Betz & Hackett, 1981).

The most prevalent stereotypical images of Black girls are school dropouts, teenage welfare mothers, drug addicts, and victims of domestic violence or of AIDS (Jessor, 1993). These stereotypes, particularly of low-income African American girls, are appalling (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). Despite the risks in economically disadvantaged

areas, the majority of African American adolescent girls do not fit these stereotypes. However, limited information exists about how low-income urban girls assess, evaluate, and resist obstacles to their well-being and success (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). Jessor (1993) states that when urban girls are successful, their stories are seen as heroic and resilient, which is phenomenal. Girls from urban areas are seen as beating the odds (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). Therefore, it is imperative to examine this particular target group where adolescents' decisions about the importance of academic progress and school performance are not only critical but also vital.

Middle School Early Adolescence

The middle school has a critical role to develop a sense of civic responsibility, not only through the intellectual work of the school but also by providing a social climate that is supportive of basic values of trust, caring, and service to others. Thus, middle grade schools must be instrumental in developing both the habits of the mind and of the heart that will sustain this nation as a just society into the 21st century (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 834).

The period of adolescence extends over many years; early adolescence has typically been identified as the period between the ages of nine and fourteen, middle adolescence occurs between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, and late adolescence occurs between the ages of eighteen to the mid-twenties and sometimes later for young people whose entry into adult roles and responsibilities is delayed (Feldman & Elliott, 1990). The corresponding subdivisions in schools are junior high or middle school, high school, and

college. The investigation for this research study will concentrate on middle school students, or the early adolescence stage.

Early adolescence is defined both biologically and socially. Biologically, entering into puberty, with its all encompassing changes indicates the beginning of the adolescence stage. The early adolescence period is said to be the most turbulent stage of a child's life. Crockett (1995) contends that "early adolescence is a stage of rapid cognitive, emotional, physical, and social growth and development that children experience between the ages of nine and fourteen" (p. 42). Thus, it is important for the educational and social environments to change as students change (Epstein, 1987). Early adolescents' social and intellectual developments can affect their capacity to learn. It is essential that during the middle school years students receive the social, psychological, and academic support needed to cope with the early adolescent period. While no period of life is ever free of problems, contrary to the stereotype of "storm and stress," most adolescents learn how to negotiate the important issues during this transitional stage (Bandura, 1964).

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) in Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st century asserts that while negotiating takes place, early adolescents also grapple with defining who they are and figuring out what they believe or even stand for. Adolescence is a time of increasing independence for most American youth (Feldman & Elliott, 1990). Autonomy in its most general sense has been defined as the ability to behave independently and to do things on one's own (Newman & Newman, 1984). As children develop from the primary and elementary ages to the adolescent years, their desire for autonomy increases and frequently conflicts with adults' desire for control. For example, the type of control that is used successfully early

in a child's life may not necessarily be successful as the child matures into the early adolescent years (Eccles et al., 1991). During this time of adjusting, adolescents sense some loss of personal control, become less confident in themselves, are more sensitive to social evaluation, and may suffer decline in self-regulation (Bandura, 1995; Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Throughout this period, autonomy is a salient issue for both parents and schools. It is a time when negotiation is necessary to prevent a decline in academic achievement and self-esteem in boys and girls.

Longitudinal studies of the transition from elementary school to middle school found that the self-esteem of European females decreased with the change from sixth to seventh grade, but that of the White males did not; African Americans of both sexes appeared to negotiate during the transition and their self-esteem increased (Entwisle, 1990). Results of national studies also suggest that for girls, the middle grades can be a time of significant decline in self-esteem and academic achievement (AAUW, 1991; Backes, 1994). For example, an American Association of University Women (AAUW) study indicates that many African American girls and Latino girls show a decline in self-esteem in early adolescence by becoming detached from schooling in general, although African American girls' self-esteem was reported higher than that of any other ethnic group (AAUW, 1991).

The early adolescent stage has been described as a time of psychosocial turmoil. Peers, particularly during the adolescence period, are recognized as influencing other peer's/friend's decisions about schooling (Entwisle, 1990). Friends appear to influence general levels of involvement in school (Berndt & Keefe, 1995) as well as decisions to spend time pursuing academic goals rather than social activities (Berndt, Laychak, & Park,

1990). During adolescence, stable, reciprocal friendships also appear to have a greater impact on educational outcomes than unreciprocated and unstable friendships (Epstein, 1989). The school process models assert that peer influence has a relatively weak effect on a student's decisions about academic achievement, if a student chooses the right type of friends. In contrast, school ecology studies find that many times during adolescence, being identified within the "leading crowd" effects students' school performance remarkably; it increases academic performance in schools where academic success is appreciated and valued but decreases performance in schools where good grades are a social liability. "Social influence among friends is a mutual process: Adolescents influence their friends while being influenced by them" (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990, p. 228).

Early adolescence is a time where many students make decisions about self-worth, the worthiness of others, and the value of education, health, work, and citizenship (Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989). In order to meet the middle school adolescents' needs from a holistic approach, Doris R. Entwisle (1990) proposes the following:

The major effect of secondary school is to create an environment that brings economic, political, and social forces to bear on all phases of development: The physical, by way of athletic and other programs; the social, by way of peer groups and organized activities; and the personal, emotional, moral, prevocational, and political, by a variety of means. Although enormous strides have been made in understanding cognitive processes over the past few decades, little of the existing research pertains directly to secondary schools. (p. 197)

The middle school is one of the major socializing institutions for young people and is a critical "turning point" in the lives of youth in America (Jackson & Hornbeck, 1989). This means that during the early adolescence years, schools have an enormous amount of

influence and responsibility to shape various aspects of adolescents' development in order to ensure educational achievement and successful school performance.

Academic Performance

Academic performance is a measure of the progress toward an educational milestone. Academic performance may be defined and measured in a variety of ways. Most measures of academic performance include grade point average (GPA), and/or the results on standardized achievement tests (Butler & McNeely, 1987). While it is necessary to include academic competencies, academic performance also “includes the ability to recognize and cope with interpersonal and other common problems related to the pursuit of education” (Butler & McNeely, 1987, p. 3).

In spite of the many similarities of African American and European American adolescents, differences emerge when it comes to cultural, socio-economic, and environmental backgrounds (Clark, 1991). Research on the achievement and performance level of students in American public schools is increasingly revealing disturbing trends for African American girls, especially from low socio-economic backgrounds (Rumberger, 1983; Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986). The academic performance of African American girls is lower than that of students from higher socio-economic backgrounds, and they drop out of school at a higher rate than White males and females (Butler & McNeely, 1987). Moreover, the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1998) reveals that, as Blacks matriculate to higher levels, this performance gap widens.

Several researchers in recent years have conducted qualitative studies among high school youth who are from especially marginalized groups (Davidson, 1996; Fordham,

1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Hudak, 1993; Lesko, 1988a, 1988b). Many of these studies analyzed how adolescents construct their identities. Researchers draw their assumptions about social transformation and school performance of marginalized groups not only from their work in anthropology, but also from sociological critical theory, feminist theory, and cultural studies (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994). According to these researchers, African American students construct their own identities (Davidson, 1996; Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Hudak, 1993; Lesko, 1988a, 1988b; Ogbu, 1987). Ogbu (1987) maintains that the subordinate positioning of Black students in the larger society constitutes a folk system that embodies the attitudes, knowledge, and competencies transmitted to and acquired by Black children and form a part of what they bring to school. According to Ogbu (1987), Blacks from the past to the present have evolved folk theories of “making it.” They have formed identities that help them cope with performance, particularly in school. When forming their identities, those students who are academically proficient use multiple protective mechanisms and identity formations to ensure academic success (Clark, 1991).

Protective Mechanisms and Social Identities

One protective mechanism for academic achievement has been identified as social identity. There are several types of social identity: a raceless identity, a bicultural identity, and an oppositional identity (Clark, 1991). Ogbu (1987) asserts that in order for African American youth to handle a dominant racial or class status, it is necessary for them to take on a certain identity as a protective mechanism.

Raceless Identity. Raceless identity is a denial of institutional racism, a lack of closeness to other African Americans, and an endorsement of mainstream values and beliefs (Boykin, 1986; Fordham, 1988). Additionally, when an individual becomes oblivious to racism and discrimination as barriers to success, he or she has decided to go through an atypical process. Signithia Fordham (1988) in a qualitative investigation of the process by which African Americans achieve academically, examined patterns of students' achievement and performance in a Washington, D.C., Black high school. This ethnographic study, conducted over twelve months, used observational techniques and participation in the community. Formal and informal discussions and interviews guided the research. The research question was "What, apart from higher scores on measures of school success, differentiates 'successful' low-income Black adolescents from their less successful peers?" The study investigated how the various social, cultural, and historical factors structuring the African Americans' lifestyle and culture in America affect the school behaviors and achievement of African American children. Fordham (1988) suggests that African Americans who succeeded in school, consciously or unconsciously disengaged themselves from the African American community's sentiments, values, beliefs, and customs and embraced the culture of the school.

Fordham (1988) further states that high achieving African Americans attending an urban Black high school accepted mainstream White values and lifestyles. Their peers regarded these students as "acting White." Although these students were high achievers, they attempted to limit their academic abilities and capabilities in fear of being labeled "brainiacs" by their peers. For African American adolescents, racial identity may be linked to the struggle for peer acceptance. Black females at times experience hostile attitudes

from other African American students in their school and community. Fordham's (1988) study maintained that racelessness might indeed serve as a protective mechanism to facilitate the academic success of some African American adolescents (Clark, 1991).

Bicultural Identity. Biculturalism results from an individual's being socialized in two cultures, in this case the dominant European culture and the African American culture. Usually this process begins at birth and continues throughout life. Clark (1991) suggests that achieving a bicultural identity requires exposure to different environments and the ability to view cultural diversity as an asset. Biculturalism is a source of both opportunity and challenge. According to Spencer and Dornbush (1990), minority adolescents clearly have a unique task: to negotiate a balance between two value systems. Bicultural individuals are able to move successfully between their primary or familial culture and the dominant culture. With models from their own ethnic group and the majority group, individuals have the advantage of adding skills and knowledge to their repertoire from which to draw. According to Boykin (1986) and Greene (1990) African Americans must incorporate two often diametrically opposed frames of reference: "Afrocentrism," an African American perspective, and "Eurocentrism," an Euro-American perspective. "The values and attitudes of Afrocentrism center on group sameness, rather than on the individual as in Eurocentrism" (Cauce et al., 1996, p. 102). This dual-consciousness can become a source of tension, uneasiness, and even shame for some African American students (McCombs, 1986).

Valentine (1971) described biculturalism as the ability to draw simultaneously on standardized African American group behavior and on behaviors accepted by the

mainstream cultural system. Bicultural people learn to live in both worlds, be active in both cultures, and adjust their behaviors to conform to society. Developing a bicultural identity may also be a way for African American adolescents to cope with the experiences of racism. Clark's (1991) research indicates that those students who are bicultural are those who are socialized into mainstream society and are able to do well academically, while retaining a strong identification with their own ethnic group.

Oppositional Identity. The oppositional identity occurs when an individual displays a negative and stubborn behavior, usually in relation to those in authority (Comer, 1976). This pattern of response reflects a behavior that refuses to conform to the requirements and standards of society. According to David Levy, who first developed and described the concept of oppositional identity, "initially the behavior was not personal, but a defense against a disturbance of a state of being and served useful developmental purposes"(Levy, 1955, p. 9). He initially began to clinically observe the compulsion to oppose as it occurred normally and abnormally in the behavior of children during different stages of psychological development. He then associated the behavior with other phenomena encountered by clinicians such as obstinacy, procrastination, negativism, temper tantrums, and refusal to eat. In the developmental stages, the first oppositional phase is observed between the ages of eighteen months and two years or later. The second oppositional phase occurs during early adolescence. According to Levy (1955), the first sign of a toddler's "no" stage marks the beginning of autonomy and the first announcement of the self. Likewise, the second stage follows puberty and ushers in adolescence. Once independence is established for adolescents, a period of remission sets

in for a brief period of time. After puberty, the latency stage becomes the second part of the adolescent's opposition. Erikson (1950) describes the adolescent "crisis" as including both the industry versus inferiority stage, and the identity versus role confusion stage. Erikson (1950) proposes that at this stage adolescents can become confused by new social conflicts and demands of society, and as a result show evidence of oppositional behavior. When adolescents react with anger, resistance, and rebelliousness, they may be demonstrating an oppositional social identity (Comer, 1976; Ogbu, 1988). Ogbu (1988) asserts that oppositional social identity comes from the cultural and ecological perspective. He believes that African Americans are involuntary caste-like minorities. As slaves they were brought to the United States, received discriminatory treatment, and were forcefully kept from assimilating into mainstream society. Thus they developed a suspicion of Whites and a dislike for behaviors associated with Whites. The attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are the opposite of those reinforced by mainstream society are the beliefs that constitute oppositional social identity.

African American Girls' Strategies

Gender Passing and Silencing Strategy. The gender role is formed early in a child's life by parents' behavior as well as socializing agencies outside the home, such as schools and peers. Children come to use certain physical attributes and wear certain clothing, colors, and hair styles as indicants of gender (Katcher, 1955; Thompson & Bentler, 1971). Gender labeling not only gives salience to the way society sorts people but also to the activities and attributes of each gender type. Sex typing, is promoted through a vast system of socialization. Parents influence their children's beliefs about

masculinity and femininity even through play. Children usually rely on the relative prevalence of modeling, observing, and learning tremendously through models of both sexes, but they are selective in what they express behaviorally (Bandura, 1965b; Bussey & Bandura, 1984; Dubanoski & Parton, 1971). Some educators believe that quietness, gentleness, and passivity are attributes of females and that aggressiveness, assertiveness, and ambitiousness are masculine attributes (Bandura, 1986; Lightfoot, 1976; Spence & Helmerick, 1978). However, not all males are aggressive, nor are all females unassertive.

Fordham (1993) reported that at Capital High, a predominately African American High School in Washington D.C., African American girls were required to either be silent or emulate the male dominant “other,” a behavior called “gender passing.” Fordham (1993) postulates that silencing and gender passing are strategies used by some African American girls to achieve academically. African American girls are faced with an enormous dilemma because not only are they in competition with males, but also with females of other ethnic backgrounds. According to Fordham (1993), Black girls are compelled to consume the universalized images of White women, including body images, linguistic patterns, styles of interacting and so on. White middle-class women have set the norm or frame of reference for women of all ethnic groups. Because African American women are compelled to assume the identity of the “other” in exchange for success, they cannot represent themselves (Fordham, 1993). Black girls are simply forced to “wear the mask” as the idealized “other” to be successful in school. To wear the mask, is to wear the code of silence in one of two ways.

First, the African American girl must become silent in order to achieve academically as well as socially. Gilligan (1982) asserts that during adolescence, girls' voices may be silenced, disguised, or suppressed which may become problematic for some.

Adolescent girls may face psychological dilemmas in which they feel that if they said what they were feeling and thinking no one would want to be with them, and if they didn't say what they were thinking and feeling they would be all alone, no one would know what was happening to them. (Gilligan, 1982, p. xx)

This type of dilemma can be devastating because of the stress of pretending to be who they are not, portraying what they are not, and suppressing what they feel. Lenita McClain, an African American woman and award-winning journalist, described this dilemma of stress in a passage she wrote five years before she committed suicide.

I am burdened daily with showing Whites that Blacks are people. I am, in the old vernacular, a credit to my race. I am my brother's keeper, and my sisters', though many of them have abandoned me because they think I have abandoned them . . . Some of my "liberal" White acquaintances pat me on the head, hinting that I am a freak, that my success is less a matter of talent than of luck and affirmative action. I may live among them, but it is difficult to live with them. How can they be sincere about respecting me, yet hold my fellows in contempt? And, if I am silent when they attempt to sever me from my own how can I live with myself? (McClain, 1980, p. 21)

Second, the African American girls' silence is another essential strategy in order for her to follow the expectations of the dominant culture. Gilligan (1982) asserts that adolescent girls' voices may be silenced or suppressed by a cultural perspective to conform to dominant images of femininity many African American girls resist. Below is an example of a teacher in the public inner city schools of London who located "Those Loud Black Girls" in the following setting:

In staffrooms [of the schools] a common cry to be heard from White teachers-usually women, for male teachers seldom revealed that everything for them was not firmly under control-was, "Oh, those loud Black girls!" This

exclamation was usually followed by the slamming of a pile of folders on to a table and the speaker collapsing into a chair or storming off to get a cup of coffee. The words were usually uttered in response to a confrontation in which the teacher's sense of authority had been threatened by an attitude of defiance on the part of a group of Black girls in a classroom or corridor. The girls' use of patios and their stubborn refusal to conform to standards of "good behavior," without actually entering the realm of "bad behavior" by breaking the rules, was exasperating for many teachers. The behavior of the girls could be located in the outer limits of tolerable behavior, and they patrolled this territory with much skill, sending a distinct message of being in and for themselves. (Evans, 1988, p.183)

African American females are, therefore, encouraged to be seen rather than heard and passive rather than assertive, which causes the Black girl to respond in an ambivalent manner (Fordham, 1993). Many African American girls resort to living the lifestyle of two worlds as a strategy for succeeding. They have one foot in the White world for acceptance, and one foot in the Black community for acceptance (Cauce et al., 1996). The code of silence is still in effect today in schools. African American girls have discovered that silence may be the "key code" to academic excellence.

For the African American girl, gender is an additional factor in the socialization process. Fordham (1990) described high achieving Black girls as "phantoms in the opera" because academic achievement was obtained in the following ways: (1) becoming and remaining voiceless or silent, and (2) impersonating male images—symbolically in self-presentation, including voice, thinking, speech pattern, and writing style and in the school context when formally interacting with their teachers in classrooms, assemblies, and club meetings. This phenomenon of combining gender passing and silence strategies has unconsciously caused African American females to feel they are emulating White people and males. The African American girls' silence turns to resistance which is another strategy used in order to succeed in school (Leadbeater & Way, 1996).

Resistance Strategy. Resistance has been defined as the behavior that takes a conscious, principled, and active stand contrary to the dictates of authority figures or social systems (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995). How can student resistance be categorized? McLaren (1998) argues that with resistance comes drama. Most drama of resistance is an effort on the students' part to bring their culture into the classroom. The culture of classroom learning is rejected because it is infused with a cultural capital to which subordinate groups have little access. As Henry Giroux (1983) asserts, some resistance may be encouraged and inspired by the dominant culture. Resistance has become a prevalent strategy used among African American females, especially when they learn that their academic efforts are not equitably rewarded. Resistance is also seen as the development of a unique cultural and political perspective which stands against anything that is perceived as unjust, unfair, and oppressive (Robinson & Ward, 1991; Way, 1996).

Tracy Robinson and Jamie Ward (1991) identified two major strategies that African American females use while resisting oppression, race, and gender. The first strategy is called short-term resistance. This approach is used when Black girls choose to employ a survival tactic known as "resistance for survival" in which they address racism and sexism by a straightforwardly rebelling against authority. However, this strategy can be problematic because many times mothers encourage their daughters to respond to racism and sexism by upholding the truth of cultural beliefs, that Black women have to expect discrimination and unfair treatment because of both their race and their sex. bell hooks (1993) argues that when Black women tell their daughters, "I would be less than a mother if I didn't tell you the truth," it sets in motion a short-term resistance strategy for coping with this unfairness, sexism, and racism (hooks, 1993, p. 34). In addition, some

African American mothers take this stance in order to dismantle meaningless idealism, expose illusions, and ultimately strengthen their daughter's character, but rather than strengthening their daughters' character, the negative image conveyed of the world has a demoralizing effect, resulting in the use of "resistance for survival." Short-term resistance strategy will impair one's ability to have a strong secure identity and discourage one's opportunity to collaborate with others (Ward, 1990).

The second strategy for African American girls' resistance is called "resistance for liberation," a method of resistance that uses long-term remedies to empower African American females through confirmation of positive self-concept (Ward, 1990; Weiler, 1988). Long-term resistance is an important concept as it relates to the lives of girls in schools because it indicates their capabilities as human agents to make meaning and to act in social situations when acted upon (Weiler, 1988). A moving example of resistance for liberation is Carrie Mae Dixon of Yates High School in Houston. This young lady was an economically disadvantaged African American who had been an orphan since kindergarten. She stayed in trouble in school and because of being a "problem child," she was called dumb by her third grade teacher. Eventually, Carrie was motivated by a classmate's insult. She decided she would show her classmate who was dumb and who was not. In the tenth grade she discovered what the term "valedictorian" meant and decided she wanted to be just that. By the time she was named valedictorian, she was pregnant and the mother of a two-year-old, had been accepted at the university, won two scholarships for the fall, and wanted to become a chemical engineer. However, her principal thought that a pregnant valedictorian would be a poor example for other students; and decided that Carrie could not participate in the graduation ceremony. It

took national media attention to change the minds of school officials (Green, 1989, p.1c). Her action, on the other hand, was a true example of resistance for liberation.

Long-term resistance employs those tactics that inform the African American student when, where, and how to resist oppression as well as when, where and how to accommodate it (Ward, 1990). Resistance for liberation as a long-term strategy can be used for attaining academic success. Alice Walker (1984) asserts that the world is not good enough alone. Black women must exert effort that will cause African American girls to use long-term strategy to achieve and make the world a better place.

Historical Perspective

Historically, Black women vividly and successfully exercised resistance as a strategy. During slavery, resistance was a way of survival for women slaves just as it is today for girls. Harriet Tubman is an excellent example of using resistance as a strategy for survival. She hated slavery and was forced to work in the fields like a man. As a field slave on Maryland's Eastern Shore, she was often beaten because of her stubbornness. She suffered her entire life from a skull fracture she received at the age of thirteen, when the overseer struck her with a two-pound weight. She also developed great strength. After her master died, she was fearful of being sold along with her brother to the Deep South, and she decided to escape. Tubman tried to persuade her brother and her husband, who had been free for five years, to accompany her to the North. After they refused, in 1849, she set out alone. Walking by night and hiding by day, she reached Pennsylvania. After working and saving her money as a cook, laundress, and scrubwoman, she returned to Baltimore in 1850 to rescue her sister and children who were about to be sold. She

returned after a few months to rescue her brother and two other men. In 1851, Tubman returned for her husband, John Tubman, only to find he had another wife and refused to see her. Although this was a painful time for Harriet, she was filled with determination and motivation to free slaves. It is estimated that she helped more than 300 people escape to Canada. Making nineteen trips to the South to free slaves, she became known as the “Moses” for her people and her contributions were an essential part of the Underground Railroad (Katz & Hallibuton, 1973). As successful as she was daring, Harriet Tubman was wanted dead or alive in the South. Southerners offered rewards amounting to \$40,000 dollars for her capture, but she was never captured. Harriet Tubman was the most famous “conductor” of Black slaves. Her work for freedom made her one of America’s greatest heroines. Bennett (1999) has eloquently expressed to what extent African Americans resisted, a resistance that has left a penetrating and profound imprint on the African American girl.

[Black people] resisted the practice of slavery and the trade in slaves from its inception in the United States in the early 1600s to its end in the middle 1800s. They resisted it on the ships from Africa. They resisted it in the fields and in the big house; they resisted by organized rebellion; and they resisted by direct, spontaneous acts of courage. For their freedom, they killed and were killed. They always ran away. And some master was always hunting for them. Their will set against the master’s will, they fought, fought back, and died. They also survived. They took the lash and the burn. They lost but they won. By the strength of their determination, led by the North Star and set aboard the box cars of the Underground Railroad—by their resistance—slaves won in their cause of human freedom. (Bennett, 1999, p.1)

Dorothy Sterling, in her (1984) book entitled We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century, noted women slaves’ resistance and advised her daughter,

“Fight, and if you can’t fight, kick; if you can’t kick, then bite” (p.1). These words were

given not only as advice for Sterling's daughter, but for African American women to endure through hardship, persevere through suffering, and soar like an eagle through times of struggle. Race, gender, and oppression were the greatest battle for African American women to fight in order to overcome the stereotypical images held by the dominant culture.

Stereotypical Images

Collins (1991) stated that the dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of four interrelated, socially constructed, controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining Black women's subordination. The first controlling image is the "mammy image." The mammy image is the faithful, obedient domestic servant. By nurturing, caring and loving the White families and their children better than her own, the mammy symbolizes the dominant group's perceptions of the ideal Black female relationship to elite White male power. The second controlling image is the "matriarchal image." Just as the mammy typified the Black mother figure in the White homes, the matriarch symbolized the mother figure in the Black homes (Collins, 1991). The mammy represents the "good" Black mother; the matriarch symbolized the "bad" Black mother, the American women who fail to fulfill their traditional "womanly" duties (Moynihan, 1965). The third image, the "welfare image," is said to share some important features with its mammy and matriarch counterparts. Like the matriarch, the welfare mother is labeled a bad mother. However, unlike the matriarch, she is not too aggressive; on the contrary, she is not aggressive enough. Black welfare mothers are blamed for failing to pass on the work ethic (Collins, 1991). The fourth

controlling image is that of the “Jezebel image,” that is, the whore, or sexually aggressive woman. Through all the stereotypes and labels assigned to the African American woman, she has been successful and a truly remarkable creature who can make the best of a variety of situations in which she has been placed (Doughty, 1980).

Historical Emphasis on Education. The legacy of slavery in the United States indicates some vital differences between African American women and other racial and ethnic minority women (Cheatham, 1990; Feagin, 1991). Davis (1981) provides an historical account of African American women’s influence on education. From the inception of slavery, whether formal or informal, Black women have been extremely passionate about educating themselves and their children. Many managed to teach themselves to read and write and would later gain reputations as academicians of remarkable achievement. During the earlier part of the 20th century, women such as Lucy Crafty Laney, Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown created opportunities for Blacks to be educated by starting their own schools. Lucy Crafty Laney was the founder of Haines Normal and Industrial Institution. Mary McLeod Bethune was the founder of Daytona Educational and Industrial training for Negro Girls. Nannie Helen Burroughs founded The National Training School for Women and Girls, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown founded Palmer Memorial Institute (for boys and girls). These women and other visionaries shared a historical framework for their race and their gender: All schools began with the idea of educating the African American female. Nevertheless, whenever an African American male arrived at the doorstep of a learning institution, he was not denied. Cynthia Neverdon-Morton (1989) says,

These founders desire was to improve status, material conditions, and the image of the race and gender by forming clubs, founding institutions, and becoming teachers, and creating innovative educational programs of many types. No matter what kind of social activity was planned, some educational aspect was included. (p. 6)

Their activities aimed at social change, empowerment, and a better quality of life for the community as well as for society. They used their schools to link race and gender by teaching and promoting domestic arts, moral living, self-sufficiency, and female achievement. In addition, they believed that education was the key to advancement and true freedom (McCluskey, 1989). Hence, the African American girls' educational achievements have been modeled for them through heroines throughout history. For various reasons, the African American woman has created an inner mechanism of strength to be a success, a mechanism which has been apparent to younger generations. The research on African American girls reveals that the unique historical and social context of the African American woman must be taken into consideration (Leadbeater & Way, 1996).

Davis (1981) defined the history of African American women as differing from that of White women or any other American women. Almost 200 years ago, African American women were treated distinctly different from their African American male slave counterparts, just as African American women are treated different from men today. The African American woman has been considered hardworking (slave and domestic labor), responsible, independent, persevering, assertive, self-reliant, and strong (Collins, 1991). They were teachers, mothers, politicians, protectors, providers, cooks, nurses, and much much more. Zora Neale Hurston (1978), an outstanding folklorist, described Black women as "mules," suggesting the existence of strength and endurance. Sojourner Truth,

an African American woman activist, who did not have a formal education, was not considered a Black woman of intellect. However, at a women's rights convention in 1851, she presented a penetrating speech defining the term woman:

That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arms! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Loewenberg & Bogin, 1976, p. 235)

Although Truth was a former slave who never learned to read or write, she proved herself to be a formidable and overpowering intellectual, profoundly using the concept of the Black woman being culturally constructed in her speech “Ain't I a woman?” Her deep religious beliefs and talent as an orator made her an effective and eloquent speaker on behalf of women and Blacks. She is known as one of the greatest orators of her time.

Another historical figure who exemplified independence and autonomy was Madam C. J. Walker. Madam C. J. Walker was born the daughter of former slaves. She was an orphan at the age of seven, married at fourteen, and a widow by the age of twenty (Lommel, 1993). Although Madam Walker's husband thought that she should be satisfied with earning ten dollars per day from her Black hair products, in 1905 Walker became known as an enterprising hair-care entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political activist. She became the first self-made African American woman millionaire. She did not allow herself to be restricted or limited by narrow stereotyped concepts of what ought to satisfy Black women in the racially segregated and sexist society of the early twentieth century. She

used her great wealth, business insight, and intelligence to promote social and political change for Blacks and women. Madam C. J. Walker gave other African American women a remarkable and unprecedented example of pride and self-determination. She lived her life with courage that defied prejudice and stereotypes, yet it began with the same experiences that other Black women of her time shared (Katz & Hallibuton, 1973). She has been honored by America as one of the few American women on a United States postage stamp.

Women such as Mary McLeod Bethune shared Madam C. J. Walker's experiences. As a child, Mary McLeod Bethune walked ten miles a day to attend school. After being rejected for missionary service, Bethune entered the teaching profession and in 1904, opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls. She began this college with six students and \$1.50 in her pocket. Using her leadership skills, which she had learned from White women such as Harriett Beecher and Jane Addams, Bethune infused her school with her own vision. She was full of enthusiasm and passion for Black women and her belief was in their capabilities of being able to transform society. This anonymous poem, which Bethune was greatly fond of reciting, exemplifies her calling.

God give us girls—the time demands
Strong girls, good girls, true girls with willing hands;
Girls whom the world's gold cannot buy
Girls who possess opinions and a will,
Girls who have honor and will not lie
Girls who can stand before the motley crowd

And down its treacherous flatteries without winking
Tall girls, sun-crowned girls whose voice cry aloud
And give a challenge to the whole world's thinking.
(Bethune papers).

In 1923, with a faculty and staff of 25 and a student body of 300, the school was merged with Cookman Institute and became a co-educational facility. The school was renamed the Bethune-Cookman Institute in 1929, and its first four degrees were awarded in 1943 (Katz & Halliburton, 1973). Bethune is known as a pioneer educator for African Americans and the founder of Bethune-Cookman College. Whereas numerous noteworthy African American women have served as trailblazers, many more are still working to become visible.

Modern African American Women of Excellence and Distinction

Historic and modern African American women have suffered greatly because of the triple barriers of race, class, and gender but have been able to “bounce back” in spite of overwhelming odds. These barriers have given them the courage to succeed in their chosen professions such as education, law, business, medicine, public speaking, and entertainment. Maya Angelou and Oprah Winfrey, two great icons in America today, have achieved success academically, politically, and financially even though their childhood experiences made the probabilities of their success extremely doubtful.

Maya Angelou, writer, poet, actress, singer, performer, social commentator, and director, was born and raised in 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri. After her parents divorced,

Maya went to live with her grandmother. In the late 1930s, Maya and her brother returned to St. Louis to be reunited with their mother. Shortly after Maya's return home, she was raped by her mother's boyfriend at the age of seven. Maya was forced to testify later at her rapist's trial, and a few days later her rapist was murdered. The devastation of the rape and entire experience traumatized Maya to the degree of not speaking for years. Through her love for reading, passion for writing, and desire for entertaining, Maya began to speak again at the age of twelve. Moving to and from various states, she became known for her zealousness and intelligence. Later, during her teens, Maya became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She worked as a nightclub waitress and later a prostitute to earn extra money to support her child. While she was working in a house of prostitution, her son was temporarily kidnapped by a woman who desired to have a child of her own. Seeking for love and security, Maya was married several times, only to end up alone again. In spite of a range of hopeless circumstances and adversities, Angelou was successful. She published her first autobiographical book, I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, in 1970, and later four more volumes of autobiography. Angelou is known worldwide, a renowned poet who was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1971. Angelou's poetry became enormously popular, especially poems such as "Still I Rise" and "Phenomenal Woman." In 1992, Angelou became the first poet since Robert Frost in 1961 to take part in a presidential inauguration ceremony when she wrote and read "On the Pulse of Morning" at Bill Clinton's inauguration (Ebony, 1999). In 1997, Angelou published a collection of essays, directed short films for PBS, and in 1998 made her debut as a director of feature films with the release of "Down in the Delta." Maya accepted a special lifetime appointment as a professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University

in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. As an African American woman, Maya persevered through her turbulent storms of life, transforming them into one radiant light of inspiration, becoming a beacon, shining to women of all ethnic backgrounds today.

Oprah Winfrey, television talk-show host, actress, and producer, like Maya Angelou, lived a life of turmoil and stress. Oprah was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi, illegitimate and virtually abandoned by her mother. Raised by her grandmother, the first six years of her life she endured much loneliness. Due to her love for reading and reciting plays in church, she won speaking competitions as early as the age of seven. Other children were filled with jealousy, which became problematic for Oprah. Oprah stated in an interview: "All the kids hated me through school," (Mair, 1994, p. 7).

At the age of seven, Oprah moved back to Milwaukee with her mother and step-sister. Attending a predominately Black school, the smart Oprah experienced difficulties in school once again. She was threatened by her peers, beat up, and unpopular which caused her to become withdrawn. After her talent of speaking was discovered by one of her teachers, Oprah became buried in books while other students played.

At the same time, while living with her mother in a small apartment in the ghetto, Oprah was raped and sexually abused by her mother's male friends and several male relatives. By the age of fourteen, Oprah had given birth to a baby, who died. At the time when her life was about to become a disaster, she ran away from home. Oprah became a promiscuous teen, stealing from her mother in order to be accepted by her peers. After being gone for a week, Oprah was discovered by Aretha Franklin on the streets of Milwaukee. Aretha Franklin gave Oprah \$100 which was enough money to stay in a motel. Once Oprah ran out of money, she called her family's minister, who returned

Oprah home. Oprah was then sent to a home for troubled teens, but there were no rooms available. This was Oprah's chance to be sent back to live with her father in Nashville, Tennessee.

Oprah moved from Milwaukee where her mother lived to Nashville, to live with her father, where she later attended Tennessee State University in 1971. She began working in the broadcasting field. Today, Oprah Winfrey is no longer teased by her peers but admired as the indisputable queen of television talk show hosts. Oprah is currently the world's highest paid entertainer. She is the first African American woman to own a TV studio—a multimillion-dollar complex in Chicago, Illinois. She is a major cultural force and is one of the most powerful women in the entertainment industry. Winfrey has proven to be self-efficacious in her pursuit for success. In 1998, after debating on leaving the television industry due to the mixed reviews of the movie "Beloved," Oprah stated she remembered the old spiritual her grandmother use to sing, "I believe I'll run on and see what the end is going to be" (Jet, 1997, p. 61). This Negro spiritual expressed Oprah's commitment and dedication to her TV viewers. The inspiring TV host emphasized, "I realized that I had no right to quit, coming from a history of people who had no voice, who had no power, and that I have been given this blessed opportunity to speak to people, to influence them in ways that can make a difference in their lives." (Jet, 1997, p. 61). Winfrey is still in the race, having moved from poverty to wealth, power, and success. Her life story has touched many hearts and spirits. She continues to encourage Americans to read through her popular "Oprah's Book Club." Mair (1994) asserts that "There is an inner strength of spirit and a belief in self that is as astonishing as the outer trappings of her success" (p.1).

Together both Maya Angelou and Oprah Winfrey are many things to many people: leaders, nurturers, mentors, and an integral part of the dynamic forces that will help shape a new millennium. They are central figures who have distinguished themselves in a changing world that benefits from their courage, ambition, inspiration, perseverance, and determination to overcome hardships, and their abilities to meet the challenges that face them daily. Above all, along with hosts of other African American women, they model self-efficacy for African American adolescents today.

Social Cognitive Theory

Many theories have been proposed over the years to explain human behavior, the analysis of which has become increasingly complicated. Human behavior is regarded as stemming from an inner motivator formed by various needs, drives, impulses, and instincts. That is, the primary cause of behavior is said to be drives within an individual. In fact, the inner drive is usually how one's behavior is confirmed. Bandura (1977a, 1977b) hypothesized four primary viewpoints from which the determinants of human behavior are examined. Existentialists believe human behavior to be based on a unidirectional personal determinism. For instance, internal variables are considered determinants of behavior. Bandura (1986) asserts the following: "Behavior patterns commonly attributed to unconscious inner causes can be instated, eliminated, and reinstated by varying appropriate social influences and by altering people's ways of thinking" (p. 3). Behaviorists, in contrast, describe human behavior as based on "unidirectional environmental determinism." That is to say, the environment determines an individual's behavior. Bandura later integrated both unidirectional views into a "bi-

directional interactionism.” Bidirectional interaction includes both the person and the environment in explaining behavior. Bandura (1977b) found the need to incorporate the person, the environment, and the behavior into a “triadic reciprocal determinism” where all three components interact with each other in a reciprocal motion, thus influencing each other. Reciprocal causations, which include the individual, the behavior, and the environment, affect behavior.

Social cognitive theory draws on the notion that interaction is based on a triadic reciprocity (Bandura, 1977b). The term “reciprocal” refers to the mutual action between causal factors. Human motivation, affects or influences, and behavior all contribute to the thought process and function as the cognitive component of social cognition. According to social cognitive theorists, people are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Rather, human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other. (Bandura, 1986, p. 18)

Since personal agency is socially rooted, it operates within the sociocultural influences. Therefore, the individual produces the product, creates the construction, decides the discovery, and determines the destination necessary in order to be successful in his or her own environment and social system. The individual, the environment, and the behavior are the key components to the social cognitive theory, which is the basis of Bandura’s (1986) conception of reciprocal determinism (see Figure 1).

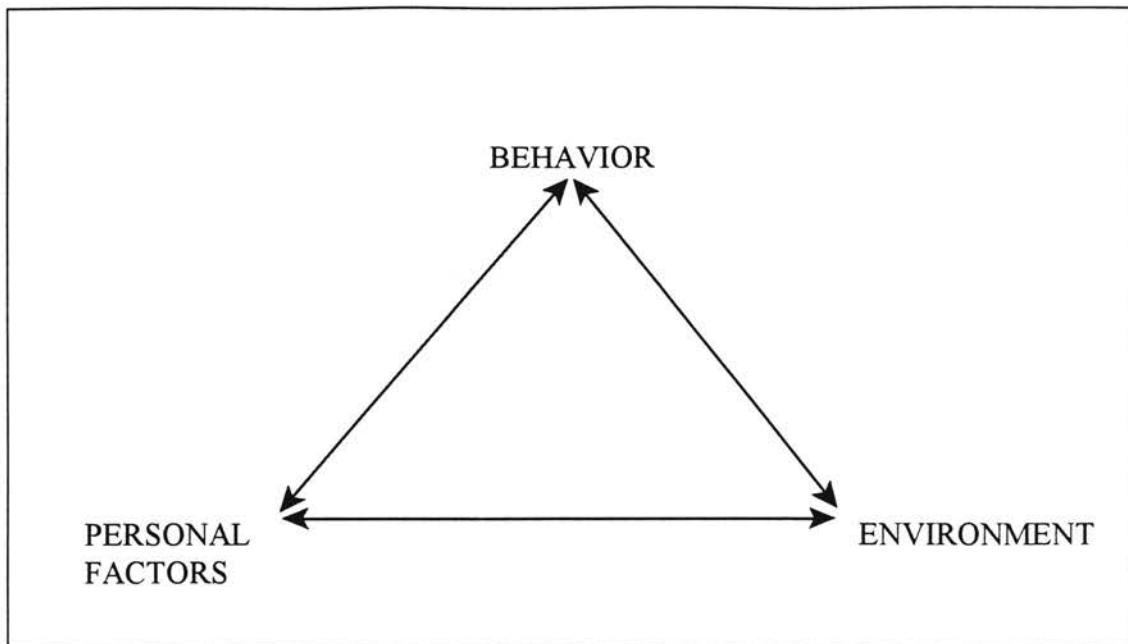


Figure 1. Reciprocal Determinism – Model of the relations between the three classes of determinants. Bandura's (1986) conceptions of triadic reciprocity.

An individual is the key that unlocks the door of his or her environment to produce an effective outcome. “How individuals interpret the results of their performance attainments informs and alters their environments and their self-beliefs, which in turn inform and alter their subsequent performances” (Pajares, 1996, p. 544). However, the “self system” plays a vital role in the triadic model in social cognitive theory. Bandura, (1978) states that the self-system refers to “cognitive structures that provide reference mechanisms and to a set of subfunctions for the perception, evaluation, and regulation of behavior” (p. 248). The self-system enables persons to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Therefore, the self-system serves as a self-regulatory function by giving individuals the capability to cognitively evaluate the processes and

results of the interaction between self and the environment and to make adjustments where necessary. Once alterations are made, the environment influences the action. Bandura's (1986) theory is mainly concerned with how one cognitively manages during one's social experiences and how these experiences will come to influence one's behavior. The nature of the individual is considered in terms of a number of basic capabilities he or she chooses to exercise.

Forms of Capabilities

There are five basic forms of capabilities which cause an individual to expand and develop the cognitive and affective structures of his or her life. These capabilities include the abilities to symbolize, learn from others, plan alternative strategies, regulate one's own behavior, and engage in self-reflection (Pajares, 1996). Bandura (1986) further emphasized the functions of each capability. The symbolizing capacity can best be described as the capacity to use symbols as a method to adjust or alter the environment. Symbolizing capacity practically influences almost every aspect of people's lives by providing them with the ability to change. Through symbols, individuals are able to transmit and alter experiences into internal prototypes that can serve as guides for future action. At the same time, through the use of symbols, individuals are able to give significant meaning, structure, and persistence to their experience. Bandura (1986) asserts that "by drawing on their knowledge and symbolizing powers, people can generate innovative courses of action" (p. 18). Many people are able to test or measure possible solutions symbolically and to weigh, remove, or retain their options based on what they perceive the outcome to be. Some people are not moved by their immediate environment;

therefore, they do not react, nor are they guided by decisions already established from their past. Most of their behavior is purposive and guided by forethought. Forethought capability is aided autonomously by the individual and then translated into action. Many people are self-motivated and are able to guide their behavior and actions by exercising forethought. But in order for forethought to be a supportive behavior when adversity arises, negative influences must be reduced immediately. Enhancing one's developmental and survival skills is necessary in order not to have to learn through trial and error. "Learning through action has thus been given major, if not exclusive, priority" (Bandura, 1986, p.19). Vicarious capability, where the person realizes that he or she has the capacity to learn through observation can be very important. Some of the most difficult and complicated skills can be mastered (vicariously) through observational learning.

Another distinctive component of social cognitive theory is the vital role it dedicates to self-regulatory functions. Much of the behavior people demonstrate is stimulated and regulated by internal standards. Self-regulatory capability can be described as when an individual is inspired to generate the behavioral outcome he or she desires. Self-directedness can be exercised by exerting influence over the external environment. By arranging appropriate environmental conditions, people can create situations by their own effort and contribute to their own motivation, enthusiasm, and actions. Being influenced by external sources and having external support does not negate nor refute the fact that self-regulation or self-influence is necessary. In fact, activating self-regulatory capability can determine one's success. Bandura (1986) argues that "if there is any characteristic that is distinctively human, it is the capability for reflective self-consciousness. It enables people to think about their experiences, analyze their experiences, and concentrate on their

thought processes.” (p. 21) Self-reflection is a process by which individuals are able to derive knowledge about themselves and the environment and the world in which they live. People not only evaluate and understand their own thinking, but through self-reflection, they are able to predict the next course of action they need to take.

Maximizing and increasing students’ beliefs about their capabilities to attain academic success is a major consideration for successful experiences in schools. Bandura (1986) asserts that “theorists who view humans as possessing capabilities for self-direction employ research paradigms that shed light on how people can affect their own motivation and actions” (p. 1). When students begin to demonstrate the five capabilities proposed by Bandura (1986), they are initiating self-efficaciousness in their pursuit to become academically successful.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theory is the theoretical lens through which this study examines the respondent’s beliefs about his or her capability to produce a desired outcome which will influence academic success. Efficacy theory says that beliefs regulate human functioning through four major processes. “These different processes usually operate in concert, rather than in isolation in the ongoing regulation of human functioning” (Bandura, 1985, p. 5). They include the cognitive process, the motivational process, the affective process, and the selection process.

The Cognitive Process

The effect of efficacy beliefs on the cognitive process varies. Usually any course of action is organized first through the thought process. An individual who anticipates success and exhibits a sense of high efficacy, constructs guides to help him or her perform successfully. Those who doubt their efficacy and envision failure will have difficulty succeeding. Individuals must be able to control situations that affect their lives. The cognitive process requires certain skills because the cognitive processing of information produces complexities, ambiguities, and uncertainties (Bandura, 1985). Therefore, individuals must be able to construct options, weigh decisions, test results, revise judgments, and recall what worked effectively in order to determine their success.

Motivational Process

Efficacy beliefs are also vital in the self-regulation of motivation. For most human beings, motivation is cognitively generated. People inspire or convince themselves to perform a certain task and beliefs are formed as to what they can do. Theories have centered around three different forms of cognitive motivators and efficacy beliefs operate in each of these types. The cognitive motivators or corresponding theories are attribution theory, expectancy-value theory, and goal theory (Bandura, 1985).

Causal attribution is influenced by efficacy beliefs (Alden, 1986; Grove, 1993; McAuley, 1991). Those individuals who consider themselves highly efficacious attribute their failures to lack of effort; whereas, those who view themselves as inefficacious, have a tendency to attribute their failures to low ability. It is through the person's efficacy beliefs

that causal attributions affect motivation and influence reaction (Chwlsiz, Altmaier, & Russell, 1992; Relich, Debus, & Walker, 1986; Schunk & Gunn, 1986).

In expectancy-value theory, motivation is regulated by the expectation of a specific outcome and the value placed on those outcomes. However, many individuals' performance is based on their beliefs about what they can do, as well as on their beliefs about the outcome of their performance. Therefore, the motivating influence of outcome expectancies is governed to a degree by their efficacy beliefs. After people consider their options, many times they decide not to pursue the opportunities that are available to them because of fear of knowing the results. Additionally, many people simply judge or misjudge their lack of the capabilities for accomplishment (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; deVries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 1988; Dzewaltowski, Noble, & Shaw, 1990; Schwarzer, 1992).

“Motivation based on goal setting involves a process of cognitive comparison of perceived performance to an adopted personal standard” (Bandura, 1985, p. 7). When an individuals' success matches a standard, it gives direction to the individual's behavior and that creates incentives or reasons to be persistent in the efforts and reach a goal. The individual seeks self-satisfaction from reaching his or her goals and is encouraged to increase his or her effort and hard work. Three types of self-influences are governed by motivation in regards to goals or personal standards (Bandura, 1991a; Bandura & Cervone, 1986). “They include self-satisfying and self-dissatisfying reactions to one's performance, perceived self-efficacy for goal attainment, and readjustment of personal goals based on one's progress” (Bandura, 1985, p.7)

Bandura (1995) clearly shows how efficacy influences all of these cognitive motivators:

Efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation in several ways: They determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties, and their resilience to failures. When faced with obstacles and failures, people who distrust their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up quickly. Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities exert greater effort when they fail to master the challenge. Strong perseverance contributes to performances and accomplishments. (p. 8)

Affective Process

When threatening or stressful situations occur, people's beliefs in their coping capabilities can affect how much energy they will exert. Perceived self-efficacy plays a central role during this process. Efficacy beliefs involve caution toward potential threats. If individuals do not feel that they can manage a specific situation, they will dwell on their deficiencies. Thus, self-inefficacious thinking will distress them and impair their level of operating (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Meichenbaum, 1977; Sarason, 1975). On the other hand, people who believe that they can manage and control potential threats and stressful situations are neither watchful nor cautious for threats; nor do they even entertain disturbing thoughts about them.

Selection Process

During the selection process, individuals can determine their own destiny by selecting the environment that will cultivate, stimulate, and motivate them to develop to their potential. Many people avoid situations with which they feel they do not have the

capability to cope successfully. On the other hand, when individuals judge their capabilities and are excellent managers, challenges become opportunities for success. The selection process is simply a series of choices driven by the individual. People have different competencies, interests, and social support groups which can determine what path or life course they may take. However, it is important to note that influences operating in the appropriate environment can promote outstanding accomplishments and continued success (Bandura, 1995).

Self-efficacy theory encompasses all the various forms of processes and capabilities discussed above. It is defined in terms of an individual's perceived capabilities to attain various types of performances or to accomplish results successfully. Students' beliefs in their capabilities to master academic activities affect their aspirations, level of interest in intellectual pursuits, and academic accomplishments, and the extent to which they prepare themselves for different occupational careers (Hackett, 1985, 1995; Holden, Moncher, Schinke, & Barker, 1990; Schunk, 1989; Zimmerman, 1995). Efficacy beliefs play a vital role in the development of self-directed life-long learners (Bandura, 1985). Thus, self-efficacy theory "treats the efficacy belief system not as an omnibus trait but as a differentiated set of beliefs linked to distinct realms of functioning" (Bandura, 1997, p. 36). Efficacy beliefs are concerned with self-regulation, motivational affects, and psychological states, as well as one's ability to exercise and manage control over one's actions.

"Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1977b, p. 2). Efficacy is an objective measure of a performance, and perceived self-

efficacy is a judgment an individual makes about the ability to do the behavior. Bandura and others frequently used “self-efficacy” to mean “perceived self-efficacy,” since what an individual perceived is implied in most contexts (Lawrence & McLeroy, 1986). Bandura (1977b) emphasized that perceived self-efficacy is a situation-specific determinant of behavior, not a global personality trait. He also stated that the study of self-efficacy must be based on an analysis of the situation that determines efficacy. Efficacy beliefs refer to how people think, feel, and act under atypical circumstances. Bandura (1978) suggested that an individual must have the skills and motivation to perform the behavior. For example, a person must know how to do the behavior (skills) and want to do the behavior (motivation). Students activate the self-efficacy process when they are motivated to succeed academically.

Academic self-efficacy refers to one’s perceived ability to perform given academic tasks at desired levels (Schunk, 1991). Students’ self-efficacy for their schoolwork (academic efficacy) has been associated with many important academic outcomes including motivation, cognitive engagement, and performance (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Schunk, 1994). Students who feel efficacious about their ability to master their schoolwork are more likely to select challenging activities, expend effort, persist when tasks become difficult, be resilient to failure or setbacks, have high cognitive engagement, use effective task strategies, and regulate their own learning (Bandura, 1990, 1993; Schunk, 1991, 1994; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992). According to Bandura (1977a), the behavior upon which people base their beliefs can be developed by four forms of influences: (1) Enacted Mastery Influence, (2) Vicarious

Influence, (3) Physiological and Emotional Influences, and (4) Verbal and Social Persuasion Influence.

Types of Influences

The Enacted Mastery Influence Experience is the most influential source of perceived self-efficacy because successful experiences provide tangible evidence that one can accomplish the behavior. Additionally, such experience provides the most authentic evidence of whether one can manage whatever it takes to succeed in spite of circumstances (Bandura, 1982; Biran & Wilson, 1981; Feltz, Landers, & Raeder, 1979; Gist, 1989). Obtaining success easily undermines robust efficacy beliefs because one may expect quick results and become discouraged when faced with failure. “A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort” (Bandura, 1995, p. 3). Failure is sometimes beneficial because it teaches that success requires sustained effort. Establishing a sense of efficacy through mastery experiences involves acquiring the cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory components for creating and executing the appropriate course of action. Obstacles can provide a chance for people to discover how to turn failure into success by honing their capabilities to exercise better control over events. In addition, many people come to realize with mastery experiences that they are able to rebound from setbacks and persevere.

Elder and Liker (1982) offer an excellent example of enactive mastery influence in their analysis of the enduring impact of hard times during the Great Depression on women’s lives. Two groups of women were faced with economic difficulties. One group was able to endure economic destitution without despairing because earlier hardships

caused the women to be more self-confident. On the other hand, a second group of women, who had not suffered earlier, were not adequately prepared to deal with adversity and did not experience the same outcome. Instead, the Great Depression left them with a sense of hopelessness and no will or effort to persevere. “Knowing how various factors affect the cognitive processing of performance clarifies the conditions under which people get the most out of their mastery experiences” (Bandura, 1997, p. 81).

The Vicarious Influence Experience is partly an appraisal mediated through observing others’ attainments. This type of experience is provided socially and offers another way of creating and strengthening efficacy beliefs. It involves watching models perform the task with little adversity. Simply seeing people similar to oneself succeed provides a vicarious experience. The persevering effort of others raises observers’ beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparative activities (Bandura 1986; Schunk, 1987). Therefore, people appraise their capabilities in relation to the attainments of others. By the same token, observing others fail despite high effort lowers observers’ judgment of their own efficacy (Brown & Inouye, 1978).

Modeling, for example, can be influential when models or modeled activities are personally relevant to the observer (Bandura, 1986). If the modeled activity is personally relevant (e.g., because of culture, gender, age, or class), the probability of the observer’s learning vicariously is enhanced (Hackett & Byars, 1996). The most vital and notable vicarious learning occurs early in life, usually from observation of mothers, caregivers, family members, and community members. Increased opportunities for vicarious learning may exist for African American girls because many girls grow up in extended families. African American mothers and “other mothers” (female extended family members such as

aunts, grandmothers, or neighbors) assist in the interpretation of subtle messages given by the outside world. This is implicit in the old African adage, “It takes a village to raise a child” (Hackett & Byars, 1996, p. 7). Despite the challenges faced today by African American mothers, the term “motherhood” has provided a base for self-actualization. In the African American community, motherhood is a source of power and respect. Mothers are generally seen as key educators, responsible for continuing the cultural traditions of the past and supporting the community’s future (Collins, 1987). African American mothers exert a more permeating influence on their daughters than do mothers of other ethnic groups due to the fact that they communicate racial dangers and other barriers that confront African American women (Cauce et al., 1996).

The African American community has always recognized and respected the unique relationship between its mothers and daughters. A common saying among African Americans is that “Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons.” This is a simple yet powerful statement about the character of these relationships, a character based on the experiences that come with African American womanhood. This character unfolds as the African American mother teaches her daughter how to survive, cope, and succeed in a hostile environment, while fostering family and community loyalty. (Cauce et al., 1996, p. 100)

Greene (1990a) declares that African American girls and women often function in a context in which they encounter different standards applied to the same behavior. She further proposes that it is the African American woman who orients her daughter to know her place in the dominant world. She then models how to mediate between two cultures that are often diametrically opposed (Greene, 1990b). Research that explicitly examines African American mother-daughter relationships is virtually absent in the literature. Those studies that have focused on African American parenting at all typically consist of cross-cultural comparisons (Wyche, 1993; Graham, 1992; McLoyd & Randolph, 1985).

However, it is not enough to compare African American mother-daughter-relationships with their White counterparts. This type of research seldom gives due respect and consideration to the distinct experience of African American women (Wyche, 1993). Instead, these de-contextualized examinations of African American mothering support the dominant group's exploitation of African American women by blaming them for their characteristics and reactions to their own subordination. Such studies also foster internalized oppression, which may be passed on from African American mothers to their daughters (Collins, 1987). The truth is that countless Black mothers have empowered their daughters by passing on everyday knowledge essential to survival as an African American woman (Cauce et al., 1996; Christine, 1987; Collins, 1987).

Suzanne Christine (1987) investigated fifty-one women using qualitative research methods. Her study inquired how and what some individuals learned from women by focusing on the kinds of social interactions that exist between African American working mothers and their daughters. Through intensive interviews and observations representing four generations, she gathered data as to how mothers pass their paradigm of mothering and working on to their daughters. This study also demonstrated how African American women transmit their knowledge and skills through modeling and mentoring. The questions that were addressed in this study were as follows: What did African American women perceive as important to their own successful performance, how did they come to learn their roles in society, how did they balance this dual role of work and home, and what critical wisdom did they feel was necessarily reported. The interviews revealed how the performance of multiple roles by African American mothers is facilitated by the existence of a strong female support network. In addition, the study explains African

American women's beliefs about how life informs what they do as mothers, which is conveyed to their daughters. Overall, this research reveals how the African American mothers' historical experiences help shape her daughter's female identity and serve as vicarious influence. Modeling does more than provide a social standard against which to judge one's capabilities. If people seek proficient models who have acquired competencies they wish to emulate, then the observed behavior becomes the method for experienced models to transmit knowledge and teach effectively.

The Physiological and Emotional Influence Experience refers to how the emotional state of individuals affects their behavior. Physiological and Emotional Influence is effective due to the fact that health functioning and affective states can produce widely generalized effects on one's beliefs in different realms of human functioning. Many people experience physical stressors that affect their perceived efficacy. Bandura's (1995) theory views stress reactions in terms of perceive inefficacy to exercise control over aversive threats and taxing environmental demands. Controllability is the key to stress relief (Bandura, 1995). It is not necessarily the stressful life conditions but the inability to manage them which can be detrimental physically and emotionally (Bandura, 1992b; Maier, Laudenslager, & Ryan, 1985; Shavit & Martin, 1987). While involved in activities, an individual's lack of energy, strength, and stamina indicates physical inefficacy.

Mood or emotional arousal is also said to affect one's personal judgment of efficacy. Such information, however, affects perceived self-efficacy through cognitive processing. Mood swings or changes occur during certain periods of life, especially during the transition from elementary to junior/middle high school. For example, African Americans report an increase in suspicion and distrust on the part of Whites during the

transition from elementary school to junior high/middle school (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). Aside from the obvious direct effects on motivation, emotional arousal associated with distrust may damage African American youth's efficacy beliefs.

In one study, junior high school African American girls had lower impulse control and moral scales than their White peers, suggesting difficulties in delaying gratification and regulating their behavior (Gibbs, 1985). It is not the sheer intensity of the emotional and physical reaction that is important, however; it is how one perceives and interprets the situation. In addition, people who have a high sense of efficacy are likely to view their state of affective or emotional arousal as energizing, whereas those who are overwhelmed by self-doubt regard their arousal as a debilitator. It is up to the individuals to control the situation in which they find themselves (Bandura, 1995).

The Social and Verbal Persuasion Influence Experience convinces the individual that he or she is capable of accomplishing the task. This type of experience is a way of strengthening people's beliefs through social persuasion. People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given skills are likely to demonstrate greater effort and endurance than if they entertain self-doubts and dwell on insufficiencies when problems arise. It is easier for someone to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when difficulties arise, when significant others express faith in him or her and others convey the idea that he or she has the ability to master the skill. However, the positive message must be within realistic bounds if change or influence is to occur. When an individual already believes that he or she can produce an effect through his or her action, social persuasion efficacy can have one of the greatest impacts for the individual (Chambliss & Murray, 1979a, 1979b). "To raise unrealistic beliefs of personal capabilities

however, only invites failures that will discredit the persuaders and further undermine the recipients' beliefs in their capabilities" (Bandura, 1985, p. 101). What African American parents tell their children about being African Americans and being academically successful clearly affects the child (Thornton, Chatters, & Taylor, 1990). Ogbu (1990) has indicated that out of frustration, parents transfer messages to African American adolescents about institutional and social systems that usually have an enormous impact on ethnic identity and development and that in turn may affect these adolescents' academic self-efficacy.

Holliday (1985), for example, noted that African American students, particularly females, are often unable to predict whether certain self-regulated behavior will be rewarded or punished. Accurate and consistent performance feedback is crucial for developing strong and realistic efficacy beliefs; inconsistent, ambiguous, or inaccurate information about the quality of one's performance results in weakened or unrealistic efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). The inability of African American girls to predict how the environment will respond to their behavior or performance can be attributed partly to barriers, either real or perceived (e.g., racism, prejudice, sexism), that operate on a societal as well as an individual level (Hackett & Byars, 1996). When one faces barriers, social persuasion is essential to master task-related skills, efficacy is necessary for defeating obstacles, and robust efficacy is imperative for overcoming barriers or adversity (Hackett & Byars, 1996).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

African American females have been the most discriminated group of people in our country (Collins, 1991; Cauce et al; Hine & Thompson, 1998). For African American females, their dilemma has been a “struggle for survival.” Black females have been in the forefront in their fight for dignity, while suffering the triple barriers of race, class, and gender. Dumas (1980) maintains the following:

Black females have yet to enjoy the benefits of their labor. Obstructed by the dynamics of racism and sexism in the groups in which they live and work, the full leadership potential of Black females throughout their history in this country has remained a relatively untapped—or at best, under-utilized—resource. (p. 203)

Despite various obstacles, adversities, impediments, or hindrances, many African American girls discover a way to succeed academically. Henderson (1979) asserts that the greatest academic achievers among African Americans are females.

This research study attempted to discover the underlying beliefs about school and learning that influenced academic achievement and academic performance of African American adolescent girls at the middle school level. This study also explored and describes social cognition and the influence of self-efficacy among this particular target group of middle school adolescents.

Chapter III presents the research methodology that guides this study and a rationale for the design. This study incorporated quantitative methods in conjunction with qualitative methods. This combination of methods, known as the multi-method approach, was used in this study. Multi-method is desirable as each method reveals areas other methods do not and because validity is strengthened when information is supported in different ways (Denzin, 1989; Rosenblatt & Fisher, 1993).

A discussion of the selection of respondents and site, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis are also presented. Trustworthiness criteria are addressed through a discussion about reliability (dependability), internal validity (credibility), and external validity (transferability) of the methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The data for this research study were gathered in an urban middle school setting with a large population of African American students, particularly girls. In this study, the researcher uses a pseudonym, Hilltop Middle School, to refer to this middle school. The following research question guided this study: How does self-efficacy influence the academic success of selected African American middle school girls?

Research Design

The research design in this study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Miller (1986) believes that “exploratory studies maintain considerable flexibility and rely heavily on subjective insights, descriptive aim for completeness and accuracy, and must be more structured to guard against errors and biases” (p. 31).

Exploratory studies are designed to research areas in which little information is available. As noted throughout the literature review, most of the studies examined African

American girls' academic achievement and academic performance at the high school or college level rather than at the middle school level. Hence, this exploratory case study served as an aid and addresses this gap in the literature.

Descriptive research methods are useful for investigating a variety of educational problems (Gay, 1996). Examples of descriptive studies include "identifying the achievements of various groups; describing the behaviors of teachers, administrators, or counselors; describing the attitudes of parents; and describing the physical capabilities of schools. The description of phenomena is the starting point for all research endeavors" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 13). Descriptive research designs involve collecting data in order to test hypotheses and answer questions regarding the current status of the individuals involved in the study (Gay, 1996).

"The most common descriptive methodology is the survey" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p.13). In this study, the researcher administered The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES), conducted informal observations, and conducted interviews as part of the descriptive design. The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES) was administered to all eighth grade African American girls who had a 3.0 to 4.0 grade point average (GPA) at Hilltop Middle School. Semi-structured interviews with a selected group of ten African American adolescent girls explored the influence of self-efficacy and how these girls see and interpret their own "academic world of success." Thus, both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, which are complementary, were employed to add depth and richness to the study. The Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board granted permission to conduct the research project (see Appendix A).

Selection of Site

The influence of academic self-efficacy was investigated in a middle school in the Midwestern section of the United States. Hilltop Middle School was chosen as the site to conduct the research study because it has been recognized and assigned as a specialty school with an academic academy. The concentration areas are Performing Arts, Fine Arts, and Foreign Language. Hilltop is an urban middle school with approximately 659 students, the largest group being African Americans. Of the 659 students, 129 are Caucasians, 488 are African Americans, 33 are Hispanics, 5 are Asians, and 13 are Native Americans.

The site was determined by the following:

1. The assistance and cooperation of the administrator.
2. The site's providing a large sample of participants for the needed target group (African American females).
3. The probability of the site generating data for answering research questions.
4. The researcher's accessibility to the site.
5. The approval of the school district's Coordinator of Research regarding site visitation, interviewing and administering the CSES survey.
6. Correspondence (see Appendix B).

Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research involves the collection of numerical data in order to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena of interest; data analysis is mainly statistical. From behavioral scientists' perspectives, quantitative methods are useful in unraveling the mysteries of data collected in research (Gay, 1996). Statistics play a number of major interrelated roles in research. In particular, statistics allow the researcher to summarize data and to distinguish between chance and systematic effects. They set forth guides for summarizing and describing data. They also provide methods for drawing inferences from groups of subjects to large groups of people. Finally, statistics set forth guidelines for selecting subjects for a study, assigning them to group, and collecting the data (Shavelson, 1996). The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey addresses various issues pertaining to self-efficacy in settings involving academic learning and performance. The nature of the inquiry required the utilization of quantitative research methods for describing the survey and explaining the three domains and levels of self-efficacy that may be operating. Empirical evidence from several areas helped reveal the operation of self-efficacy during school: academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and self-regulatory efficacy. Through the use of the CSES, the researcher was able to identify all eighth grade girls' level of academic self-efficacy, in particular, the participants' level of academic self-efficacy.

Sampling

“Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent a larger group from which they were selected” (Gay,

1996, p.111). One of the most important steps in conducting research is the selection of a sample. The sample is considered a subset of the population whose members share the same or similar characteristics of the common population. The purpose for sampling is to “gain information about the population” (Gay, 1996, p. 111).

In order to gain information about the population, the researcher asked permission from the building administrator to meet with all eighth grade girls to distribute, administer, and collect self-reported results from a demographic data/profile sheet. The researcher developed a 10-item demographic profile sheet which included ten personal data items and two “yes/no” items (see Appendix C). It elicited the following demographic information: (1) grade, (2) ethnic background, (3) approximate GPA for the previous semester, (4) extracurricular activities, (5) leadership role, (6) love for school, (7) love for studying, (8) family data, (9) parental education, and (10) sibling information.

After collecting the demographic profile, the researcher administered an adversity questionnaire she developed to explain and describe the respondents’ “world of adversities or stressful situational experiences” (see Appendix D).

Following the adversity questionnaire, The Children’s Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES) was administered to all African American eighth grade adolescent girls with high grade point averages (GPA) ranging from 3.0 to 4.0. who have experienced adversity. The students’ GPA was verified by the school counselor/s. This group was chosen as the sample group. Once the CSES survey was completed and scored, ten African American girls were randomly chosen to participate further in the study through in-depth interviews (see Appendix E).

Children's Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES)

The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey (CSES) developed by Dr. Albert Bandura (1989) was the quantitative instrument used to measure the influence of African American girls' academic success. Respondents were instructed to choose the option that best reflects their opinions about each statement (See Appendix F). The purpose for administering the (CSES) was to assess students' academic efficacy level and the influence of self-efficacy during their daily activities at school, home, or other environmental settings. Dr. Albert Bandura also provided a key under each subheading which demonstrated the area of self-efficacy in which a student may be operating (See Appendix G). When individuals exhibit high self-efficacy beliefs, they also exert greater effort to succeed, regardless of the circumstances that come their way. The CSES is a 57 item self-efficacy scale using a 7 point Likert scale. The 7-point scales are described as 1 = not well at all, 3 = not too well, 5 = pretty well, and 7 = very well. The nine dimensions of the CSES for the 37 respondents and their corresponding means \bar{x} 's are as follows: self-efficacy in enlisting social resources ($\bar{x} = 5.6$), self-efficacy for academic achievement ($\bar{x} = 6.0$), self-efficacy for self-regulated learning ($\bar{x} = 5.9$), self-efficacy for leisure time skills and extracurricular activities ($\bar{x} = 5.8$), self-regulatory efficacy ($\bar{x} = 6.5$), self-efficacy to meet others' expectations ($\bar{x} = 6.1$), social self-efficacy ($\bar{x} = 6.4$), self-assertive efficacy ($\bar{x} = 5.9$), and self-efficacy for enlisting parental and community support ($\bar{x} = 5.4$). Each subscale consists of four to eleven items (See Appendix H).

The scoring of The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey was based on a scoring measurement found in The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) which was originally published in 1961 (Beck et al., 1961). The original test was a 21-item multiple choice test in which the selections for each item varied from four to seven choices, standardizing each item to three possible points. "Each choice was given a weight of zero, one, two, or three points. The statements were ranked, ordered, and weighed to reflect the range of depression" (Beck et al., 1961, p. 83). Similar to the BDI, the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS) responses are based on frequency of occurrences and are weighed from one to four (Reynolds, 1989, 1992). Each choice was given a weight of one, two, three or four parts. This researcher used a cutoff score approach as well to identify those who participated further in the study similar to the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the responses to the CSES were ranked, ordered, and weighed to reflect the level of self-efficacy in each domain. Numerical values of one, two, three, or four were assigned each statement to indicate the degree or level of self-efficacy. Specifically, of the four categories ranked, ordered, and weighed to reflect the range of self-efficacy results, those whose response was between one and two were ranked in category one which represented low self-efficacy. Those whose response was three or four were ranked in category two which suggested moderately low self-efficacy. If the response was three or four the ranked category was three, which signified moderately high self-efficacy. Those whose response was seven were ranked in category four which indicated high self-efficacy. While the researcher admits that no arbitrary score can be used for all purposes as a cutoff score and that the specific cutoff depends upon the judgment of one's capabilities, the categories

selected for this study are presented in Table I. See Table II for mean results of The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey as shown below.

TABLE I
CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY
RESPONSE CATEGORIES

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
1 to 2	3 to 4	5 to 6	7
Low Self-Efficacy	Moderately Low Self-Efficacy	Moderately High Self-Efficacy	High Self-Efficacy

TABLE II
MEAN RESULTS OF CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY
SURVEY BY DOMAIN

Variables	Academic	Social	Self-Regulatory
Mean	5.99595	6.09771	6.58919
Standard Deviation	0.56487	0.52694	0.69434

Performance self-efficacy influences various aspects of behavior that are vital and enhance the learning process. Among these are an individual's choice of activities,

effective effort, persistence, and academic achievement (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1989a; Schunk, 1989a, 1989b; Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons, 1992). According to Bandura (1977, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989b), individuals develop specific beliefs about their capabilities to cope with situation-specific constructs. If Bandura's self-efficacy theory is applied to children's and early adolescents' beliefs about learning, it would be consistent and valid that children and early adolescents with high self-efficacy would be likely to demonstrate greater success in school. Pajares (1996) purports that the primary concentration of self-efficacy studies, however, has been in two areas. One area has explored the connection between efficacy beliefs among college majors and career choices, particularly in the areas of science and mathematics, and the second area of efficacy beliefs has been related to academic achievement and motivation, mainly among high school students. "Although literature speaking directly to children's academic self-efficacy is rather sparse, what does exist supports the link between self-efficacy and academic performance" (Jinks & Morgan, 1999, p. 224). Academic domain-specific assessments of self-efficacy are especially common.

Reliability. "Reliability refers to the consistency of the scores obtained for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another and from one set of items to another" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p.160). Reliability can be expressed numerically and be consistent according to the purpose of the test. Once the researcher measures a specific attribute, the accuracy of what is measured should become the researcher's main concern. Shavelson (1996) makes the following statement:

The notion is that assuming the subject is in a steady state, a measure on that subject should give exactly the same reading upon repeated measures

within the same instrument or with equivalent instruments that are used interchangeably to measure the same thing. (p. 473-474)

The reliability of self-efficacy measures has been established in various ways. In several studies, significantly high (range=.62-.94) internal consistency coefficients have been computed (Pajares & Kranzler, 1995; Pajares & Miller, 1994, 1995; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995; Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989). In this study, the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha for academic, social, and self-regulatory self-efficacy are revealed in Table III.

TABLE III
CRONBACH COEFFICIENT ALPHA
FOR SELF-EFFICACY

Variables	Academic	Social	Self-Regulatory
Raw	0.870099	0.664309	0.775352
Standardized	0.866651	0.673614	0.811284

Validity. The types of validity are content, criterion, and construct. As to content validity, self-efficacy tests are usually developed along with an instructional program that students receive. Criterion validity can be established by relating self-efficacy to students' achievement behaviors. Pretest self-efficacy typically shows poor prediction since it usually is low and skills are absent or poorly developed. More validity, and therefore better prediction, is found in measures of self-efficacy for learning, which positively relates

to subsequent success during instruction, and with post-test self-efficacy, which correlates positively with posttest skill (Schunk, 1989, 1995). Construct validity has been assessed in a variety of ways. Self-efficacy would be expected to be related to factors that influenced it. Thus, attributions (perceived causes of outcomes) are hypothesized to be vital indicators of self-efficacy (Schunk, 1989). Higher self-efficacy should be associated with greater emphasis on ability and effort as causes of success and with lower judgments of task difficulty. This pattern of significant correlations has been acquired (Schunk, 1981; Schunk & Cox, 1986). Consistent with prediction, it was discovered that as skills developed, the correlation between self-efficacy and ability attributions increase (Schunk & Gunn, 1986).

Qualitative Research Method

The distinctive benefit of qualitative methodology is that it allows a rich, multifaceted, in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, grounded in the world view, expressions, and context-specific experiences of those studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research allows the researcher to discover through a more definitive approach of inquiry, answers that will assess the social environmental setting and the individual in that particular setting as one context.

In qualitative research, not only are the possibilities for generating new insights and constructs, and for understanding of conditions enhanced, but also voices of non-mainstreamed populations can and will be heard through this method (Denzin, 1989; Fine, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative methods can shed light on rarely examined phenomena in a cultural minority

population, such as the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance of African American adolescent girls.

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study subjects in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2)

This researcher studied the respondents in their natural setting. Using the CSES, informal observations, and in-depth interviews, the researcher examined and interpreted the influence of self-efficacy through the lens of the respondents.

Interviewing provides researchers access to individual's ideas, insights, and views conveyed in their own words (Patton, 1980). Interviews can reveal how a respondent brings meaning to his or her world without the researcher imposing his or her own meanings (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Qualitative interviewers develop listening skills which enable them to determine what ideas, themes, or issues should be pursued later in the questioning process. An interview, according to Dexter (1970), is a conversation with a purpose. Ten interviews were held with respondents interested in participating in the study, and their parents and/or guardian (see Appendix I) signed a consent form giving permission to participate. In addition, the respondents signed an assent form stating their desire to be involved in this research study (see Appendix I). The interviewer focused on the respondents' thoughts, feelings, and intentions. The four parameters suggested by Creswell (1994) were used in this research study: the setting, actors, events, and process. The actors were the African American girls or respondents, the events involved the respondents' everyday activities, and the process was the interpretations shared by the respondents about "their academic world of success." Rubin & Rubin (1995) assert that

“qualitative interviewing requires listening carefully enough to hear the meanings, interpretations, and understandings that give shape to the worlds of the interviewees” (p. 7).

Sample Selection

The primary decision in collecting data through interviews is determining whom to interview (Merriam, 1988). The persons selected for this study provided a purposeful sample of African American adolescent eighth-grade girls at the middle school level. The intent of a purposeful sample is to interview sources that exemplify characteristics of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It is important to “seek out groups, settings, and individuals where (and whom) the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 202). Random sampling, the process of selecting a sample in such a way that all individuals will have an equal and independent chance of being selected from the sample (Gay, 1996), was used in this study. The members selected for the study were selected on a completely chance basis. This type of sampling is said to be the single best way to acquire a representative sample (Gay, 1996).

The researcher spent three days a week, six hours a day, for approximately six weeks observing and later interviewing the respondents selected for this research study. The researcher then transcribed the recordings verbatim. The meanings and interpretation of the interviews continued as the interviewing process unfolded and as the data began to become saturated. Ethically sound practices, such as maintaining the confidentiality of respondents and destroying all audiotapes after transcription, were followed.

Data Collection

The primary and sometimes only data collection instrument utilized in what is considered naturalistic inquiry is the researcher. The sources the researcher employs as instruments may be both human and non-human (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The human sources were tapped by interviews, with the interviewer noting non-verbal cues during those interviews.

Research Questions. Interview questions further examined the lives of the respondents as the questions applied to the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance in school. Qualitative interview questions assisted the researcher in investigating, understanding, and analyzing the perceptions of the respondents.

Semi-Structured Questions. Interview questions are patterned around three types: main or semi-structured, probing questions, and follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Many questions in qualitative research interviews are open-ended questions and less structured (Merriam, 1988). In this study, the interviewer also discerned verbal and nonverbal messages provided by the respondents. McCracken (1988) emphasizes that as a researcher, one must “listen not only with the tidiest and most precise of one’s cognitive abilities, but also with the whole of one’s experience and imagination” (p. 19). Thus, the semi-structured interviews were guided by a list of questions, concerns, or issues to be considered, but questions were not fixed nor was the order of the questions prearranged. The researcher used the semi-structured format to interview the ten respondents

individually for thirty to forty-five minutes (see Appendix J). If there was a lack of clarity, the researcher used probing questions or follow-up to establish clarity.

Probing Questions. Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that when responses lack sufficient detail, depth, or clarity, the interviewer should ask a probing question and may also request further examples and evidence. The three primary purposes for probing questions are specifying the level of depth the interviewer wants, signaling the respondent that the interviewer wants a more detailed answer using specific examples, and encouraging the respondent to keep elaborating. Finally, asking the respondent to clarify an ambiguous answer or missing information is essential (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Probing questions also indicate to the respondent that the researcher is attentive. Positioning the body during this process is also important. Leaning forward in a posture that gives the respondent the interviewer's undivided attention is considered a form of probing, and the respondent usually will continue talking. Possible probing questions, words, or examples would be "Can you tell me more?" "How?" "Why?" "Can you give me an example?" (see Appendix K). "Elaboration, continuation, clarification, attention, and completion probes are housecleaning probes. They ensure that [the interviewer] is getting a reasonable accurate and understandable answer while encouraging the interviewee to keep talking" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 150).

Follow-Up Questions. The purpose of follow-up questions is specifically for depth. Qualitative interviewing pursues themes that are discovered, elaborates on the context in which the answer is given, and explores implications of what is said (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This follow-up method can be done between two or more interview sessions.

Follow-up questions are based on the interviewee's responses, and therefore, cannot be planned. The researcher must review each interview after transcribing and closely "look for themes, ideas, concepts and events and prepare additional questions on those that address research concerns" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.151).

The questions guiding the in-depth interview process were semi-structured. Below is a list of the semi-structured interview questions. The respondents freely responded to any of the questions, which caused the researcher to use follow-up questions as necessary.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me why do you think you do well in school and/or what enables you to do well in school?
2. In what ways do your peers/friends play a role in your academic success in school?
3. What are some of the obstacles you faced while in middle school?
4. What do you think are some barriers that you face now in school?
5. How do you deal with these barriers?
6. How do you maintain your grades or remain focused on your studies when problems arise?
7. Who would you consider to be the best mentor who contributed to your success in school? Why?
8. Why do you think others do not perform well in school?
9. What suggestions would you give for the success and/or image of other African American girls in school?

10. How do you view yourself as an African American young lady?
11. Do you think that others view you that way?

Selection of Respondents

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) identified the criteria of adequacy and appropriateness for data in qualitative research by making the following statement:

Adequacy refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects, as in quantitative research. Adequacy is attained when sufficient data have been collected that saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood. Appropriateness refers to selection of information according to the theoretical needs of the study and the emerging model . . . In qualitative research, the investigator samples until repetition from multiple sources is obtained. This provides concurring and confirming data, and ensures saturation. (p. 230)

McCracken (1988) stated that “less is more” when selecting individuals for interviews. In other words, it is important to work intensively with a few subjects than in a cursory manner with many subjects. McCracken (1988) further asserts that as few as eight respondents will offer sufficient data for most interview studies. However, in this study, ten eighth-grade African American adolescent girls were interviewed.

Since the purpose of the study was to describe and explore the influence of self-efficacy on selected African American girls at the middle school level, data were obtained from students at one site with a large population of African American students. The population of the Hilltop Middle School girls consists of the following: 22 European American girls, 22 Hispanic girls, 2 Asian girls, 8 Native American girls, and 72 African American girls. The respondents had similar characteristics such as race or ethnicity, socio-economic status, and high grade point averages. Although the student’s GPA was

self-reported, the school counselors at Hilltop Middle School verified the reports. In addition, the self-reporting demographic sheet elicited information about the respondents' personal data and family background. The respondents in this study were ten eighth-grade students who demonstrated academic success in spite of adversity during their middle school years. The adversity questionnaire developed by the researcher was administered.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis has been defined as the following:

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 157)

“Data come to us only in answered questions, and it is we who decide not only whether to ask but also how the question is to be put” (Kaplan, 1964, p. 385). The purpose of data analysis is to establish the categories that reflect a particular culture. Data analysis begins while the questions and interviewing sessions are still under way. After completing each interview, the researcher examined the data, pulled out concepts and themes, and decided which areas should be examined in more detail. Miles & Huberman (1984, 1994) define data analysis according to three sub-processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data reduction occurs when “the potential universe of data is reduced in an anticipatory way as the research chooses a conceptual framework, research questions,

cases, and instruments” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 428). Finding emerging themes, coding, and writing narratives are all examples of data reduction.

Data display is defined as an “organized compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and/or action taking” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 428). It is the second inevitable part of data analysis. The reduced data should be seen and serve as a foundation for the researcher’s thinking about its meaning.

Drawing conclusions and verification stem from comparison and contrasting, noting patterns and commonalities, emerging themes, clustering, and the use of metaphors to confirm tactics such as triangulation and member checking (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Themes and Concepts

The purpose of the data analysis is to “organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behavior” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 229). Concepts are recognized when the respondents use language which reflects meanings that become a common thread throughout the interviews.

As the researcher continues the data analysis, the themes and concepts should be woven into a broader theoretical or practical guide to prepare for the final report. In Marshall and Rossman’s (1989) view,

... data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. (p. 12)

Data analysis is the final stage of listening to hear the meaning of what is said (Antaki, 1988; Antaki & Leudar, 1992; Charmaz, 1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mumby, 1993; Riessman, 1993; Spradley, 1979; Strauss, 1987; West, 1990). A mobile blueprint of emerging themes is revealed as the data is analyzed and interpreted.

In qualitative research, data collection is continuous and simultaneous with data analysis. As the researcher reads the data, additional categories are added or existing categories are refined. Thematic units, classes, and categories are established throughout the initial data analysis. Schatzman & Strauss (1973) suggest three classes and categories, Common Classes, Special Classes and Theoretical Classes as defined below.

1. Common Classes are used essentially in assessing whether certain demographic characteristics are related to patterns that may arise during a given data analysis (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).
2. Special Classes are those labels used by members of certain areas to distinguish among the things, persons, and events within their limited province (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).
3. Theoretical Classes are those that emerge in the course of analyzing the data (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). In most content analysis, these theoretical classes provide an overarching pattern (a key linkage) that occurs throughout the analysis.

This type of dividing technique, method, or strategy can be summed up as “an interactive process through which the investigator is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings” (Merriam, 1988, p.120).

Data collection and analysis narrows the focus of the study by establishing categories of themes that emerge from the data. Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p.158-167) give ten suggestions about analyzing data during the collection process:

1. Deliberately narrow the focus of the study.
2. Define exactly the type of study being pursued.
3. Develop analytic questions.
4. Plan collection activities in light of revelations from the data.
5. Habitually write "Observer's comments."
6. Habitually write notes to self about what is being learned.
7. Try out ideas, themes, and categories on respondents.
8. Go back to the literature.
9. Play with metaphors, analogies, and concepts.
10. Use visual devices.

Denzin (1978) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) state succinctly that categories should be grounded in the data from which they emerge. The organization of a framework permits the researcher to establish themes emerging from the research. "Qualitative research uses inductive analysis. This means that the categories, themes, and patterns come directly from the data" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 215). At this point, emerging themes should be evident. Emerging themes and categories should be positioned in "conceptual categories, typologies, or theories to interpret the data for the reader" (Merriam, 1988, p. 133). It is also necessary to take long undisturbed intervals to carefully read the data collected at least twice (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998).

Coding. In order to delineate categories, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 348) emphasize that researchers be open and prepared for “anomalies, conflicts, and other inadequacies” to emerge. To open inquiry widely is referred to as open coding. Strauss (1987) suggests open coding. He states, “Believe everything and believe nothing while undertaking open coding” (p. 28). At this point, the researcher can restructure or modify categories and even establish new categories.

This research study describes the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance of African American girls through drawing emerging themes, categories, and patterns directly from the data presented by the respondents.

Researcher Bias

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) refers to researchers’ bias when she states: We cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any more than we can disown the eyes, ears and skin through which we take in our intuitive perceptions about the new and strange world we have entered. (p. 28)

Researchers attempt to interact with their participants or respondents in a natural, unobtrusive, and non-threatening manner. Researchers bring many perspectives to data collection and data analysis, shading the interpretation of events, processes, and people. The researcher must keep in mind those beliefs held internally that may affect the study and minimize the effects of these beliefs by being sensitive enough to report the bias in the final analysis.

It should also be noted that a researcher can only limit his or her biases, not eliminate them (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998). This researcher is an African American woman

with thirteen years of experience in the public school arena including teaching in middle school. She has served as a student teacher supervisor and an entry-level teacher coordinator for secondary education which may also lend itself to other biases. The researcher has an understanding of and passion for the age group studied. The researcher also has taught “Upward Bound” and “Best for Life” summer programs at a Historical Black College/University. Other experiences include teaching Introduction to Speech and Language Arts in predominately Black schools. The experience of African American girls’ self-efficacy, as manifested during the adolescent years is an extraordinary interest for the researcher since most critical education decisions are made during this stage.

Trustworthiness

The terms “trustworthiness” and “authenticity” are used as verification of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher must ask questions of himself or herself in order to persuade the audience or readers that the findings of the study is worthy of paying attention to or worth taking into account (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Traditionally, researchers have found four questions to pose to themselves:

- (1) “Truth value”: How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?
- (2) “Applicability”: How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)?
- (3) “Consistency”: How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?
- (4) “Neutrality”: How can one

establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquiry? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Internal validity, reliability, and external validity promote trust in the findings of a qualitative study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) used the terms “truth value” for internal validity, “consistency” for reliability and “transferability” for external validity. Merriam (1988) also addresses the issue of trust: “The applied nature of educational inquiry thus makes it imperative that researchers and others be able to trust the results of research—to feel confident that the study is valid and reliable” (p.164). Multiple methods such as administering the CSES surveys, adversity questionnaires, informal observations, and in-depth interviews allowed this researcher to provide rich, thick, descriptive evidence for the reader to follow.

Internal Validity

Internal validity is considered the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It permits others to trust and assess the findings of qualitative research. Taylor and Bodgan (1984) report that “the qualitative researcher is interested in perspectives rather than universal truth, and it is the researchers’ obligation to present these perspectives and experiences of the informants” (p. 168). The responsibility and obligation of the researcher in this study will be to record, transcribe, interpret, analyze, and report the viewpoints and perceptions of the respondents involved. As Ratcliffe (1983) said, “data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator; researchers cannot observe or measure a phenomenon without changing it;

and numbers and words are all only symbolic representation of reality, rather than reality” (p.167).

Internal validity is contingent upon the degrees to which the researcher’s representation of another’s version of reality are “credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). It is therefore imperative for the researcher to ensure that the explanation of the respondents’ world is congruent with the world in which they live.

Merriam (1988) suggests six methods to increase the internal validity of a research study:

1. Triangulation,
2. Member checks,
3. Long-term observation to gather data over time,
4. Peer examination,
5. Involvement of participants in the research, and
6. Clarifying the researcher’s biases at the beginning of the research.

In this study, the researcher utilized the following methods: (1) Triangulation, (2) member checks, (3) peer debriefing or peer examination strategies, and (4) clarification of researcher biases. Mertens (1998) asserts that “member checks can be formal or informal. For example, at the end of the interview, the researcher can summarize what has been said and ask if the notes accurately reflect the person’s position” (p.182). A debriefing feedback questionnaire (Appendix L) was used as a method of member checking.

Triangulation. Triangulation compared data obtained from the surveys and informal interviews to ensure that the data from multiple sources and over multiple time frames revealed patterns of consistency sufficient to establish trustworthiness. The researcher in this study relied on a triangulation that used various kinds of methods or data.

Denzin & Lincoln (1994) identify four ways in which one can triangulate:

- (1) Data triangulation: the use of a variety of data sources in a study,
- (2) investigator triangulation through the use of several different researchers or evaluators, (3) theory triangulation through the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and
- (4) methodological triangulation or the use of multiple methods to study a single phenomenon. (p. 214-215)

In this study, methodological triangulation was used to study a single phenomenon, the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance of African American girls. Triangulation was used to confirm measures and validate the findings of this study (Jick, 1983; Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989, Leedy, 1993; Mitchell, 1986; Sohler, 1988; Webb et al., 1981). This approach typically involves the use of qualitative data to gain insights into the meaning of quantitative results or to support or substantiate results. The concept of triangulation is applied to quantitative data by supplementing them with qualitative data (Gay, 1996, p. 232).

According to Morse (1991), methodological triangulation can emerge between qualitative and quantitative approaches in two ways: by simultaneous triangulation or by sequential triangulation. Morse (1991) asserts that in sequential triangulation, two phases of the research study take place and the results of the first stage is necessary for planning the next stage. Simultaneous triangulation, on the other hand, answers the qualitative and

quantitative research questions at the same time in the research study. The answers to the qualitative questions, for example, are reported separately and do not necessarily relate to or confirm the results from the quantitative study (Morse, 1991). This study employs simultaneous triangulation which strengthens the levels of efficacy. The researcher triangulated through the use of interviews, informal observations, and administering the CSES. Peer debriefing or peer evaluation techniques permitted colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged. The researcher extensively discussed with an unbiased peer the findings, conclusions, and analysis of the research study. Dr. Natalie Adams functioned in this capacity, bringing experience and expertise in qualitative research to the analysis.

Audit Trail. The purpose for the audit trail is to carefully document so that those who are interested in this research study can reconstruct the process by which the researcher reached the final conclusion (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The audit trail consists of six types of documentation: “raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions, and instrument development information” (Halpern, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319-320).

Raw data includes electronically recording materials through the use of videotapes and stenomask recordings, written field notes, unobtrusive measures such as documents and records and physical traces, and survey results. Data reduction and analysis products include write-ups of field notes, summaries such as condensed notes, unitized information (as on 3x5 cards), quantitative summaries, and theoretical notes, including working

hypotheses, concepts, and hunches. Data reconstruction and synthesis products contain the structure of categories (themes, definitions, and relationships); findings and conclusions (interpretations and inferences); and a final report, with connection to the existing literature and an integration of concepts, relationships, and interpretations. Process notes also include methodological notes (procedures, designs, strategies, rationale); trustworthiness notes (relating to credibility, dependability, and confirmability); and audit trail notes. Materials relating to intentions and dispositions include the inquiry proposal, personal notes (reflexive notes and motivations), and expectations (predictions and intentions). Finally, instrument development information includes piloting forms, preliminary schedules, observation formats, and the survey (Halpern, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319-320).

Transferability

External validity is transferability when applied to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity means the degree to which the research can generalize the results or replicate the study in other situations. Thus, the reader can judge whether or not the research study can be replicated.

In qualitative research, the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgment. (Mertens, 1998, p. 183)

An explanation will be provided concerning the assumptions and theory, the selection of the respondents, and the researcher's relationship with the group under study. An example of triangulation will be explained as part of the trustworthiness section to

establish internal validity and credibility. Additionally, an explanation of the multiple methods of data collection and the development of categories or emerging themes will be available in this chapter to guide other researchers who are interested in gender studies, feminist theory, critical theory, or related fields.

Summary

Chapter III presented a rationale for this study of the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance of African American adolescent girls through surveys, questionnaires, informal observations, and in-depth interviews. The transcriptions of the interviews were examined and analyzed to identify the categories and themes of self-efficacy. These were then analyzed to determine the congruencies of the three domains of self-efficacy which were revealed as a result of the CSES. The three domains of self-efficacy were the academic self-efficacy, the social self-efficacy, and the self-regulatory efficacy. This section on methodology also established guidelines that were followed. The site and the selection of the respondents involved, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, reliability, and validity measures were all explained in this chapter.

Following the analysis of data, the final two chapters of the study were completed as a written report. Quotations from the interviews and examples of the collected data were used to support the findings. An explanation included how the respondents expressed their “academic world of success.” Chapter IV begins with a synopsis of the interviews, adversity questionnaire responses, a description of the levels of efficacy results, and the categories and themes that illustrate how self-efficacy influences African American

middle school girls' academic success in spite of obstacles. Chapter V begins with a summary, the focus of the study, relates the themes discovered to that focus, and compares the themes of the collected data to the review of literature. The chapter concludes with implications, suggestions, and recommendations for further inquiry.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore, describe, and explain the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance among middle school African American girls. In addition, the researcher was seeking to understand the factors that may help determine why some girls chose to be identified as academically proficient in spite of adversity. Via semi-structured interviews, ten African American eighth-grade students described in the preceding chapter participated in the data collection phase of the study. Each of these students was actively engaged in school and placed either in regular classes or in a special component called “The Academy.”

The Academy consisted of sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students with a 3.0 or above grade point average (GPA). It was housed in a separate building from the regular classroom students and was indeed a school within a school concept. The students in The Academy were tracked and placed in 80-minute classes throughout the day. The students’ schedules permitted them to have four core classes on A-days and one core class and electives on B-days (see Appendix M). Eight out of the ten respondents in this study were students from The Academy, while two of the respondents were students from regular classes with a 3.0 or higher grade point average. The Academy students ate lunch separately, held separate functions, and went on separate fieldtrips from the regular

students. It appeared that this was a form of the new millennium segregation, and The Academy students had to build a unique bond among themselves and create their own culture.

Patton (1990, p. 68) defines culture as

the collection of behavior patterns and beliefs that constitutes standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it.

Ten eighth-grade African American girls were part of the academic culture at Hilltop Middle School. They were not chosen to represent some part of the larger world, but rather to provide a glimpse of the character, organization, activities, and logic of their culture (McCraken, 1988).

This chapter reports the quantitative and qualitative data gathered as a result of the interviews, adversity questionnaires, and The Children's Self-Efficacy Surveys. The previous chapters explained the purpose for this study, provided the review of related literature, and presented methodological considerations that guided this study. The research question that guided the collection of this data was "How does self-efficacy influence the academic success of selected African American middle school girls?" The chapter consists of (a) site description, (b) the findings and quotes from the selected group of African American girls who were interviewed, (c) the statistical analysis of the Children's Self-Efficacy Surveys, (d) a chart of the themes and concepts emerging from each question, and (e) a summary of the findings.

Preliminary Steps and Site Entry

The primary reasons for identifying Hilltop Middle School as a potential site for this study were the following: (1) it has a large population of African American students, (2) it is an inner city school, (3) it is a regular school with a Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and Foreign Language program, and (4) it has a diverse population: one-third of the regular students function one to two years below grade level, one-third consists of special education students, and one-third is comprised of The Academy students. The Academy students have accelerated classes, specialized course offerings, various electives, and highly motivated educators committed to helping them reach their potential. Students who are accepted in The Academy as sixth graders enroll in a three-year plan of study, seventh graders enroll in a two-year plan of study, and eighth graders enroll in a one-year plan of study. The Academy students must score above the 70th percentile on the standardized test and have maintained a GPA of 3.0. Students who enroll in The Academy are required to enroll in Honors Language Arts, Honors Social Studies, Honors Science, and Honors Mathematics (sixth grade), Pre-Algebra (seventh grade), and Algebra I (eighth grade): one foreign language class, and a fine arts (performing or visual).

Description of the Site and Community

Physical Description of Hilltop

The funny thing about going to Hilltop to collect my data was that each visit felt like the dreaded first day of school. I was anxious, a bit hesitant, and butterflies abounded. As I made a left turn and coasted past the faculty parking lot clustered with

moderately priced vehicles, I began to appreciate all of the things that middle school youthfulness prevented my adolescent eyes from noticing.

In the distance, the single-level, red-bricked, white-roofed, Hilltop school awaited my arrival. But it was 8:00 A.M. and since school did not begin until 8:40 A.M. Hilltop would have to wait a bit longer. I continued south toward what appeared to be the cafeteria and I remembered school lunch (not all memories can be fond ones). But before my descent to the back of the middle school, I noted the freshly cut front lawn and bush-lined brick near the main entrance. Like a huge green and yellow beacon, the Hilltop Middle School sign stood erect and alone. The front of the sign read “6th-7th Grade Awards Assembly May 19th; PTSA Meeting 6 pm Monday May 1.” The reverse side informed me of “8th Grade Promotion JMHS May 19th 6:30; PTSA Meeting 6 pm Monday May 1.” The school name was on the banner of both sides of the sign and contained the school mascot, The Hawk. Another sign, smaller and lower to the ground, was yellow and black, almost to symbolize a school that would be a beacon of light.

Continuing southbound, past the frosty white windows of the cafeteria, I made a right turn, passed the unattended, inoperative, murky yellow, construction vehicle to another parking lot, this one seemingly the area where school buses arrived, loaded, unloaded, and departed. This particular parking lot was sparsely populated with 15 to 20 cars and one small yellow school bus for the disabled. Several feet from the bus, the customary red and white Coca-Cola truck was parked and unloading onto some sort of dock. A few yards away from the lot, a fenced-in rack with nearly a dozen bikes gave credence to the idea that some students lived within walking distance from the school. Large trash bins and a cable or satellite dish coexisted several feet from each other. The

rear of Hilltop was simply a large field with endless green grass, a piece of recreational equipment in its center, and basketball posts on the perimeter closest to the school, perhaps an area for recreation. Opposite the basketball posts and a huge plot of open space, a wooden fence separated the schoolyard from the tree-lined backyards of neighboring community houses.

As I ventured away from Hilltop into the neighborhood of the surrounding area of the school, I was greeted by single-leveled homes placed neatly on manicured lawns with shrubbery and spring flora. The explosive reds, greens, and yellows of nature, adjacent to the awkwardly over-sized, black, green, or dark blue recycling bins painted a surreal picture of back-to-the-basics nature in combination with contemporary American reality. I was traveling in my car, the only traffic on the serene streets that morning. Competition with the motor of my car came in the form of chirping birds, the click/clack of yard tools maneuvered by elderly Caucasian residents, and two young African-American girls giggling as they took turns riding a small pink and white bike.

After I completed my circle around the neighborhood, I continued north until I was once again near the school parking lot. But before entering, I noticed that I was now on the opposite side of the field, passing the basketball posts noted earlier. A closer look at the field showed a baseball cage and several green and crème-colored, horizontally-striped, trashcans. Trash filled the entire can closest to me and there was no misplaced discarded waste on the field. In fact, I had not seen any trash on the ground anywhere. The first few feet of fence encircling the field showcased a burgundy and white Sylvan Learning Center sign.

As far as the eye could see, minivans, vans, and sport utility vehicles awaited the faculty members' late evening start-ups. But it was only morning, so of course they would have to remain a few more hours before making the trip home. There was also an empty fire lane clearly designated with red paint on the curb and the forbidding words in white block print: "FIRE LANE NO PARKING."

My car crept onto the faculty lot and I parked just steps away from an uninhabited police vehicle that had created a space of its own. When I stepped out of the car, I noticed miles and miles of power lines and towers opposite the lot. The lines hung low, but not low enough to be of any danger. On my way toward the main office, two Hispanic construction workers who were fixing a portion of damaged pavement greeted me. This pavement would later be filled with fresh cement and blocked off for safety.

An opening in the green curtain of an unoccupied classroom allowed me to peek in to what seemed to be a technology class. Several terms on the board—data, floppy, disk, memory, monitors—and keyboards in the students' desks led me to this conclusion. The teacher's cluttered desk was in the back of the classroom, away from the board and the door. The American flag hovered over a poster board that read: "I will not let you fail." Another sign on the brick walls of the classroom revealed that the room that I was surveying was in the east wing of the building.

As I edged toward the main office, I encountered a woman whom I refer to as Ms. Blue, a Hilltop teacher on her way home. She greeted me and replied that after seeing me for several weeks on campus she was unusually interested in my research study. As I proceeded to explain to her the topic of this study, Ms. Blue shared comments about The Academy program. She believed that "The Academy is a way to ensure that Hilltop

maintains a healthy White population in a predominantly Black middle school.” She recalled that when she arrived at Hilltop, a little more than a decade ago, the student body was primarily White. She explained that, as the school began to integrate, White flight occurred, and to counter the effects of integration and as a means to hold on to its dwindling White attendees, Hilltop created The Academy program.

Ms. Blue made the following statement: “The Academy at our school is really segregated. They don’t mix with the general population. I think they use that so they don’t have to mix with the kids that are in trouble or are lower achievers.” (Blue, April, 2000). According to Ms. Blue, the disparity in treatment toward The Academy and non-Academy students was so blatant that even the students were aware of it. “Regular students complain that ‘The Academy students get to go on field trips and eat lunch by themselves,’” said Ms. Blue. She believed that if The Academy did not exist, the White population at Hilltop would not either, in spite of the fact she said, that 75% of Hilltop’s surrounding community is White. “We are an inner city school in a suburban area. Most of our kids do not live around here,” Ms. Blue admitted. In fact, students were bused in from surrounding districts. Hilltop was the largest demographic area for transportation. “We are in this neighborhood, but most of our students aren’t from here. The ones that are, live in the apartments,” Ms. Blue commented.

The sign near the main office said “Hilltop Middle School.” Finally, I reached the inside of the building. I seemed to be in the dreaded principal’s office. There were three office workers, one African American female and two European American females, who acknowledged my presence and gave my visitor pass the customary once-over. The workers’ desks were behind a large counter. When I looked down to see what was

cushioning my shoes, I noticed that I stood on a large black and red “Say No to Drugs” floor mat. A step or two from the carpet stood a large trophy case with two clowns on its top and several plants at its side. Awards for the social science fair, track, technology, and volleyball, and for contributing and making the largest donation to the Awesome City United Way Campaign expressed school spirit in the otherwise mundane waiting area. An African American male student sitting alone next to a public telephone informed me that most of the trophies were for basketball, and while the boy did not play for the team, he said he does enjoy the sport during leisure hours.

In the counseling area, a small cove to the left of the main office, the crème colored cement brick walls were littered with public service announcement posters. Anti-violence, diversity, anti-drug, and mental health were the main themes of the posters. The counseling area consisted of two offices and a small waiting area. Ms. CJ was the seventh and eighth grade A-J counselor. Ms. Bee counseled grades six and seven K-Z. Between their offices was a janitor’s closet that doubled as a file room. There was also a small refrigerator and a printer in this room. The waiting area contained five chairs and a round desk covered with pamphlets. Four large file cabinets immersed in blank schedule forms surrounded the right side of the waiting room table. The Awesome Public School Goals for 1997-2000 poster contained a vision, mission, and eight goals (see Appendix N).

The Hilltop Middle School creed hung among the public service announcements as a reminder of the objectives of the Awesome Board of Education, personnel, students, parents, and community (see Appendix O). But as I contrasted the comments of Ms. Blue to some of the goals, I saw a great inconsistency.

Goal 2: “To provide students in every classroom with an equal opportunity to learn, to be critical thinkers, technologically literate, and effective communicators.” Ms. Blue had reported that The Academy students partook in field trips and ate lunch separately from the other students. How did her comment conflict with the goal? Was this a goal of separate-but-equal or just separate?

Goal 8: “To set high expectations and clear standards of performance for all personnel and students. To recognize achievement set by the Board of Education January 27, 1997.” But if Ms. Blue’s comments were factual, how could achievements be high for all if The Academy was the pet project of the entire school and received special benefits?

A red, wall-mounted, fire extinguisher at waist level faced upright in front of me. Above the extinguisher, a list of helpful numbers for students hung on a poster board. Students could receive assistance from crisis-intervention, multicultural and gang counseling, AIDS, HIV, and pregnancy-assistance hotlines.

I exited the main office on my way to observe class sessions, returning to the east wing of the school. The first room on the left side of A corridor was an office filled with computers. The plaque on the door read 103. The eighth grade technology classroom I had peered into earlier was across from it. I passed A-105, a lightly populated class with only five students: four Black males and one White male. Crossways from A-105, room A-106 was brimming with students working on computers. The class was made up heavily of Black females. White males were second in number.

Ahead, was a large group of aging gray lockers. An empty Cheetos bag lay in front of one of the shabbiest lockers. A water fountain and a snack machine filled with

saltys and sweets were nereby. The teachers' lounge touted a sign that said: "Golden Retreat." A-111 and A-112 was a cluster of rooms with closed doors.

A Coke machine offered my last chance for a snack before coming to the main foyer flooded with skylight. On the west wall of the lobby was another large trophy case. The opposite wall, however, had a more distinctive display. "What Would the World Be Like Without Black People?" asked the large black block letters. Beneath them, pictures of Black inventors, athletes, leaders, scientists, authors, and entertainers replied to the question. Gwendolyn Brooks, Charles Richard Drew, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, May Jamison, and Thurgood Marshall were just a few of the historic faces peppering the wall. There was also a story of a young boy named Theo who found himself in a world where African American inventors did not exist. The boy discovered how difficult life would be without the ideas and ideals of his people. The moral of the story was evident.

On my next stop, I passed two restrooms, a Coke machine, and another snack vending machine. I was in corridor H on my way toward corridor E. The first object in my line of sight was another drink vending machine. Instead of soda this one boasted artificial juices. I bypassed an empty room, E-100, and an in-session room, E-102, before I arrived at E-104, an honors algebra class instructed by Ms. Algebra, a Caucasian woman in her mid to late 40s. I entered the room midway through the 80-minute session.

The Academy Experience

The goal of The Academy at Hilltop Middle School is to provide an academic plan of study, which prepares students for an advanced, college-prep high school curriculum. The objective is stated as such: Upon completion of The Academy at Hilltop Middle

School, students will be prepared to enter and participate successfully in The Academy at Jackson Miller High School. The Mission of The Academy is to experience advanced fine arts and foreign language classes. The Academy at Hilltop Middle School operates as a “school within a school,” with a curriculum consisting of accelerated classes, specialized course offerings, and various electives. Elective offerings include fine arts, performing arts, visual arts, and foreign languages. The curriculum is geared towards assisting students in scoring high on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills(I.T.B.S.) and the Criterion Reference Test (C.R.T.) exams. Further, eighth grade Academy students are encouraged to obtain high school credits through concurrent enrollment at Jackson Miller High School. Concurrent enrollment enhances the elective curriculum mentioned above (see Appendix P).

Positive affirmation in the form of posters cluttered the walls. Themes like respect, teamwork, and leadership were repeated throughout the entire school and the classrooms. The teacher’s desk was opposite the door near where I was sitting. A stockpile of textbooks rested in a wooden bookshelf beneath a medium-sized chalkboard on the right side of the room. The modern white ceiling fans were a strange contrast to the apparently aged, brown, wall-to-wall carpet. The hands of a large clock sat idly at 5:50, while the American flag and a small clock with the correct time dangled from the same stretch of wall. In the back of the classroom, a manual pencil sharpener, (a math class stapler), was affixed to the wall at an easily accessible level.

Twenty students filled the first 20 out of 25 seats. In most classes observed in The Academy, attendance ranged from 16-25 students. The class consisted of six Black males, six Black females, and eight non-Blacks. Each student was casually dressed. Most wore

no-frill jeans, khakis, cotton t-shirts, or corduroys. Ms. Spanish's ensemble consisted of relaxed-fit pants, a loose fit shirt, and an oversized sweater.

Ms. Spanish's advanced Spanish class had the largest attendance of all the classes that I observed. She recalled that at the beginning of the semester 34 were enrolled. When I visited there were 27 students in class. Ms. Spanish predicted for next fall almost 50 students would sign up for the course. In addition to advanced Spanish, Ms. Spanish also taught French. Ms. Spanish was a Caucasian woman in her early to mid-50s.

The racial make up of this class was ten Black females, four Black males, eight White males, and five White females. Ms. Spanish instructed the students in Spanish to turn to a page in their textbooks. Then the students were told that they had five minutes to study for a pop quiz to make up for the poor grades that they had received on the last quiz. The customary sigh of disbelief followed her statement. Ms. Spanish called out scores ranging from '98' to '0.' Most students received either a 'B' or 'C' but were unaware of who received what because test grades were called at random with no names mentioned.

The teacher's workstation was near the door in the front of the classroom. Ms. Spanish taught from a wooden podium, which she frequently neglected in order to achieve a more personable relationship with the students. There were two chalkboards and two poster boards on the front of the sides of the room. Signs in French and Spanish filled the poster boards. Other boards were blank. Group collaboration appeared to be encouraged, as Ms. Spanish walked around encouraging teamwork.

The classes observed throughout this study were basically set up in such a way that students could freely explore and learn from others. The teachers in The Academy

allowed students to construct their own learning environment and structure their knowledge by drawing on the vast resources available to them. The teacher and student roles were reversed and collaboration could be viewed as both students and teachers exchanged information. I observed this in both the Advanced Algebra class and the Astronomy class. It was obvious that teamwork and team building skills were taking place, leading to learning for those who participated.

The Interview Site

Interviews were conducted with randomly selected respondents after reviewing the adversity questionnaires. The Children's Self Efficacy Survey was administered in the library during a time when the library was closed to all other students, after which I began the interviewing process. I was escorted to an area where there seemed to be very little traffic by the counselor. When she unlocked one of the offices, I found myself in an open space with three round tables, one square table available for any phone calls, and telephone books available for both students and teachers in The Academy. In front of me was another entrance where there were three separate offices. Garfield pictures hung on the brick wall. I noted one particular poster that said, "It's amazing what one can accomplish when one doesn't know what one can do." To my left was an office full of books, a telephone, and a square table to work on. I invited one of the respondents to enter. Closed up in a somewhat crowded room of books, I immediately began to move some things around so that the respondents could feel comfortable. This area had once been used for the speech pathologist and the psychometrist. However, it was no longer in use. A telephone was on my left just in case I needed to call the office for any kind of

emergency. It was then time to begin interviewing. I assured each respondent that what she told me was confidential and for the purposes of confidentiality, the respondents were assigned a pseudonym and Little Ms. was placed in front of the respondent's name to signify the respect given to all respondents.

Hilltop's Results

Thirty-seven girls filled out the demographic self-reporting background information sheet, the adversity questionnaire, and The Children Self-Efficacy Survey. The demographic report showed 65% of the African American girls lived with the mother only, 24% lived with both mother and father, and 5% lived with the grandparents, as shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV
HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS

Household Demographics	Guardian Code	Percent
Mother only	1	64.86
Father and Mother	2	24.32
Father only	3	0
Grandmother only	4	0
Grandfather only	5	0
Grandmother and Grandfather	6	5.41
Mother and Grandmother	7	2.7
Sister	8	2.7

Following are data on the educational background of the respondents' parents' educational background. The code key for Figures 2 and 3 follows: 1=Less than 12th grade, 2=Grade 12, 3=Some College but no degree, 4=College Degree, 5=Vo-Tech, 6=Graduate School, 7=Masters Degree, 8=Above Masters, and 9=Don't know (see Figure 2).

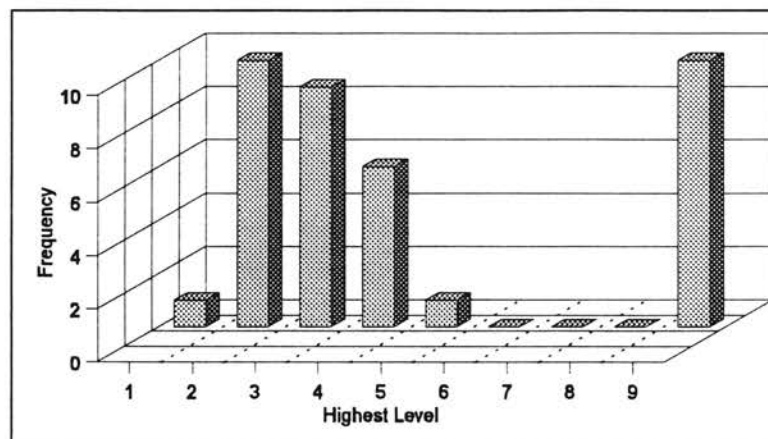


Figure 2. Mother's Education.

The African American girl's academic aspirations may be due to the example set by the mother in the home. Many African American women today are matriculating up the academic ladder of success faster than the African American male. Therefore, the African American girl must perhaps look to the mother for educational guidance and nurturing. If the mother did not obtain a degree, many times she attempted, through verbal persuasion, to convince her daughter of the importance of receiving a quality education in order to be competitive and marketable in the job market today.

Of the 37 girls who filled out the demographic questionnaire 27% of the mothers had at least finished high school, 24% had pursued a college degree but did not complete, 16% held college degrees and 27% of the respondents reported that they did not know.

Since the mother headed many African American homes, the educational background of the parents varied. Many girls did not know the father's educational background information due to the fact that many fathers were not in the home. Of the 37 girls reporting, 5% African American fathers finished high school, 13% attended college but did not obtain a degree, 19% completed college and obtained a degree, while 59% of the respondents did not know as shown in Figure 3.

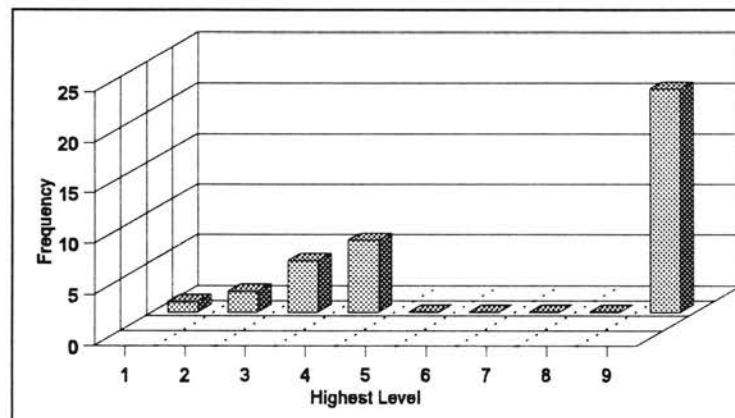


Figure 3. Father's Education.

Of the thirty-seven girls, 90% described "life" as the best thing that has ever happened to them and 46% reported death of a loved one as being the worst thing (see Appendix Q). Death was also the main obstacle many of the respondents reported that they had to overcome.

Although sixteen of the thirty-seven students returned signed consent forms and assent forms to Hilltop Middle School, only ten were chosen for interviews. These ten respondents were girls who had overcome enormous odds, as determined by the adversity questionnaire, and had scored moderately high or high on The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey. They were still full of zeal, energy, and enthusiasm in their willingness to share their stories. In spite of the difficulties encountered, the African American girls in this study proved to be academically successful.

When I asked the respondents how they viewed themselves as African American young ladies, 80% responded with words synonymous to smart or intelligent and 10% simply as a "normal person," as shown in Figure 4. When, I asked if others viewed them the same way, 80% said yes and 20% responded, "I really don't care" (Figure 5).

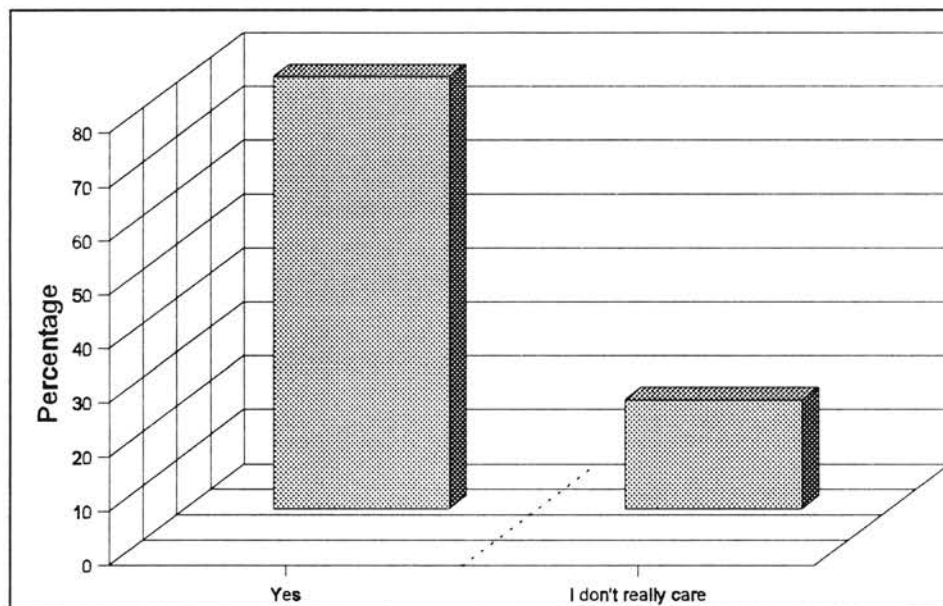


Figure 4. Percentage of Responses to Question Ten – How Do You View Yourself as an African American Young Lady?

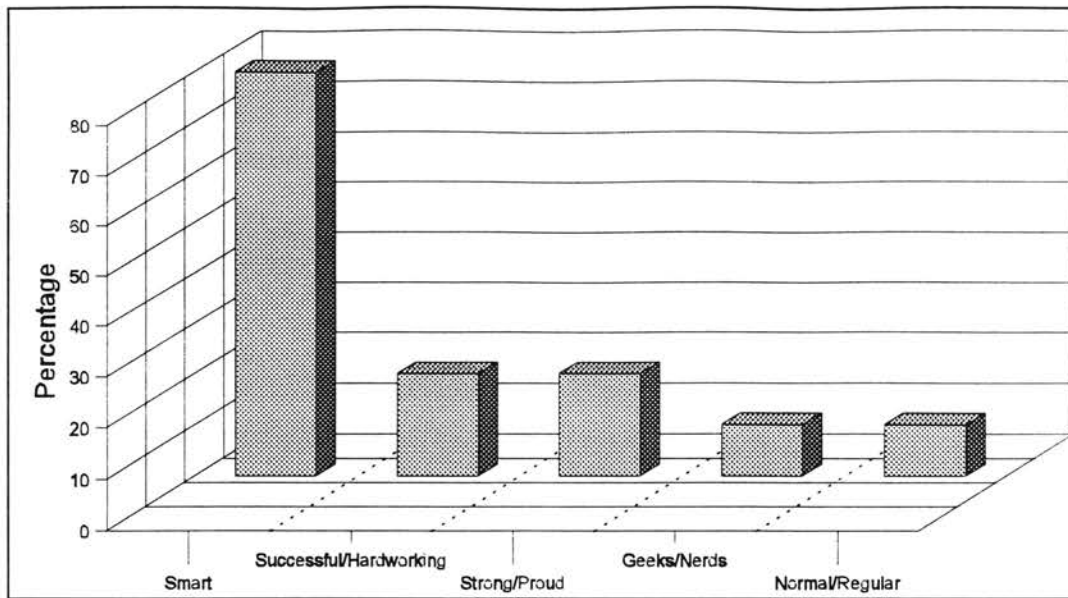


Figure 5. Percentage of Responses to Question Eleven – Do You Think That Others View You That Way?

The responses about the image of an African American young lady were congruent with the American Association of University of Women (AAUW, 1991) report that African American girls' level of self-esteem is high. The AAUW report on self-esteem revealed that factors such as family importance, peer acceptance, and academic self-esteem contribute to the African American girls' self-esteem. African American girls' self-esteem was reported as being higher than that of any other ethnic group (AAUW, 1991). The African American girls in this particular study definitely seemed to be in alignment with the academic self-esteem findings. This may perhaps be due to being in The Academy which, in this study, particularly increased their personal self-esteem. The girls were of all sizes and shapes, well groomed, and very confident about themselves. They were grappling with their bodies and other pubertal changes but this did not appear to be a

concern nor was it even mentioned as an obstacle. If anything, the African American girls in this study had to grapple with the multiple selves' concept as an obstacle.

“Multiple selves” in this study can be described as how one acted in school, in the classroom (especially in The Academy), outside the classroom with the regular students, at home, with friends, or even in the community. After listening to the comments made during the interviews, “multiple selves” and “self-esteem” were obviously two salient issues.

Most of the girls, however, recognized that The Academy was an opportunity for them to get ahead academically if they applied themselves. One motivating factor was the fact that these students were able to receive high school credit, especially if they attended James Miller High School, which had an Academy program at the High School level. Family importance enhanced the respondents' self-esteem just as the AAUW report revealed. Many respondents in this study focused on their family and their willingness to please their parent(s). Receiving a quality education was important to the family and/or family members. The two respondents who were in regular classes shared the same sentiments but did not desire to be in The Academy.

Peer acceptance emerged as a major factor for the African American girls' self-esteem because 80% of the respondents reported that they felt their friends/peers viewed them as smart or at least they should be viewed that way because they were in The Academy. When they were ridiculed for being smart, or academically proficient, the African American girls attributed jealousy as the primary cause for being teased and, therefore, did not care about being called a “geeker” or a “nerd.” The two respondents

who were not in The Academy shared the same sentiments and their self-esteem was just as high, judging from the comments they shared in their stories, if not higher.

The African American Girl: A Spark of Hope

“Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.” – William Jennings Bryan

The ten African American girls in this particular study were sparks of hope in their homes, communities, and classrooms. These girls were the shining power of hope for their parents, siblings, and family members. They were the blazing energy of hope for their friends, neighbors, and churches. They were the beaming strength of hope for other Black girls, Black males, White girls, White males and other ethnic groups. By their self-efficaciousness and their resilience to rebound from one situation to another, many people for generations to come can look at the brief portraits of these African American females and listen to their “voices of hope.” Their narratives will cause others to be inspired to reach their own pinnacle of success.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Braids

Little Ms. Braids, who maintained a 4.0 GPA in The Academy, was a fourteen-year-old African American girl with a medium complexion, small body frame, and a big smile. She was the first to be interviewed. She was well groomed with long, highly polished and pointed fingernails. After beginning the interview, she sat straight up with a serious look on her face. She lived with her mother, whom she described as the most

important influence in her life, pushing her, helping her, and providing a role model for her. The answer to each of the questions about what factors have led to her doing well in school was “My Mom.” Little Ms. Braids could not think of any obstacles she had faced in middle school, but she mentioned the shooting deaths of her young twenty-two-year-old cousin and his girlfriend and her subsequently playing with their young son. Little Ms. Braids exhibited calmness and a good sense of self-control. She intended to go to Duke University. She demonstrated high academic self-efficacy receiving a score of 6.8 which was the highest of the ten respondents. Her self-efficacy for regulated learning was also a 7.0. Her self-efficacy for leisure time and extra curricular activities along with self-efficacy for enlisting social resources was high as well, which reflected a score of 6.5.

She scored high social self-efficacy by making a 6.7 just as did two other respondents in this study. On one hand, Little Ms. Braids appeared to be quiet, but demonstrated high self-assertive efficacy where she obtained a 7.0. She was one of the three students who were highly motivated and this was reflected by her self-regulatory efficacy being a score of 7.0, as well. This young lady’s consistency was remarkable. She scored a 7.0 in four areas of the nine domains which was the highest of all respondents.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Calm and Collected

Little Ms. Calm and Collected, also in The Academy and maintaining a 3.8 GPA, was the youngest of five children. With a rich brown ebony skin tone, and a Kodak smile on her face, she lightened up as she described her mother who attributed to her academic success. She stated that her mother was also an important influence in her overall success. Although her mother had dropped out of school, she always encouraged Little Ms. C & C

and told her she was smart, so she did not want to let her mother down. The obstacle she mentioned was that other students called her a “nerd.” She ignored the name-calling because it came from jealousy, she said. She had experienced personal problems with family relationships with her alcoholic stepfather and the aggressive behavior he exhibited toward her mother. She was happy her mother chose to get out of the relationship because “they could really make it financially without him,” she said. Although Little Ms. C & C did not especially enjoy school, she understood the value of an education and was willing to work hard to achieve. Her willingness to work hard was evident by her activating self-regulatory efficacy where she scored a 7.0 which was one of the highest among the ten respondents. She demonstrated moderately high academic self-efficacy with a score of 6.0 and a moderately high self-regulation for learning obtaining a 6.4 score. She was obviously assertive scoring a high score of 6.5 in the area of self-assertive efficacy. This may have enhanced Little Ms. C & C’s accomplishments also in The Academy. She seemed to have a balance between academic and pleasure by demonstrating moderately high self-efficacy for leisure time and extracurricular activities with a score of 6.3. Although Little Ms. C & C scored low self-efficacy for enlisting parental and community support with a score of 2.5, this may have been due to the family problems she encountered. Nevertheless, her ability to meet others expectations was moderately high receiving a 6.2. By Little Ms. C & C exhibiting a moderately high self-efficacy in enlisting social resources with a score of 6.5 this could possibly enhance her career goals. Her first goal was to be an actress and if that did not work out she wanted to be a beautician.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Lola

Little Ms. Lola, approximately five feet, six inches tall and heavily built, had a 3.3 GPA and was also in The Academy. Little Ms. Lola had a medium brown complexion and high cheekbones. She responded many times with her head down and throughout the interview she mentioned not wanting to disappoint her mother and not wanting to be stupid as reasons for her success. She also faced the obstacle of other students talking about (“hate’n on”) her, and believed it was because of jealousy. She did not really worry about it a lot and was able to continue to do her work. Outside of school, she had recently dealt with the death of her grandmother; also, an older sister frequently left her children for Little Ms. Lola to baby-sit. Although she enjoyed children and really did not mind babysitting, being expected to do so without being asked was irritating and especially hard when her grandmother died. Her grandmother, she said, was her best mentor. She wanted to be a pediatrician. Both Little Ms. Lola’s academic self-efficacy and self-efficacy for regulated learning was moderately high. She received a score of 5.7 in the area of academic self-efficacy and a 5.2 for self-regulated learning. Since she had to baby-sit quite often, her self-efficacy for leisure time and extracurricular activities was moderately high scoring a 5.1. Although Little Ms. Lola’s self-efficacy for enlisting social resources was moderately high scoring a 5.5, her social-self-efficacy was very high where she received a 6.7. In the area of assertiveness efficacy, Little Ms. Lola’s self-assertive efficacy was a moderately low 4.7 but she scored moderately high 6.1 for self-regulatory efficacy. She stated, “I really do good in school because of myself too.” She also discussed her desire not to disappoint her mother and this could be reflected in the area of

self-efficacy in enlisting parental and community support which was high receiving a score of 6.5. Although Little Ms. Lola lost her grandmother which she spoke about as her greatest obstacle, she scored a moderately high 6.2 in the area of meeting others expectations. Little Ms. Lola shared that she works hard and really wants to be somebody.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Shay

Little Ms. Shay described herself as a “3.3 [GPA] and over” student. With her ebony tone and daintiness of a growing young lady she begins to share her story. She was soft spoken, well groomed, and described herself as a sweet person. Her motivation for doing well in school came from her mother and from not wanting to struggle, as she got older. The barrier that she faced at middle school, she said, was the interest of other students in sex, and the difficulty of not getting into stuff like that. She also had dealt with one grandmother's death and was involved with the other grandmother, who was not well and refused to see a doctor or take her medication. She attributed her academic success to her mother, who had attended two years of college and still wanted to finish. Her goal was to become a journalist, and she intended to study business and journalism in college. Little Ms. Shay's self-regulated efficacy for learning and her academic efficacy will perhaps help her reach her academic goals. She scored moderately high with a 6.36 in the area of self-efficacy for regulated learning and a moderately high 6.2 in the area of academic self-efficacy. Her leisure time and extracurricular efficacy was the lowest of all the respondents scoring a 4.6 in this particular domain. Little Ms. Shay's self-efficacy for enlisting social resources was moderately high scoring a 6.2, and her self-efficacy for

enlisting parental and community support was moderately high receiving a 5.7. Her self-regulatory efficacy was 6.6 just as Little Ms. Bo Pete. Although Little Ms. Shay was one of the respondents who expressed that she really doesn't care about what others think, she scored a 6.25 in the area of meeting others expectations. Little Ms. Shay's self-assertive efficacy was moderately low 4.7 and was the lowest of all respondents selected for this study. Because she had experienced being a part of both worlds, she was very sociable with both students in The Academy and students in the regular classroom building. This created moderately high social self-efficacy where she scored a 6.2.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Jay

Little Ms. Jay, one of six children (four older and one younger) had a 3.6 GPA and was in The Academy. Slender, five feet six inches tall, dark complexion and athletically built, she sat with poise, and spoke with confidence as she gave her responses. Her older brother, who was in jail, and peers who were not as successful provided motivation because she did not want to be like them. The obstacles she mentioned were fighting and "ditching" (missing school) when she was in the sixth and early seventh grade, but she had overcome them. In eighth grade, she was focused on trying to keep up and maintain her academic standing. Her mother, she said, was her mentor because her mother, a nurse, had gone back to school after she had children and was still achieving her goals and Ms. Jay was proud of her. Little Ms. Jay's goal was to go to Langston University and eventually become a doctor. Her self-efficacy for regulated learning was high reflecting a score of 6.8 and her academic self-efficacy was a moderately high 6.6. Because she was independent she received a moderately low score of 4.7 in the domain of enlisting parental

and community support. Her social self-efficacy was a moderately high 6.2. Little Ms. Jay scored 7.0 on self-regulatory efficacy along with Little Ms. C & C and Little Ms. Braids. She also scored high self-efficacy with a score of 7.0 in two other areas which were self-assertive efficacy and self-efficacy in meeting the expectations of others. Although she exhibited a moderately high score of 5.7 for leisure time and community support, Little Ms. Jay scored 7.0 in three areas of the nine domains. She was the second highest of all the respondents.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Na Na

Little Ms. Na Na, with a 3.0 GPA was not in The Academy, lived with her mother, stepfather, one sister, and one brother. Her complexion was dark but she had a reddish tone to her smooth skin. She was short in stature but tall in spirit. Little Ms. Na Na credited her motivation to do well in school to her ambition to be successful. Although she did not report any barriers in school, Little Ms. Na Na had faced the loss of her grandmother and a friend, both of whom died around Christmas time, but not the same year. Her best mentor, she said, was her mother, who helped her with her schoolwork as well as with “street knowledge.” Little Ms. Na Na’s goal was to be a pediatrician. Whereas her self-regulation for learning was moderately low scoring a 4.4, her academic self-efficacy was moderately high scoring a 5.3. She appeared to be self-motivated and did not utilize outside resources much. Her self-efficacy for enlisting social resources and parental and community support was moderately low. For self-efficacy for enlisting social resources she scored a 4.7 and her score for enlisting parental and community support was 4.2. Of all the respondents, she scored the lowest in these two domains other than Little

Ms. C & C who scored a 2.5 in the area of parental support. Although Little Ms. Na Na was in regular classes, she was self-regulated. She received a score of 6.6 in the area of self-regulatory efficacy which was the highest score for her of all the areas. Although she described herself as shy, her desire to meet others expectation and her social self-efficacy were both moderately high with a score of 6.0.

The Narrative of Little Ms. O

This year was Little Ms. O's first year at The Academy. Due to being self-motivated, encouraged, and recommended by a group of regular classroom teachers, Little Ms. O had a GPA of 3.3. Little Ms. O had three brothers and one sister. She was a tall young lady with a French roll hairstyle and sparkling light brown eyes, light complexion, who sat with her long legs crossed. She shared that her inspiration to do well came from looking at other people and how they became famous. She also wanted to prove her siblings wrong when they said she would not amount to anything. Her younger sister was in the same school and a brother had attended there the previous year. When asked about obstacles she had overcome, Little Ms. O said that one barrier was getting used to her sister being in the same school. She said that her sister was a troublemaker and she (Ms. O) had to help her get out of trouble. Another barrier was that her mother and father had separated, but she said that the separation had not affected her or her schoolwork. Other barriers were peer pressure and her mother's illness. Most of the stress she mentioned seemed to come from her home situation; yet, she named her mother as probably her best mentor. She said that her mother was a strong person, even though she was not well. Little Ms. O did not mention a career goal. She was very assertive and had

an inner drive to achieve, which caused teachers to recommend her. be transferred from regular classes to The Academy. Her self-regulatory efficacy was high 7.0 and her self-assertive efficacy was a high 6.5 which probably influenced her to do well in The Academy. Little Ms. O's self-efficacy for academic achievement was a 6.0 and self-regulated learning was 5.9, both moderately high. Little Ms. O also knew how to activate her self-efficacy in enlisting social resources where she received a moderately high 6.0. and a moderately high score of 6.5 in the area of social self-efficacy. Her self-efficacy for leisure time and extra curricular was a 5.3 and her self-efficacy for enlisting parental support was a 5.0 both were moderately high. She desired to meet others expectation especially since she was placed in the Academic which was reflected by the moderately high score of 6.2.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Shorty

Little Ms. Shorty was five feet and four inches tall with a medium build. She had shoulder length, black curly hair, and a brown rich complexion and was soft spoken. She was well groomed, wearing the latest name brand shirt with "Tommie Girl" on it. With her hands folded and long nails polished, Little Ms. Shorty shared her story. At the time of the interview, Little Ms. Shorty had raised her grade point average from a 3.8 to a 4.0. and she was a student in The Academy. Her motivation to do well, she said, came from her ambition to get into a good college—and "so my daddy can be happy." The obstacles she faced were school related: getting along with other girls and sometimes thinking about or distracted by boys. When asked who her best mentor was, Little Ms. Shorty replied, "My Daddy." The father constantly lets her know that he had high expectations for her

and she did not want to disappoint him. Her goal was to become an obstetrician. Little Ms. Shorty's focus in school was very consistent with the Children's Self-Efficacy Survey scoring a 6.0 in the domain of self-regulated learning and a 6.4 in academic self-efficacy, both being moderately high. It was obvious that Little Ms. Shorty cherished her outside family resources by her self-efficacy for enlisting parental and community support where she scored moderately high receiving a 6.2. In the domain of meeting others expectations she received a high score of 6.7. Her self-assertive efficacy score was moderately high demonstrating a 5.5. Self-regulation was the highest category for her with a score of 6.8. She had a unique balance socially receiving a score of 6.7 in the area of social self-efficacy and enlisting social resources which was a 5.7. Both domains were also moderately high. Little Ms. Shorty expressed her desire to be more active in school by participating in extra-curricular activities but her self-efficacy for extra curricular activities revealed a moderate high score of 5.8. It appeared that she was simply willing to do extremely well in all areas.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Bo-Pete

Little Ms. Bo-Pete had just turned 14 and also described herself as "just fun." She was in The Academy, maintaining approximately a 3.5 GPA. An athlete, with light complexion and perhaps wearing a size three, she proudly conveyed her story. Of Little Ms. Bo-Pete's nine siblings, eight were older than she and the one that was younger was four years old. Her motivation to do well in school, she said, was the influence of her mother, who believed that she could be the best. The obstacle she mentioned facing was the taunts and prejudices of eighth graders who were not in The Academy and did not

want to associate with those who were, calling them “geekers” and other names. She had also just dealt with the death of her grandmother, which “was hard because I just had met her,” and she had died around Little Ms. Bo-Pete's birthday. When asked about her best mentors, Little Ms. Bo-Pete named her mother and her oldest sister (age 31) who had her master's degree. Little Ms. Bo-Pete's goal was to become a cosmetologist. Little Bo Pete's academic self-efficacy was moderately high scoring a 6.6 and her self-regulated learning was a 6.2. It was apparent that her being involved in extracurricular activities was advantageous by her scoring moderately high self-efficacy results for leisure time and extra curricular activities which was a 6.8. Her self-regulatory efficacy was consistent with her academic self-efficacy with a score of 6.6. Out of all the nine domains, Little Ms. Bo Pete scored the highest with a 7.0 in the area of meeting others expectations. She was assertive receiving a moderately high score of 6.2 for self-assertiveness efficacy. Little Ms. Bo Pete knew how to utilize resources by scoring moderately high in both the domain of enlisting parental and community support which was a 6.5. and self-efficacy in enlisting social resources which was a 5.5. By being the youngest of nine children, Little Ms. Bo Pete appeared to not have a problem adjusting where and when necessary. Her social self-efficacy was moderately high with a 6.7. This may have resulted from being from a large family.

The Narrative of Little Ms. Promise

Little Ms. Promise lived with her mother and stepfather. She was not in The Academy. Little Ms. Promise was a fourteen-year-old Black girl who thrived on sharing her story with anyone who would listen. Already, at the age of 14, she had traveled

during summers with a modeling group. She had been rather consistent in spite of the adversity she faced, maintaining a 3.0 GPA. At least part of her motivation for doing well in school came from knowing that she had to keep a minimum 2.5 GPA in order to travel with the group during the summers. Bold as a lion, yet soft and tender hearted as a dove, she shared what had been some of the most horrific hurdles to climb. When she was in the sixth grade, she and her best friend were in a car wreck. Her best friend was thrown out of the car and “there she lays in front of me with her intestines on the outside.” Later, Little Ms. Promise was expelled from school for an altercation with a teacher who had made an insensitive remark about the accident. Little Ms. Promise had to attend the About-Face Academy, an alternative school for students who had been suspended from the regular school. After extensive training, physically and mentally, she graduated. The About-Face Academy basically functioned like a military school. Students graduated and then went to phase 2 and after 45 days they had to excel in the program, maintain the expectations of the drill sergeant, go to class, and maintain at least a 2.5 or above GPA before they were dismissed. Several of Little Ms. Promise barriers stemmed from physical problems; she had a hereditary form of cancer, sickle cell anemia, and respiratory problems. Her grandmother had died of this form of cancer a month or so earlier, and it was Little Ms. Promise who made the decision not to keep her on a life-support machine; she believed it was the right decision, but also said, “it hurts.” Her six-year old sister also had this form of cancer. In addition to these problems, Little Ms. Promise had recently had an abortion. She credited her boyfriend with helping her keep her head on straight, “because my mom was not being there for me.” Little Ms. Promise’s grandmother had been her best mentor and always had been available and encouraging. Little Ms. Promise

was very aggressive and assertive throughout her middle school years. She scored a moderately high 5.7 in the area of self-assertive efficacy.

For Little Ms. Promise, her success in school was perhaps due to her moderately high academic self-efficacy which was a 6.3 and her self-efficacy for self-regulated learning which was a moderately high score of 6.0. Little Ms. Promise was an autonomous learner and this was exhibited through her social self-efficacy which was a score of 5.5 and for enlisting social resources which was a score of 5.75. Her self-regulatory efficacy was a 5.4 which was moderately high and this probably improved her out of class modeling career. Additionally, Little Ms. Promise self-efficacy for leisure time and extra curricular activities was moderately high scoring a 6.5. Although she strived to constantly set goals and meet them personally, her self-efficacy for meeting others expectation was moderately high revealing a score of 6.7. Due to her independence and being such a precocious teen, Little Ms. Promise scored moderately high in the area of enlisting parental and community support demonstrating a 4.7. Although she was not in The Academy, Little Ms. Promise appeared to be consistent in her self-efficaciousness and determination to excel.

The following section will include both the quantitative data and the qualitative data to help explain the influence of self-efficacy on African American girls' academic achievement and academic performance at the middle school level. Students experience the objective world in a variety of ways and are regulated, activated, stimulated, and motivated to interpret those experiences through their personal knowledge, history, and values. Through their individual interpretations they create and formulate their own personal world-view. This is revealed through the ten respondents' interviews. Influence

was one of the primary themes that emerged from the following semi-structured questions with four sub-themes to follow.

Factors Cited for Academic Success

“It would be difficult to exaggerate the degree to which we are influenced by those we influence.” –Eric Hoffer

Theme: Influences

Many times during early adolescence, influence is said to have a negative impact on teens. During this particular stage of a child’s life, beliefs, underlying values, and attitudes are shaped. This is also a time of socialization that can indeed have an enormous effect on teens, both positive and negative. Influences appeared to have a positive, powerful, and persuasive effect on the African American girls who participated in this study. Influence became a primary theme that emerged from the responses to the research questions. Four sub-themes followed: mother’s influence, mentor’s influence, future-oriented influence, and peer’s influence.

Mother’s Influence. African American mothers have influenced their children in every aspect of their lives. Many times the mother has been the sole provider for the child, just as she is in this study. She exhibits strength, persistence, endurance; she encourages, advises, teaches, and most of all loves to see her children excel in school (Cauce et al., 1996; Collins, 1987; 1991). The African American mother often serves as the most influential person because of the admonition she gives to her daughter to reach the

pinnacle of success. Although the African American mother was at times uneducated herself, she constantly pushed, motivated, and encouraged her children to become academically successful. When asked why they did well in school or what enabled them to do well in school and who would they consider to be the best mentor that contributed to their academic success the following responses were given:

Little Ms. Braids:

I think I do well in school because of my momma; she pushes me and she really (*pauses*) you know, put me like in my place or whatever. Without her, I would probably do well, but not as well.

She added with a smile:

My Mom, she is just my world. She helps me and then, like, she won't give you the answer cause she want [sic] you to find it and then like if you can't find it she'll try to help you even though she might not know it though but she'll try to help (*Respondent smiles and nods her head*) Umm Just that she's there for me and I guess that I live with her and see her doing good. I want to grow up to be like her and she be putting it down hugging me all tight and stuff. And like she sometimes hit a few trouble spots and then she gets through it. And that's just how I want to be so I would say it's just my mom all the way.

Little Ms. Lola asserted, "I think I do well in school because if I don't do good in school my mom wouldn't be very happy and I won't be able to have a good job." Little Ms. Bo-Pete, a 3.7 student, responded by saying "I think it's the influences that my mother has on me. She believes that I can be the best and I want to be the best instead of struggling in life. I want to make something of myself."

Little Ms. Shay said:

My mother and me because I want to have something when I get older. I don't want to struggle. Cause I mean she went to college for like two years and she tries to tell us that she wants to go to college and finish and she want us to do everything. And she don't want us to struggle and she wants us to do good in school cause we can get a good job and you know she just

kind of motivates me a lot to keep my grades up and don't never give up and try to do your best. And ever since kindergarten, I've been doing good in school. So she don't really have too much to worry about when it comes to me but when she starts seeing my grades and she don't see me doing a lot of homework she start asking me about it. She kind of motivates me.

Little Ms. Calm & Collected replied:

Well I think I do well because my mother, my brother and my sister had dropped out so that leaves me to try to do good. I want to be successful you know because my mom's always telling me how smart I am so I want to prove to her that she's right and not let her down. My mom, she's just a good mother and a good advisor. I just look up to her.

Little Ms. Jay did not hesitate a moment when asked who she would attribute as a mentor for her academic success. Her response was:

My Mom, she's a nurse and she had six kids and she was really struggling with her first set of kids she was really struggling and she went back to school. She always tells us what we need to do and what's best for us. And I know she wouldn't tell me anything wrong. She's still achieving her own goals and I'm proud of her and she always tells us the right thing to do. That's why she is my mentor.

Little Ms. Na Na shared the sentiments of Ms. Jay by stating:

My mother, cause she helps me out and shows me how to do stuff and teaches me things that I should know when I get out there on the streets because she's been there and she is a good influence on me. Like if I don't know something, she would like explain it, especially my schoolwork and show me how to do it.

Little Ms. O said:

My mom is my mentor. I don't know—she's like, always, been there for me. She is a good person to have as a mentor because even though she is sick, she is still strong and she still encourages me to do my best in school and stuff like that.

Little Ms. Bo-Pete's face lit up as she smiled and said:

My mom is my mentor because she teaches me and my oldest sister because she went to college and she got her masters and everything. She influences me, too.

For various reasons, the mother's influence was perhaps the most prominent in these respondents' lives. These respondents cherished not only what they observed but also the hidden messages sent by the African American woman as well. One example of a hidden message was the strength the African American mother exhibited even when she was sick as one respondent expressed. She was admired for her strength under adverse circumstances.

The mother's influence has inadvertently been passed on to her daughter. In this study, if the mentor was not described as the mother, then another dominant African American woman served as the mentor to contribute to the academic success of the respondents, the grandmother.

Mentor's Influence. Having the right mentor during a time when influence is so vital is comforting for many parents. I propose that the respondents in this study did not have to seek or search for anyone outside their own families, as their grandmothers were cited next as the dominant force contributing to their academic success. While mothers played a significant role influencing their daughters' academic dilemmas, grandmothers simply passed the torch obviously to their daughters and now their daughters are passing the torch to their daughters. This is what I call a generational domino effect. This concept is revealed by the results in Figure 6.

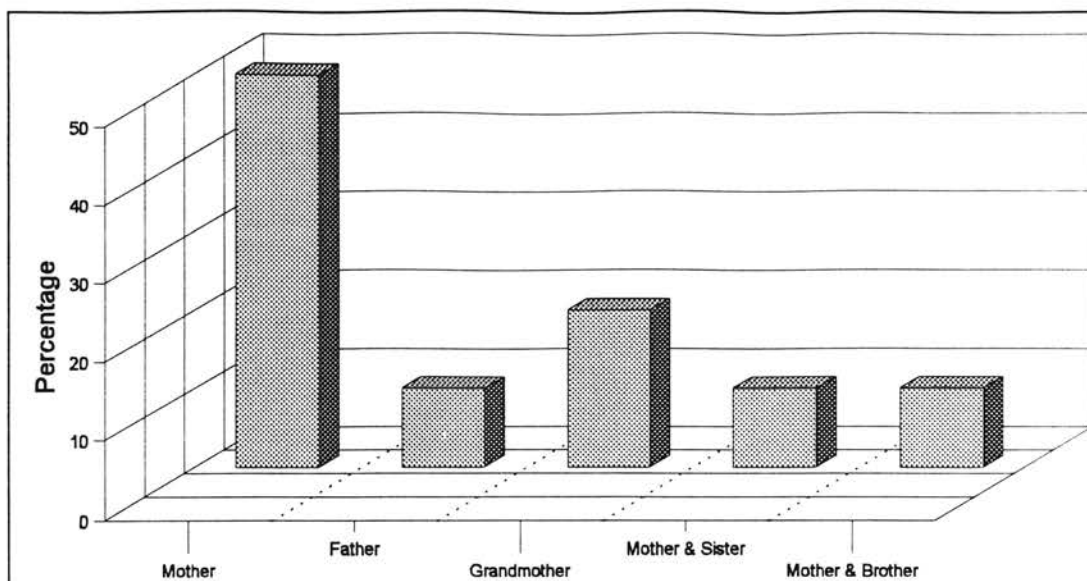


Figure 6. Percentage of Responses to Question Seven – Who Would You Consider to Be the Best Mentor to Contribute to Your Academic Success in School?

Little Ms. Lola, explicitly stated, “My Granny. She always tell me to do my work and not to dropout of school and go to college.” Little Ms. Promise reminisces as she identified about her grandmommie to be her mentor:

My grandmommie, because she was always there for me no matter what. If I called her at 3 o’clock in the morning she was there. No matter what I needed I always had it whatever it was I wanted. Plus she would always tell me, “keep your eyes on the prize and get’em and grab’em.” She was always making little statements like that. She said a lot. She was like at first you don’t succeed don’t give up. As you being a Black young lady, you got to work hard and you can do it and whatever you do, never ever do anything against your will. She said a lot of things that . . . that will just benefit me for the rest of my life.

Of all ten respondents, only Little Ms. Shorty asserted that her daddy was her mentor. She made the following statement:

My daddy. Cause my daddy he's like real smart and he always tell me that you're going to get into a good college and stuff. It makes me want to do better and he always say and tell my momma she's going to buy us a big house and she's gonna buy us a Lexus (*respondent laughs*) when she get older and I said yes that is right and I feel like since I said that I think I should keep my word now. And make sure that I do good because he always like he's really into school and he don't never be like, get off the phone and study, don't you have some homework. I be like no and he be like okay. He don't really make me get off the phone or any anything. He always telling me don't let these little girls and little boys get you off your work you know to stay on track. And this and that. I be like, okay daddy whatever (*respondent laughs*) still you know I know what he is saying is true.

The mentor's influence in this study all came from the home environment, which was prolific and served as a unique factor in this study. Many times African American students have had to look outside of the home for role models, but this was not evident, apparent, nor manifested in this particular study. Comments that caused some respondents to seek an influence from the home environment came during the respondents' discussion about their desire to be successful, which was due to having future-oriented goals set that also influenced their academic success.

Future-Oriented Influence. Looking into the future requires planning. Several respondents had goals which kept them focused in school and caused them to be resilient when problems came about in their lives. Their aspirations of who they wanted to become influenced their behavior to produce a desired outcome, especially academically. Additionally, negative and demeaning comments, the respondents' desire to please their parents, and the observation of others' failures served as other reasons that prompted future-oriented influence to emerge.

Little Ms. O described her reasons for academic success by asserting the following:

Well, looking at other people and how they became famous, I know it took having a good education. I want to try my hardest to make it to the top cause I don't want to be broke and have a lot of kids and can't take care of them and stuff. And then people telling me like my siblings even that you ain't going to be nothing and I try to tell myself yes I am and I can be better. I just take what they say and use it as a motivator really to my advantage.

Little Ms. Na Na relayed:

To get a better education and go somewhere in life. I want to be a pediatrician and I know I am going to have to keep my grades up in school if that dream is to come true.

Little Ms. Jay added:

Well, I like going to school and I want to achieve my goals. I want to have a good job and I want to be successful in life and I know I got to do that by having good grades and working very hard in school especially in The Academy.

Little Ms. Shorty, a 4.0 student who had been in The Academy all three years of her middle school experience, proudly added pleasing her parents as a factor for her academic success. Although at the middle school level autonomy is desired, many students are still seeking approval from teachers and parents. Little Ms. Shorty stated the following:

I try to make my parents happy and make them know that I am learning something in school. I'm not just going to school you know just to associate or socialize with my friends. I try (*respondent pauses and smiles*) to really do good so that one day I can get into a good college and stuff like that. And really so my daddy can be happy. So he can go tell his friends "You know my daughter made a 4.0." (*Respondent's face lights up as she elevates her voice happily*). That's why I just go and strive for the best so my parents would be happy. They know that I'm smart enough to make the right decision in life; that's really why.

Little Ms. Promise, a teen model during the summer explained factors for her academic success by emphasizing

Basically, it's mental. I know I have to do certain things. I have to keep a certain GPA to excel, to become what I've succeeded in life and do what I want to do in the summer time. Before we get out of school our agents check our GPA and so they know we are keeping up in school so that our careers are not interfering with our schooling. I try to do my best at everything.

Future-oriented influence is a critical need, particularly among these African American teens. This type of influence can cause an individual to achieve even when the external factors seem dismal and role models seem few. Being future-oriented can serve as an inner source of reference, as an activator, motivator, and regulator for students to retrieve when necessary. This was also apparent by some of the comments of the respondents.

Peer Influence. Peer influence has been shown to be a powerful force through every phase of a child's schooling experience. However, very few educators, parents, and students will discuss positive peer influence. The girls' talking continued as they shared how their peers and friends played a role in their academic success.

Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents received peer support while in middle school which influenced their behavior to be resilient even when the subject area became difficult. The respondents constantly referred to "algebra" as one of their classroom examples. Half (50%) of the respondents noted that peer encouragement was very meaningful to them. Peer competition took place due to the fact that eight of the ten students were in The Academy and two of the students were in the regular classes. The school had created obvious differences between the two groups. Some tension did exist but some girls used this as an advantage. The observation of others failing was a

motivator as well, and 10% reported that others influenced their desire to excel in school (Figure 7).

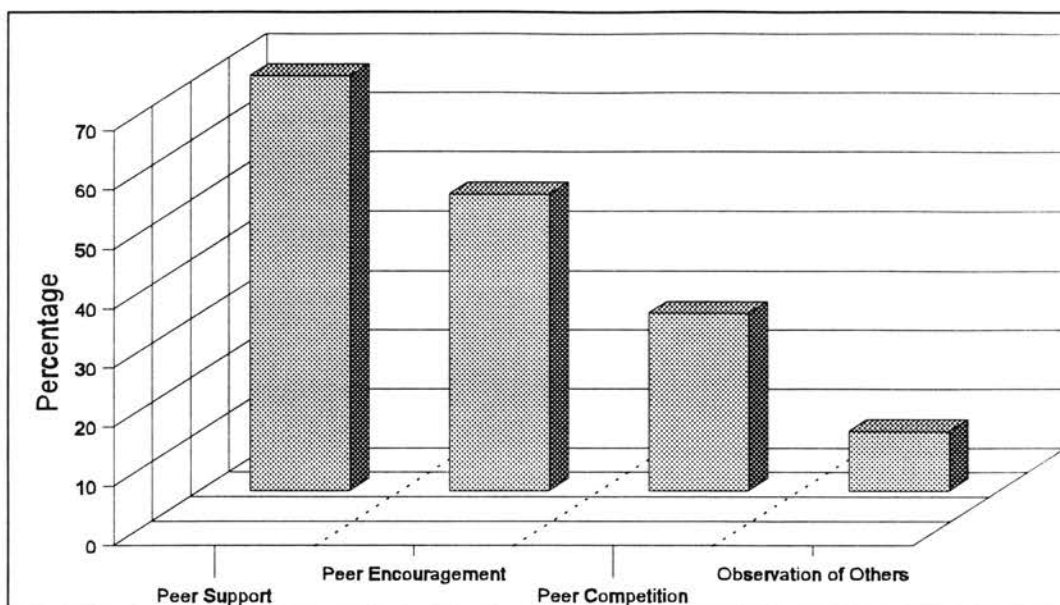


Figure 7. Percentage of Responses to Question Two - in What Ways Do Your Peers/Friends Play a Role in Your Academic Success in School?

Little Ms. Braids gave a quick response and an example. When I asked what role her peers or friends played in her academic success in school, she responded:

If I have a test and I'm stressing through it, they help me calm down, and that's the kind of role they play. They just help me calm down and get cool and help me laugh or whatever. We just talk about stuff for school and for tests.

Followed by Little Ms Calm and Collected who answered, “They encourage me to do well because I don’t want to be the only one that doesn’t, especially because they do well also.”

Little Ms. Shay was eager to contribute:

Yes, like some people might not have strength at home with their family or something and they help me out on that end as far as problems in life and some are good in algebra and I’m not good at all. So they help me try to do that and that’s good that they care a lot to help people out because some friends don’t do that.

Little Ms. Lola confidentially said, “If I’m doing bad or something they might help me with my work or something.”

Little Ms. Jay spoke from an unusual view saying:

I see how some of my friends are sort of failing and I don’t want to go there. And they’re really setting an example in a different way. Sometimes I look I know I have choices and see where they are and then I look at myself and where I could be at and its like in a way they’re playing a role in my academic success.

Little Ms. Na Na stated,

Sometimes I get them to help me with something I’m lost on in class or something like that and usually they do help.

Little Ms. O added, “Well only one of my friends is in The Academy and she kind of help [sic] me out.” Little Ms. Shorty boldly confirms that she has more than one friend in The Academy and expresses her gratefulness by stating:

Most of my friends they’re like up there with me (*Respondent uses her hands as she demonstrates up*) you know they make good grades and they are all in The Academy and they feel like they have to study and get good grades, so since I hang with them I feel I have to do the same so to feel involved in what they’re doing I have to do the same things in class (*respondent pauses and emphasizes*) get good grades. I’ll be the only one with one point something and I’m going to feel left out if they all made honor roll and I didn’t. I feel like as far as when they make good grades I

should too. Just to feel a part of something where everybody is just doing their work and their best in school.

Little Ms. Bo-Pete shared the same sentiments:

My main friends are in The Academy with me. We all help each other out and encourage each other. They encourage me, they tell what I can do and don't let nobody tell me what I can't do. Because I can do anything I want. And that's what they tell me and they are very encouraging.

Little Ms. Promise said: "Basically other people that were older than me were leading me in the wrong direction too."

Peer influence serves as a prevalent type of influence. After reviewing the interviews and themes, I asked the students on the last day of school while in a focus group why they felt peer support, peer encouragement, peer networking, or peer influence was so apparent in this study especially in The Academy. One of the responses was that the regular classroom teachers prohibited them from being involved in the school activities that were restricted to the regular eighth grade students. These included activities such as the school 70s dance, the eighth grade picnic, and other school functions. The Academy students felt that all eighth graders should have been allowed to participate in any eighth grade activities. The students also stated that they were made to interact only with the sixth and seventh grade Academy students. In addition to those comments, some of the regular students reacted the same way to the girls in The Academy as did the teachers. Therefore, not only did being in The Academy cause tension for the teachers, but for the regular students as well. Little Ms. Shay stated:

I don't understand why as eighth graders we just can't be all eighth graders. Obviously the kids are getting these crazy comments like we think we're better and get to go on more field trips from the teachers.

For these reasons, the girls agreed with the findings and asserted that they felt the need to stick together, especially since the regular teachers and regular students did not want them to be a part of their functions. The girls also expressed that they felt that they were being punished for being smart which many cited as an obstacle that they faced in middle school.

“After Having Done All . . . Stand”

*“Obstacles are nothing but an opportunity in disguise.” –John F.
Kennedy*

Obstacles in middle school can be overwhelming due to the fact that physical changes, psychological changes, and social changes are also occurring during that time. In today’s society students are faced with enormous obstacles and they receive conflicting information about how to handle those obstacles. Obstacles in this particular study ranged from fighting, peer pressure, dealing with teasing and demeaning comments, to dealing with the death or loss of a loved one.

Theme: Pressures

Of the respondents interviewed, 80% reported peer pressure of some kind as an obstacle, 40% reported death of a loved one, 50% reported teasing or demeaning comments due to being in The Academy or labeling and stereotyping as obstacles they faced in middle school (Figure 8). The emerging theme was pressure, from which three sub-themes were peer pressure, family pressure, and life pressure.

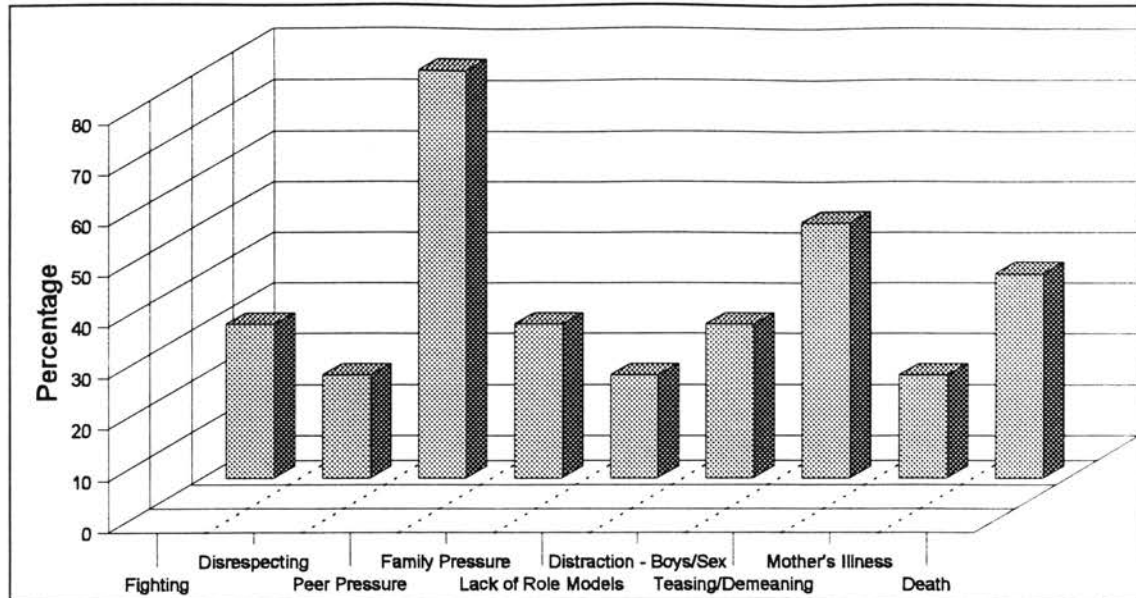


Figure 8. Percentage of Responses to Question Three - What Are Some of the Obstacles You Have Faced in Middle School?

Peer Pressure. Peer pressure has been part of the social identity for many especially during the early adolescence stage. Unlike peer influence where the African American girls were influenced positively, peer pressure in this particular study served as a negative overtone for many of the girls. African American girls in this study voiced their frustrations with attempting to have a friendship outside The Academy but appeared to have come to an understanding that friendships are imperfect. “They just go and come I guess and they really weren’t my friends,” said Little Ms. O after being transferred from regular classes.

Peer pressure permeated throughout the interviews as it does for every teen at some point. Peer pressure can be overwhelming if an individual does not know how to combat its impact. The students in this study faced some of the same types of peer pressure being in The Academy. Other forms of peer pressure were opposing the stereotypical images of African American girls that are unique challenges. Being identified as a geeker or a nerd was consistent throughout the respondents' stories.

Little Ms. Calm & Collected experienced being ostracized by her peers due to being in The Academy and recalls the following:

Little Ms. Calm & Collected: Kids talking about that I'm a nerd or whatever but I really don't pay attention to that. Just a bunch of kids that just, you know, hate'n basically, you know.

Interviewer: Hate'n? Now I'm not familiar with that term. Can you tell me a little bit more?

Little Ms. Calm & Collected: Umm . . . it's just basically that the other kids that are not in The Academy are jealous of The Academy kids. Hate'n comes up—usually its all about jealousy. Just because I get my hair done and stuff I think I'm hard. I think I'm too good for everybody since I'm in The Academy—basically stuff like that. I don't know really where that came from just because I'm in The Academy they think I'm a nerd but I don't think I'm a nerd. They call most of us names. I don't really care. Just because you do well in school and the other kids choose not to listen and not do as well don't mean I'm a nerd.

Peer pressure appears to function in a way that affects students' social skills. Not only was the girls' self-esteem high during peer-pressure, but their will to resist this type of pressure was extraordinary.

Little Ms. Shorty: Well, some probably say that I'm a geek and I'm trying to be like them. Well most people like, the people that's not in The Academy, they were, like, The Academy people thinks we're too good to hang out with them and we're trying to be like the White people and stuff like that. I have a lot of friend that not in The Academy and when we are together and I'm not trying to (*respondent pauses and demonstrates*) oh

yeah I got a 4.0 and you know this and that and I'm in The Academy and I don't never talk about school really unless they get on some school subjects. They usually be just like we think we're better than them cause we make better grades, we're getting a higher education, which that's not even true: we just learn faster than what they do. And the rest is just the same; we learn the same thing except we go through ours quicker. I think because they are jealous, they say we try to act like we're better than them, which we're not and we don't act like that either.

While students are dealing with peer pressure issues, their own personal identity, personal worth, and personal values are being identified and strengthened. Peer pressures inevitably served as a motivator though the comments were negative. Little Ms. Bo-Pete clearly understood the “big picture” and utilized reverse psychology to resist the statements made about students in The Academy. She emphasized that if The Academy students were not “anything” then why were the regular students preoccupied with their success.

Little Ms. Bo-Pete: Well, I've been in The Academy ever since the sixth grade and I've been in honors classes ever since I've been in school. I went to Head Start so from the beginning of my schooling I have been in honors. I've been making good grades so I can stay in honor classes. The first time when I came to this school and enter the honor classes, people were telling me that she thinks she's smart; she thinks she's better than everybody and I'm a geeker or whatever. But I really I didn't pay no mind because I was proud of my knowledge and knowing what I had and being what I got to be in school instead of trying to be like everyone else. So that's basically what happen through sixth and seventh. Eighth grade now they say things like they're not smart, The Academy isn't nothing. So I have to break it down and say if The Academy isn't nothing then why are you so worried about us. You can be in The Academy if you want to instead of being like everybody else, instead of wanting to be in regular class and goofing off. And they also don't want us to participate in activities that they have just because we're in The Academy. . . eighth grade activities (*respondent frowns in a state of confusion as she raises the pitch of her voice very high*) and we all are eighth graders including The Academy eighth graders. It's like The Academy kids get separated from the rest of the kids and regular kids just act so childish and like we just can't do anything with them and we're all eighth graders.

Many times, schools and educators have the students' academic needs in mind without giving much regard to how a particular program will influence, change, or even affect the students' social needs. The opinion of the girls, as expressed by Little Ms. Bo-Pete, was not to be separated from their same age-group peers, especially during school functions. The girls later shared during the lunch hour that their concern was not as great when it came to eating with their friends who are not in The Academy but they were definitely concerned about not being able to socialize during school functions and during the eighth grade activities. In this particular study, this was a type of "new millennium segregation" indeed.

Little Ms. Shay: People who have a low GPA, who are always in trouble and they do go through the wrong path all the time but they always talk about the kids in The Academy.

Interviewer: Can you tell me some of the things that they say about kids in The Academy like... (*respondent smiles and frowns as she begin describing what's said*).

Little Ms. Shay: They'll say something like you're a nerd, you think you too good for us, you need to leave from over here, or they'll say something like y'all think y'all are little goody two shoes or things like (*Respondent pauses then continues*) dork and stuff like they're just trying to act White.

As Little Ms. Shay indicated, regular students resorted to name calling because they perhaps could not be identified with The Academy students. The Academy's being organized and structured the way it was created a greater dissonance in the minds of other students and the girls who participated in this study about their social identity. Therefore, it was additional pressure, for these girls had to know who they are as African American females and many reflected on who they wanted to be in order to guard against this form of peer pressure.

Interviewer: Whose saying this again?

Little Ms. Shay: It's... basically it's all students. Well, not all students because I have friends outside The Academy. I have a lot of friends outside of The Academy too. Sometimes its people who just dislikes you or people who are bad or people who have low GPA. They'll say just because I want to do my work I'm a nerd or just because I want to succeed I'm a nerd. They'll say something probably like that and sometimes other things.

Interviewer: Other things like what?

Little Ms. Shay: I guess we [Black girls] have a lot of experience because some people really think that we got a bad name. They think we are very promiscuous or something but its not even like that. I see a lot of girls that's not even our race that are doing worse than us. And we have it harder cause these boys out here. They think that we are just going to do whatever they say just because they think all Black females are all the same. A lot of people say they [Black girls] ain't nothing. They think of us like that and that's a lot to deal with. A lot of grown ups think even that of us like that or think that we they ain't [sic] about nothing and think that we all are the same. And it really not like that because there are a lot of different females. Some females are like that but not all African American females. African American females that have done a lot of successful things and made a lot of success in their lives through bad things and still held their heads up. They say we are but it's like they just don't know about a lot of things that happen or even about us.

Interviewer: You said "they" think Black girls are promiscuous and all the things you just talked about. Can you tell me whom are you referring to when you say "they" think this of Black girls.

Little Ms Shay: Basically White people and people of other races.

Interviewer: Then you said its hard and you would tell them to hold their heads up. Let's talk about what makes it so hard.

Little Ms. Shay: Some people think less of us that we ain't [sic] going to be nothing and we just going to go out and do a lot of things that we are not suppose to. And its really not like that. It's like we have more goals for ourselves than probably any female out here. We have more goals and try to pursue them in certain areas.

Although Little Ms. Shay expressed her concern about the stereotypical images of African American girls, she had the ability to resist the controlling images of the dominant

society which has depicted her as a promiscuous teen. Historically, the African American woman has been faced with resisting the images as mummies, matriarchs, welfare, and whores or Jezebels (Collins, 1991).

During early adolescence, peer pressure can heighten if individuals feel an emotional loneliness when he or she desires to be accepted even if it is from the opposite sex. In addition to being ridiculed for being in The Academy, and resisting stereotypical images, Little Ms. Shay admitted that being distracted more during her eighth grade year with boys and sex was another obstacle. Below she describes of this obstacle.

Little Ms. Shay: Well, I have faced this like personal (*respondent pauses, raises her eyebrows, and with a high pitch*) anything?

Interviewer: Anything.

Little Ms. Shay: I have focused a lot on sex. I mean that's all that's going around but I ain't [sic] never did anything. But basically young girls like us, boys, like, get more attracted to one thing and it's like that this year and we have a lot of problems with girls getting into that.

Interviewer: That? Is in reference to what?

Little Ms. Shay: Sex.

Little Ms. O shares her experience with peer pressure.

Little Ms. O: Peer pressure, there is a lot of people out there trying to make you do bad stuff like ask you to drink, smoke and do all this stuff and if you really don't want to do it you don't have to. Like me I don't deal with that kind of stuff. Like people ask me if I do that and I say no but they tell me I am lying. And I say why would I want to do something like that to mess up my life.

Interviewer: When you talked about drugs, alcohol, peer pressure and all those kind of issues, is it mostly at school or do you face it everywhere.

Little Ms. O: It's not really at school, it's when you are out in the community or neighborhood but I basically made up my mind and tell them NO.

Interviewer: You tell them No.

Little Ms. O: Yes because that is not cool.

Family Pressure. Although mother's influence and mentor's influence was positive and appeared to have come directly from the family, pressure from other family members' encouragement and life's pressures were conveyed throughout the interviews as well. Students readily discussed and drew from a wide array of the world's pressures, not only peer pressure, but family pressure.

Little Ms. Jay speaks about family pressure being the barrier for her while at Hilltop Middle School.

Little Ms. Jay: Like my brothers; my mom has two sons and they are, like, the bad ones. One of my brothers is only 16 and he's not going to school and he used to try to get me to smoke and all that. And my other brother he's in jail and he tries to help us at first he didn't try to help us while we're in school but now he's in jail he tries to tell us like what we need to do and stuff. That's basically it.

Interviewer: How old is your brother that's in jail.

Little Ms. Jay: He's 24

Interviewer: 24...Okay. Were you able to keep your grades up going through all of that?

Little Ms. Jay: Yes, because I see where he's at right now and what he did and I know I didn't want to go that way. So he was another role in my academic achievement because I see how he was doing and where he's at and I didn't want to be like that.

Little Ms. Promise shares the same reaction about family pressure. She added: "I have two brothers that were like, Oh yeah my little sister is hard."

Interviewer: What do you mean by hard?

Little Ms. Promise: I mean bragging because I was bad. They were encouraging me instead of stopping me. My older sister was basically the same way. She encouraged it too kind of until she went to the military. She then basically stopped. After she talked to me I had to look over myself and had to look back at my little baby sister and when she started doing some of the same things I was doing . . . I mean acting bad. It made me see that it wasn't right. So I stopped doing that and a lot of people were mad at me . . . (*Respondents smacks her lips and takes a deep breath*) but it was what I made up my mind I wanted to do.

Interviewer: A lot of people as in...

Little Ms. Promise: My brothers...my friends well... like people around here that I used to hang with that I don't hang with no more, don't associate with, and even my other sister and some of my family.

Interviewer: Okay, you said they were mad at you...what did they say or do to make you think that they were mad at you? Can you tell me more?

Little Ms. Promise: My family members would say well would some of them would tell me I am not about (*Respondents spells out the word S.H.I.T.*) but you know I would say I don't think of my family as being a family cause we only pull together in times of needs.

Life's Pressure. In today's society adolescents are forced to grapple with unexpected pressures of life which cause many African American girls to be precocious teens who are prematurely forced to function in adult roles. Unfortunately, terminal illnesses, premature deaths of a friend, or death of a loved one was a reality for these respondents.

With drugs, gang violence, gun violence, teenage pregnancy, and other external factors surrounding their world, survival took on a new meaning and many youth were simply grateful be alive. The obstacles that these African American girls faced in this study other than peer pressure and family pressure were the pressures of life. Learning

how to deal with death and loss was evident. With watery eyes and trembling voices, the girls shared their stories.

Little Ms. Braids related her obstacles as, “Recently, my cousin and his girlfriend died and that was hard.”

Interviewer: You mentioned losing your cousin, I want to ask this question. If you don’t want to, you don’t have to answer it. How old was he when he passed?

Little Ms. Braids: 22

Interviewer: I’m sorry to hear that, with him being so young.

Little Ms. Braids: Yes. He got shot; the both of them. Him and his girlfriend got shot.

Interviewer: Really?

Little Ms. Braids: Yes, my uncle was the one who found them. His little boy was in the apartment with them.

Little Ms. Na Na adds the same sentiments: “Well, I lost my grandmother and my friend.”

Interviewer: Your grandmother and your friend?

Little Ms. Na Na: Yes

Interviewer: Okay when did you lose your grand momma? And then tell when did you lose your friend?

Little Ms. Na Na: Yes, like 1998 and it was two days after Christmas for my grandmother. That was my worst Christmas. (*Respondent puts head down*)

Interviewer: Tell me, then, at what time did you lose your friend?

Little Ms. Na Na: I didn’t lose them at the same time. He died the morning of Christmas. He had spinal meningitis.

Little Ms. Shay added:

One of my grandmothers died and I face things with my other grandmother even now. She like needs medication because she's like to the point where I guess she'll start seeing things and stuff. And we have to help her out sometimes because she'll start talking and she'll get crazy and stuff and then we have to calm her down. It just like right now we are trying to get her to go to the doctor so she can better herself. And its like she don't want to go to the doctor; she don't want to do anything because right now I'm kind of really scared for her cause she's not wanting to go at all. You know because she need her medication because if she don't have that I mean she really start seeing things more and the doctor keep telling her she need to take it.

Little Ms. Promise was an unusual respondent who had experienced multiple obstacles ranging from family pressure and peer pressure, to death of a loved one, having cancer, which is hereditary, and lastly an abortion. Below is her story.

Little Ms. Promise:

When my grandmommie got sick everybody was like we going to start doing this we going to start doing that but that only lasted for a little while. I have a tumor in my right kidney, which is cancerous. I had to have a lot of operation in the past because it's hereditary. It's basically in my family and I have sickle cell and real bad respiratory problems. My life has flash before my eyes about four times because I go out to places and girls that don't like my older sister will pull out knives to stab me and cut or fight me. I try not to fight or get involved because I know that by me having cancer I try to keep that on my mind instead of getting involved too much with everybody else. My grand mother died of this same cancer. She wasn't old; she was the closest thing to me. She was the one to keep my head on straight and when I fall she was always there to pick me up. She was living with it; she doesn't believe in operations she wanted to go whole. She didn't believe in taking it out. She was like she not going to let it get her down. She fought for the longest. I had to make the choice of do I actually want to keep her on the life machine or do I want to let her go. She fell into a coma, she woke up and she was telling me that she want to go home and her soul was tired. I didn't catch on until after she died. I felt like it was my responsibility and I made the right choices because she's not suffering any more but it also hurts. But that's something I will have to live with. It's been a month or so.

Interviewer: Are there any other comments you would like to share. Remember everything you say during this interview is confidential and will remain that way. No real name will be used or anything.

Little Ms. Promise: Well, I recently—I'm not going to lie. I just had an abortion because I messed up. My boyfriend helped me a lot. I have to give him props; he was always there for me. When I felt I want to die after this happen and especially when my grandmommie died. Instead because my mom was not being there for me my boyfriend was the one kept me... to keep my head on straight a lot?

Interviewer: You mentioned earlier that your sister has this same cancer and I know you said it's hereditary. How old is your sister?

Little Ms. Promise: Now she's six

Interviewer: She's six... How did you deal with that?

Little Ms. Promise: It was really hard because she had her operation when she was two because she couldn't live without it. It was hard because on her second birthday instead of having a party liked other kids she was laying in the hospital. I felt like it should have been me instead of her. I've been living longer than she has (*Respondent puts her head down*) I mean I was like take me instead of her. Now she kind of ... doing a little better you know although she have it she don't let it stop her too much from being a normal kid...but when she look at her scar she cries. I be like you have nothing to cry about. But she cries and says "but it's an ugly scar" (*Respondent speaks and uses her voice like a little child*) By her being a young child she handle it pretty good though but it's hard because she had a lot of therapy but she is finished with therapy and now its really up to her. She has to keep it up on her own. She has to have it mentally like I did.

Interviewer: Anything else you would like to share in reference to some of the barriers that you've been dealing or you have dealt with.

Little Ms. Promise: My best friend died when I was in the sixth grade. We had got into a car wreck on the way to the city. We didn't have any seat belts. She was thrown out the car. There she lay in front of me with her intestines on the outside.

Although the African American girls in this particular story had enormous obstacles and hurdles to climb, they were triumphant in defeating their personal life's giant; and whether faced with peer pressure, family pressure or life's pressures, these respondents were victorious in their academic pursuits and resilient enough to bounce back.

“In the Eye of the Storm . . . Just Do It”

“Be thankful for adversity because it presents the greatest opportunities for significant and personal growth.” –Lorrin L. Lee

Barriers can be incredible, unforeseeable, and sometimes improbable, but being able to rise above them is not impossible. Determination to remain focused in school emerges as the next theme. In the respondents’ comments, 60% reported that the way they maintain their grades when faced with problems is by focusing on their work, while 50% stated in a very short candid way that they “Just Do It.” The Nike slogan has been one that unintentionally African American girls adopted as a coping strategy. Forming this philosophy or view may stem from the African American girls’ history and race. Many times the African American woman had to recognize that she had no other choice in many arenas than to “Just Do It.” This outlook about the dilemmas she may find herself in when it comes to life’s circumstances has taken determination for both the African American woman and African American girls alike (Figure 9).

Theme: Determination

For the respondents in this study, several barriers could have easily prevented them from succeeding academically. However, the respondents recognized that achievement was attainable in spite of difficulties; they had the vigor, the stamina, the endurance, the resilience, and the determination to get the job done academically. Below are their testimonies of how they accomplished their academic goals.

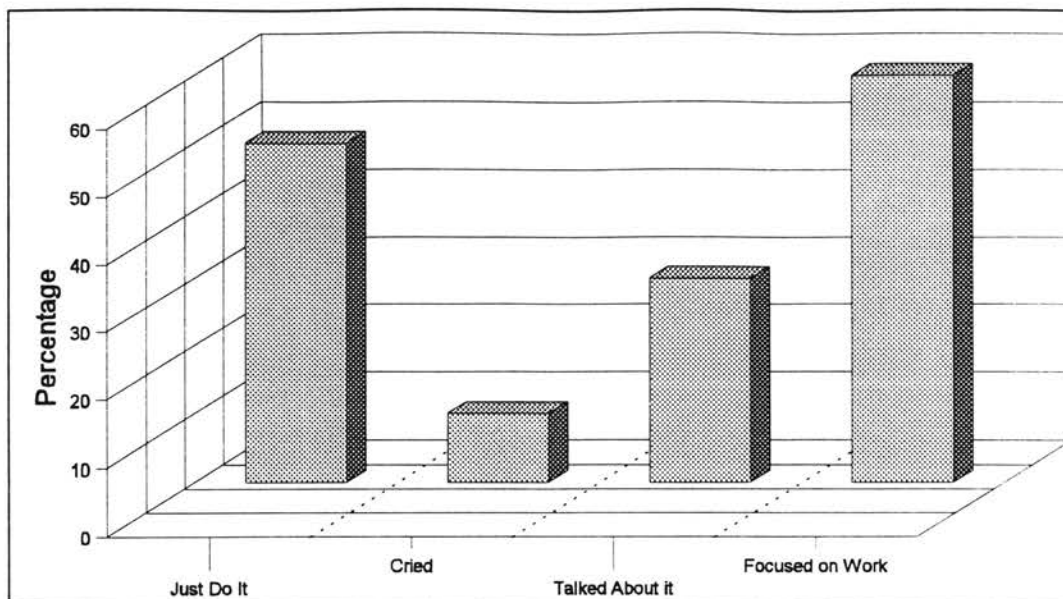


Figure 9. Percentage of Responses to Question Five – How Do You Deal with Barriers (Faced in School)?

Little Ms. Braids states:

What make me stay focus is getting something in life after I leave school. I have retained a 4.0 the whole three years I have been in middle school and I don't want to mess that up. I don't want to be like some of the drug dealers working at McDonalds or something. Because I want to be better than that so I work hard to get into college so I can do something and be something and maybe get out of Oklahoma City (laughs). And that's what keeps me focus.

Little Ms. Calm and Collected's response to a personal matter was as follows:

I'll say that it was on my mind a lot but I knew that I couldn't bring my grades down because of the mistake that I made. I just try to take it off my mind and focus on what I had to do and just get it done.

Replied Little Ms. Shay,

Well that's [remaining focused] hard it's very hard to do that but I try to block a lot of things out. I try to block it out cause really I don't have anybody to talk to and I make myself think . . . I got to do this and do that.

But still go on and just do what I need to do. People who are outside of The Academy think that you are stuck up and they think that you think you're too good for them. But you got to keep your mind focus on your work or books instead of letting them put you down.

Little Ms. Lola's and Little Ms. Jay's responses to the death of each of their grandmothers were similar. Little Ms. Lola emotionally stated, "I was crying for a long time and I wouldn't talk to anybody but I still came to school." Little Ms. Jay added, "I cried but I still got my work."

"I just have to check myself I have to tell myself calm down and do what you got to do. I mean I got to remind myself that I got to keep my grades up and do what I know to do," said Little Ms. O.

Little Ms. Shorty responded:

I, like, (*respondent pauses*) if I have a problem I talk about it just to get it off my mind a little and after I talk about it I usually, I mean, I'm right back on top of my school work and getting focus again. I mean I just feel like I shouldn't be dreading over something that happened and if I just talk about it then it will come all out and I can just get on over it and get on with what I'm suppose to be doing. Just thinking about it and reminiscing over it is not good.

Little Ms. Bo-Pete exclaimed:

I tell them I'm trying to make something of myself, I'm trying to be somebody. That's how I get over it; I just don't want to be struggling in life. I want to make it, I don't want to be on the verge of going down. I want to be on the top. So that's how I handle it. I know if I study now and I can get a scholarship to go to college and then I can be somebody instead of being nobody. That's what keeps me going.

Little Ms. Promise added, "My grades were falling, but I got them back up. There are people here that I can talk to and people who do stuff for me when I need them maybe in a way."

Determination is the key component to winning in a losing situation or circumstance. It is what caused these African American girls to initiate the inner drive from within and to activate their effort to achieve. If these respondents had not been tenacious enough to formulate a strategy that would cause them to “dare to be different” then the outcome of their “world of academic success” would have been different.

“When Educational Opportunities Knock . . . Will you Answer?”

“People can be divided into three groups: Those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened.” –John W. Newbern

Taking advantage of educational opportunities is not only critical for teens but for all those who desire to fulfill their aspirations and goals. It is not new that receiving a quality education, acquiring certain degrees, and later obtaining the job that one may desire requires walking through opportunity’s door. Doing this will take motivation, interest, and encouragement even at times from one’s inner self. However, many students do not possess the motivation and encouragement they need to produce successfully in school, which creates a lack of interest in school. In this study, 80% of the respondents stated that many students did not perform well in school because they lacked motivation and encouragement, while 50% were reported to simply lack interest in school, and 20% simply did not see the benefits of schooling (Figure 10).

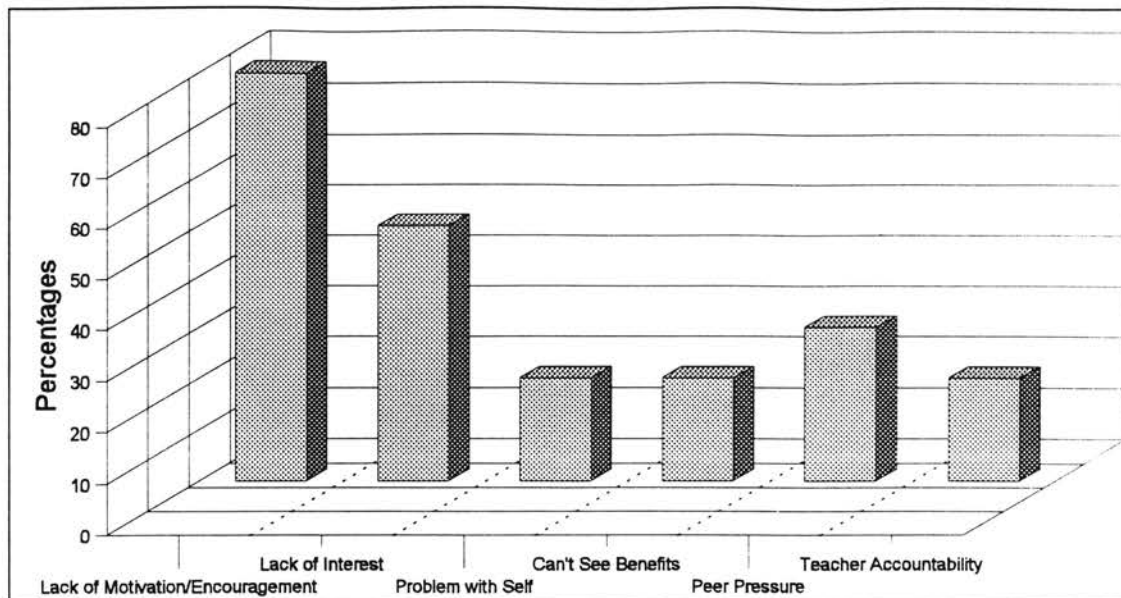


Figure 10. Percentage of Responses to Question Eight – Why Do You Think Others Do Not Perform Well in School?

Theme: Lack of Motivation/Encouragement

There are various studies on student motivation, which appeared to be a theme in this particular study as well, but only for those who do not do well in school. On the other hand the girls responded as to say that many students have “no excuse” but are not interested and cannot see the benefits of schooling. These comments are from multiple perspectives.

Little Ms. Braids answered:

I don't know but sometimes like the stuff is easy for me but maybe it's my mind or whatever. Or sometimes they just don't turn in their work cause math is the only thing that people in The Academy have a lot of trouble in. It's easy for me but there's probably some students who turn in their work where there's some that probably don't because they thinks it hard.

Little Ms. Calm and Collected replied:

I think they don't listen and they try to act funny and tell jokes and they want to smart off to the teachers all the time. They don't do their work and they don't really like school. Even though I don't care too much about school either, but I know I must do well if I want to be successful in life because school is the opportunity for me to do well.

Looking at the home environment, Little Ms. Shay stated:

Well, I'll say maybe they have problems with themselves or maybe they just don't like school at all or they don't want to do any work or maybe they feel like why should they do it if it's not going to help them. Some people think that school is not going to help them in life, but actually when you think about it, it's like it will help. Because I use to think, well why we got to have algebra that we really don't need it in life, which we really may, or we may not. But I guess they felt that way too. Another reason is they may be going through a lot of things or their parents might not be motivating them at home to tell them they need school to find a job. So sometimes it can be with the parents not motivating them that makes them not do well in school.

Little Ms. Lola had a different opinion when I asked her why some students don't do well in school:

Because they don't want to. They just don't take advantage of school. They could do good if they try but some people just don't even try. But when they are grown and they don't be able to get a job, then they will be thinking back on why they didn't do their work in school.

Little Ms. Lola's expressions may have been a little harsh to some but similar expressions and statements were echoed by other members specifically from The Academy.

Little Ms. Jay said:

I think probably their friends and the problem that they are going through but you can't really blame all that on your problems; you can but in a way you can't. I think they're listening to their friends and they're listening to people and letting them bring them down instead of doing right and going up. I think if they really want to achieve their goals they would and keep on trying. I think they shouldn't let their problems or bad situation get in front of them or hold them back from doing what they want to do.

Little Ms. Na Na believes, “Probably because the mothers aren’t there for them; I mean if they are, then probably cause they don’t want to. Some kids don’t even try in school.”

Little Ms. O commented:

They probably don’t want to or think they don’t need to or don’t have to or they want to be their own boss and not listen to the teachers maybe. But then again, I feel if they wanted to do well in school, they would.

Maybe because the majority of the African American girls were in The Academy they knew the importance of taking advantage of the educational opportunities available to them, and they did not have a tolerance level for those students who did not. The girls’ responses appeared to lack sensitivity for even those students who experienced difficulties.

Little Ms. Shorty was sympathetic to some extent and supported the belief that environmental factors may play a part. She made the following statement:

Because usually problems at home and maybe for instance some kids like for instance they just keep on getting D’s in Math or something they just, like, “well, I don’t like math, forget about it” and stuff like that and just quit. Instead of just keep on going like they’ll make a bad grade one time and they’ll be, like, forget it. I don’t need to study cause this other test I almost flunk and they just give up so easily really when they give up, it just leads to all bad grades and stuff and they be just like well. Instead of studying and trying to get better grades they just be like okay, you know. That really kind of sets them back and that makes it harder on them when they just give up and not take advantage of the opportunity to get what they can.

Little Ms. Shorty appeared to voice an opinion of students who experienced difficulty in school.

Little Ms. Bo-Pete proposes:

I really don’t know what they go through but it seems like they don’t have as much encouragement as others have. They may feel like that since they don’t have it at home, they feel like they can do whatever they want to do because no one cares. I feel if you don’t have anyone that you care about you really won’t care about yourself. So I think that mainly what others go

through they do really have someone who care about them to make sure they are on the ball or on the right road and not get off track.” . . . “they probably because they want to be like their friends or somebody in the neighborhood, people that they hang around. Those people who don’t do well... they do well and their friend doesn’t do well then they might feel like they are not a part of the crowd. I feel like they think that they have to be bad, they have to clown in class because they have friends who do that kind of stuff.

Lack of encouragement and peer pressure is what is conveyed by Little Ms. Bo Pete comments. This might mean that a lack of supportive home environment and a lack of a supportive peer group can contribute to a student’s lack of performance in school. Although Little Ms. Bo Pete speaks from the view that peer pressure plays a vital role. Little Ms. Promise asserts that teacher’s lack of involvement in the classroom can be just as critical in a student’s academic performance in school.

Little Ms. Promise comes from a different perspective by asserting:

I feel like some of the teachers don’t teach like they should, especially the Black kids. Kids do well here because I feel like the teachers didn’t teach. I feel like if anybody is having a problem then the teachers should be the first one and say here you are and show you how to do this instead of saying another student go and help this person. Around here it’s only certain dedicated teachers that teach to the fullest. Most students come to this school not to learn but to see their friends. Some students who need help won’t get help because they hold out because from perspective they worry about what everybody else is going to think of them. Okay, everybody in regular classes is not dummies. But they don’t want to be in The Academy either.

The reasons for those who lack the aspirations to achieve obviously varied. However, being in The Academy was an opportunity that some chose to take while others did not. It was not perhaps due to the fact that many students could not have been in The Academy because their grade point average signified that they could, but some students even in this study were in the regular classrooms out of choice. For these girls, the

question remains the same as at the beginning of this section: When the door of educational opportunity knocks, will you answer?

“In Spite of it All . . . Still I Rise”

“Few ever die from commitment, perseverance, faith, and achievement, but many die from neglected responsibilities, impatience, doubt, and unfulfilled dreams.” – Unknown

Persistence is essential when attempting to overcome any barrier in order to fulfill the dreams desired. The suggestions given in this study for other African American girls were similar to how the girls viewed their own image as it related to their academic success. In the eye of their storms, while sharing their stories, their own personal worlds, they did not give up. The ten African American girls persisted and endured the darkest tempest of turmoil and hardships. Their suggestions and views were similar.

Theme: Persistence

Recalling the slogan of the army as their admonition to others, the girls in this study stated that they would suggest to others: “Be all that you can be.” Sixty percent (60%) stated that their suggestions would be to “pursue your goals and strive for success,” 50% asserted that girls should avoid bad advice and 40% suggested to “believe in yourself.” Persistence was the theme for the accomplishments of these African American girls (Figure 11).

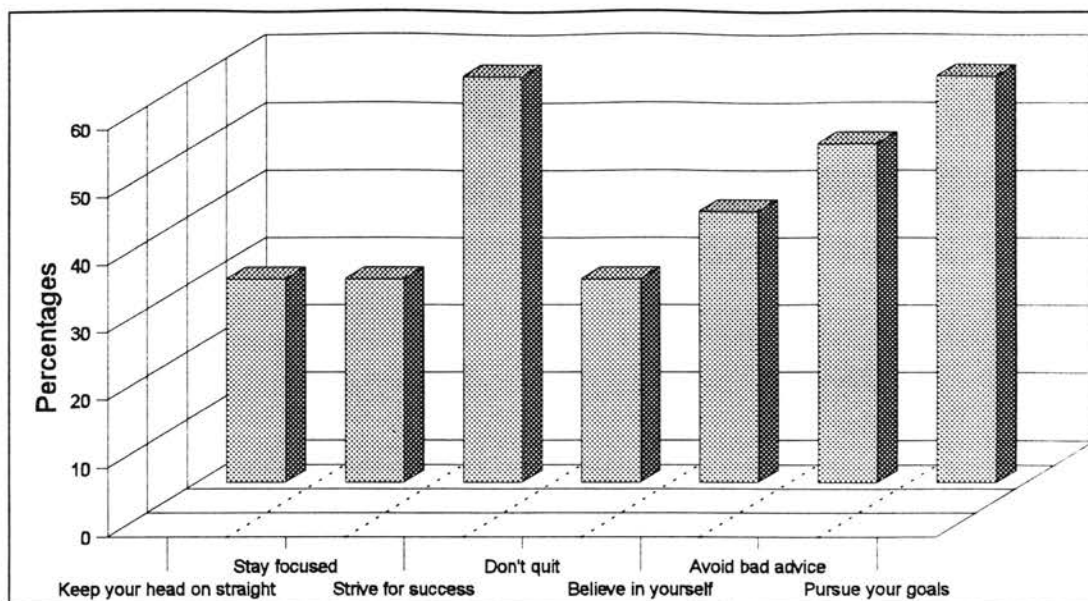


Figure 11. Percentage of Responses to Question Nine – What Suggestions Would You Give for the Success and/or Image of Other African American Girls in School?

An example of the responses in reference to both suggestions given for others and the image of African American girls were as follows:

Little Ms. Braids: The only I would say is keep your head on straight and don't be worrying about them boys or whatever. And just stay focus and if getting good grades and stuff (pauses) and being successful is what you want to do in life, keep that in your head and really and truly you can make it.

Little Ms. Calm and Collected exclaimed:

I would say stay strong no matter what. Don't listen to what people got to say, especially negative things. That's really about it.

Little Ms. Shay added:

I would say to strive for success, to hold your head up in life. I think we need to hold our heads up on a lot of things and just think about positive things that are very important to you.

Since these girls were constantly reiterating keep your head up this may have been because of the ridicule they received from other students. It appeared that those in The Academy were refuting any attacks by attempting to do the opposite of what many expected them to do after receiving negative comments. They did continue to hold their heads up as they were giving advice.

Little Ms. Lola began reminiscing on what her granny used to say and replied:

I would tell them to finish whatever you go to do because you can. Don't let anybody tell you what you can't do. Don't let nobody put you down and stay in school, don't drop out, and get a good education. That's what my granny use to say.

Little Ms. Jay's notion was:

I'll tell them that anything they want they can get it if they try and they don't have to listen to their friends that's giving them bad advice or being a bad example. And anything they try to achieve they can achieve it and they don't need to give up because that's what I did; I just kept trying and trying. I'm in The Academy and I think I'm achieving my goals.

Little Ms. Na Na stated she would say, "Just do well in school, get your education, don't let nobody tell you that you can't do anything." Little Ms. O said, "They just need to keep trying their best and try to be what they want to be when they grow up." Little Ms. O also added, that she would tell them, "Don't drop out; keep going to school and just don't quit."

Little Ms. Shorty boldly asserted:

I would suggest to go to school and just be their best. They don't necessary have to make the best grades or anything, just do the best that they can. And like a lot of Black people, they be like the White people is this and that and they always saying the White people are smart and they are geeks and stuff like that. Usually people just say that because they want to be as smart as the other people and you can be as smart as the White people you know. They just come up in a different household where they're use of studying and stuff like that. Most of the Black households,

most of your parents don't tell "do your homework. go study" and they don't keep up on what's going on at school you know. So I would say just go to school and do your best and don't blame any bad grades on anybody else or anything. Don't say I didn't make good grades because my teacher don't like me or something like that and try to be just as good as the other kids in the class.

Little Ms. Shorty's frustration seemed to have occurred from the lack of focus being placed on the African American girls' academic success. It was fact that whether they were in The Academy or not, the African American girls in this study were academically challenged. Little Ms. Shorty also appeared to be one of several dealing with the "burden of acting White." Although she had found ways to negotiate in The Academy, she was attempting to hold on to her own ethnic culture. She added:

I would tell them that being a young African American girl, it's like in class competing with the other races and stuff and it should be for them to see like a young Black girl to be higher than what people is expecting of her. I will tell them that it's good to see somebody, strive to do better for themselves and actually for their families too. Because if they succeed in their goals in life then it will be a success for many Black people not just for myself or my family. Now days you see a lot of Black doctors and stuff and I will be adding to it and you'll see more and more if they would just realize that they can do whatever they want to just like other people.

Little Ms. Shorty's focus was on the contributions that many African American girls can make through self-determination. She wanted to convey perhaps that receiving positive messages would only enhance the image of the Black girl especially as she strives to defy the stereotypical images placed on her by the dominant culture. She reiterated that obtaining certain goals were usually not a norm for Black girls but they can set a precedent for other African American girls. I believe that Little Ms. Shorty may be grappling with Black girls having the opportunities to advance in certain fields such as science, math, and the medical fields. Her comments perhaps stem from her desire to be

an obstetrician. She also realized that she would not only contribute to her race but to others as well.

Little Ms. Bo-Pete emphasized, “Stay focus and don’t let anyone tell you what you can’t do; be yourself, don’t try to be like others, stay on track and be something.”

Little Ms. Bo Petes’ statement may have come from having nine older brothers and sisters and her cry out to simply allow have the opportunity to be herself. She stresses the importance of others doing exactly that.

Little Ms. Promise commented:

I would tell them especially no matter what you are, who you are, keep your head up. Don’t let nobody knock you and if you know there is something you want, instead of wanting it for the rest of your life go out and get it. Don’t let anybody stop you from getting what you want. Don’t let anybody take your pride, just keep your head up and you’ll succeed.

Not only did the girls’ admonitions, suggestions, and advice resonate through their stories, but their expressions can also be equated to their academic success. In addition, the Children’s Self-Efficacy Survey revealed the following results. The academic self-efficacy for the African American girls in this particular study was moderately high, social self-efficacy was moderately high, and self-regulatory was very high as shown in Table V. On a Likert scale from one to seven, seven was the highest score to be made on each of these three scales.

TABLE V
MEAN RESULTS OF CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY
SURVEY

Variables	Academic	Social	Self-Regulatory
Mean	5.99595	6.09771	6.58919
Standard Deviation	0.56487	0.52694	0.69434
Note: N=37.	<i>Moderately High</i>	<i>Moderately High</i>	<i>High</i>

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the school district, the school site, and the African American girls as respondents. Descriptions were obtained through interviews, document analysis, field notes, observations, and the Children's Self-Efficacy scores (See Appendix R - Summary of the Children's Self-Efficacy Survey). Exploratory findings from this study were presented through the "rich, thick" data collected through the interviewing processes which included Hilltop's site, the interview site, and the interview respondents.

CHAPTER V
FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement and academic performance of selected African American Middle School girls. Specifically, this study proposed that beliefs held by African American girls influence African American girls' academic success and their interpretation of their schooling experience. Chapter I presented the background information and an introduction to the respondents. Chapter II functioned as a review of the pertinent literature concerning the influence of self-efficacy. The third chapter presented the methodology that guided this study. Chapter IV presented the exploratory cases. Chapter V is a summary of the findings and reports the conclusions which emerged from the categories and themes defining self-efficacy. The chapter concludes with implications of this research and recommendations for practice and further studies.

Data were collected during field work by participant observations, respondents' adversity questionnaire, The Children's Self-Efficacy Survey and formal and informal interviews. All field work was conducted by the researcher. As this study progressed, the researcher gained new knowledge about this particular culture and a renewed admiration for youth growing up in today's society. Each African American girl provided a variety of

examples of how she was academically influenced and able to succeed regardless of the circumstances encountered or difficulties faced during her middle school years. The following question was asked to determine how these African American middle school girls were able to be academically proficient in spite of adversity:

How does self-efficacy influence the academic success of selected African American Middle School Girls?

Reflections From Interviews

Ten girls were interviewed using the above research question. Based on the data presented from the site and the outcomes of the analysis, several findings emerged. The African American girl's academic self-efficacy was moderately high. Although some girls experienced difficulty in classes such as math and science, their belief in their capability to excel academically with hard work resulted in success. The girls' social self-efficacy was moderately high perhaps due to the fact that the girls were in The Academy and many times socially isolated from the regular students. The African American girl's self-regulatory self-efficacy was the highest of the three levels of domains. Many of the respondents did in fact reveal that they were self-motivated, self-activated, and self-regulated in their quest for excellence.

Although self-regulated, the African American female served as a model who influenced the African American girl tremendously. The respondents were influenced through the enacted mastery influence, social/verbal persuasion and/or vicarious influence. Many of the respondents recognized their mother or grandmother as the most influential person to contribute to their academic success.

Historically, the African American mother has been influential while seeking for transformation and revitalization in order to be a shining thread of hope for her children. Having the African American female as a role model enhanced the Black girls' self-esteem even greater. The African American girl's belief in her capability to succeed academically many times came from words of admonition or encouragement from her mother or grandmother especially when combating peer pressure.

Peer pressure served as a major obstacle for African American girls in middle school but the girls in this particular study many times chose resistance as a coping strategy. They were able to defy the stereotypical images placed on them by using this strategy. Being in a positive academic environment enhanced the African American girls' decision making. Adversity served as a motivator for the African American girls in this study. Forethought capability was implemented and served as a weapon to deter peer pressure.

The pressure the girls in The Academy received by peers was negative and served as a barrier. Previous research concluded that African American students were often perceived by their same race peers as "acting White" when they excelled in school. Many students during Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study chose not to succeed in school because of this type of pressure. This study has shown not only the impact of peer pressure, but the resistance higher achievers use in order to be accepted by their peers. The findings in this particular study were consistent with the literature. However, the ten girls in this study chose to succeed in school despite peer pressure.

African American girls have learned to strategically cope with the obstacles that come their way. They used resistance strategy as their method for victory. Fordham's

(1993) study concluded that Black girls are compelled to consume the universalized “other” in a behavior called gender passing as a strategy. Fordham stated that in exchange for success, African American girls cannot represent themselves and therefore are silenced. In this particular study, gender passing was not revealed. However, a behavior that I would call “unconscious silencing” manifested itself. Eight of the ten girls resorted to wearing this unconscious code of silence as a strategy. They primarily resorted to living the lifestyle of two worlds in order to succeed in school and saw adversity as a motivator. When adversity occurred in their personal lives, their focus on their future goals and desires remained in view.

Conclusions

The African American girl was the key instrument to unlocking the door of her environment in order to produce an effective outcome. The proper use of the self-system enabled the Black girls in this study to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. These functions were implemented by giving the girls the capability to cognitively evaluate their behavior and their circumstances and make adjustments where and when necessary. Bandura’s (1986) theory is mainly concerned with how one cognitively manages during one’s social experiences and how these experiences come to influence one’s behavior.

The African American girls’ self-regulatory efficacy was high which means the girls possessed a cognitive structure in which the major functions included motivation through internal standards and self-reflections. This resulted in the academic success for

the ten African American middle school girls interviewed. Because the girls were able to master this particular function, they were deemed efficacious in this study.

Implications

While the respondents discussed in detail being ridiculed by students who were not in The Academy, they believed this was due to the behavior and attitudes teachers from the regular classes displayed toward the students in The Academy. I believe what the respondents implied as a primary concern through their narratives was the apparent lack of encouragement by all teachers for those who were academically proficient. The implications of these findings seemed to be that teachers should strive to have a willingness to treat all students equally whether they are tracked or not. This would reduce the negative peer pressure received by those who were tracked. There is also a need to improve the school's climate and to recognize that the school's duty is to address each student's need for academic success.

Addressing the students' social needs is just as important for those at the middle school level as addressing their physical and psychological needs. The Academy students that were separated and isolated from the regular students received discriminating and stereotypical messages from the school personnel. The implications were that the decisions administrators, counselors, and teachers made were not always in the student's best interest. Educators should guard against sending such messages to students of any race or ethnic background. School unity and pride assemblies should take place to reinforce the idea of diversity.

Additionally, educators should pay close attention to what research has to say about the ecological effects of schooling on adolescents. African American adolescents, especially from those single parent homes, many times are depicted as underachievers. However, in this particular study, seven out of the ten girls were raised by the “mother only” and were high achievers. One might project that such adverse circumstances would have caused the girls to perform poorly in school and despair by dropping out. These African American girls did not drop out, but chose to persist by beating the odds.

Role models for Black students are many times discovered outside the home, but this was not the case in this study. The ten respondents named someone from within the home environment who enhanced their future-oriented goals. It has been the opinion of some researchers that African American students must look at outside influences as role models. Many times models are athletes, music artists, or those in other entertainment arenas. However, this was not evident in this particular study. The Black girls in this study instead looked at the African American woman as the outside influence for inspiration and motivation to succeed academically. The African American girls’ mother in this particular study was the most prominent in the African American girl’s life.

Recommendations

When the data analysis of the review of literature was coupled with the data gathered from the girls’ interviews, several issues emerged that may suggest additional inquiry. The following recommendations address opportunities for further research and improve practice to broaden the knowledge base regarding academic achievement and academic performance of African American girl at the middle school level.

Recommendations Relating to Practice

This qualitative study has given the research a rich description of the way African American middle school girls view their academic world of success. More attention should be given to African American mothers as a resource for encouraging and stressing the importance of academic achievement and academic success among African American students in schools. While Bandura (1986), Christine (1987), Hackett (1995), and Hackett and Byars (1986) viewed African American mothers as being career-oriented with their daughters, and passing on their paradigm of working, they failed to realize that the African American woman should be viewed as a major influence in her daughters' academic success. The truth of the matter is that African American women are not only preparing their daughters for careers and domestic labor, they are also preparing them through her influence and self-efficaciousness to succeed academically and reach her highest potential in school. This study reveals that her influence, whether verbal or vicarious have made an overwhelming impact on the African American girl and should not be overlooked, ignored, neglected or disregarded.

Research that explicitly examines African American mother-daughter relationships is virtually absent from the literature. However, this type of research is imperative. There is a need for schools to be cognizant of the Black girl's educational experience. I believe research on how the mother is actively involved in her children's academic endeavors will reflect the history of the Black woman and the resilience of the Black girl. Such studies will foster a resistance against the stereotypes attached to the African American

female, especially the mother. The African American mother can be a vital resource in the building of a solid academic foundation for the African American child.

African American parents also need to be informed of local, state, and national requirements for standards in order to inform their daughters of the educational and career opportunities available to her. Since many of the students in this particular study were future-oriented, this information could serve as a motivator to promote higher education and career placement. Parental involvement seems to play a major role in how students perform in school. Therefore, programs which advocate parents as partners in education would be recommended at all levels.

Several girls asserted that they wanted to become medical doctors. It is therefore necessary to help African American girls who are self-regulated affirm who they are by promoting fields of study that were once denied to the African American female. Overall, the results of this study not only indicated that the African American girls' academic experience has been overlooked as supported in other literature, but also that the African American girls' academic success may be related to and influenced by self-efficacy and social cognition.

Although The Academy appeared to have the several necessary components to ensure the students' academic success, some practices should be revisited and revised. The area that created the most dissonance was the notion of being separated and isolated which is what I refer to as the "new millennium segregation." Although the overall physical facilities and other tangible factors were the same, being in separate buildings deprive the regular students of certain opportunities. The regular students did not have the opportunity to go on educational field trips that improved the skills taught in the

classroom. They did not have the opportunity to receive positive reinforcements and rewards at the discretion of the teachers. They did not have the opportunity to have separate assemblies. They did not have the opportunity to eat during a smaller stress free lunch hour. They did not have the opportunity to engage in a non-traditional smaller classroom setting. Hence, The Academy appeared to be for the have's and the regular classes were for the have not's.

The restructuring and reorganization of The Academy should be given consideration in order to accommodate all students. The students who were academically proficient should not be penalized for rising to the educational standards required. Additionally, they should not have to worry about being accused as "acting White" because of obtaining a certain GPA and being placed in The Academy. School cultures have not accommodated for the lack of socialization for the "geeks and nerds" and having a supportive institution in which students can comfortably come and go, to freely learn, and reach their highest potential. This study was consistent with Signithia Fordham's (1988) study where high achievers were called brainiacs. Academically successful students should be able to function without the distracted, deterred, or discouraged.

Teachers, administrators, and board members should implement an all-inclusive, comprehensive effort in order to get students who have the academic potential to succeed to complete school with less difficulty. A mentoring and nurturing component for both accelerated students and their parents should be added. Many times parents do not know the various aspects of schooling. Visiting the school may assist the parents in seeing from a different lens the things that take place at school, in the classroom, and in the community. A support group could be formulated to provide discussions about factors

that are vital in raising accelerated students. Having this type of support group can serve to ensure that parents understand “The Big Picture” of high achieving students. This would be especially useful for African American girls who have unique barriers to face such as race and gender.

Recommendations for Future Research

The overall frame of this research is that the school ground is the place in which African American girl’s self, friendships, and societal influences come into play. Schools must reiterate that young African American girls must negotiate their multiple selves in order to be successful academically in school and risk losing relationships in the community and among peers. Boykin (1993) proposed that there were three patterns for African American students to master in order to be successful in academically. He suggested that the academic achievement and performance of African American students was influenced by their ability to come to terms with the mainstream experience, the minority experience, and the African American cultural experience. Boykin (1983) referred to this as a “triple quandary.” The girls in this study did master all three challenges. Each girl brought to school the multiple aspects of herself and the synergy of being able to achieve in school despite difficulties which became apparent. She behaved one way in her neighborhood and her community. She behaved one way in school with the regular students, and another way in school with students and teachers in The Academy. Many times the African American girl took on the characteristics of the European girl described by Sara Lightfoot (1976). Lightfoot (1976) described White girls as perfect, obedient, and easily adaptable to societal norms. It may mean that the African American girl adopted

this behavior to be accepted in The Academy. If the Black girl was too vocal and assertive (as was the aggressive and outspoken Little Ms. Promise) they may not have been accepted in The Academy.

Selected students reported rich descriptions of their social experiences as being an obstacle, but there is little information regarding the extent to which teachers, counselors, or administrators are trained to meet the needs of a diverse population. Black girls must deal with defying uncertainties by both the dominant culture and the African American culture, accommodating contradictory expectations by both the dominant culture and the African American culture, and fearing rejection by the dominant culture and the African American culture. Schools must become cautious of the strong societal messages sent to students of color. African American girls' academic achievement has not been stressed and is not being stressed. The focus must be on her strengths, resilience, and self-efficaciousness to thrive regardless of her situation and the need to hear her "voice of hope."

In order for these concerns to become more than concerns, Lisa Delpict (1995) explained that the connection educators have with girls, particularly across class and cultural lines, is a complicated one. She explained that the only way to start a dialogue is with "a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but also hearts and minds" (p.46-47). She also maintained that one must have a willingness to hold on to their beliefs and cease to exist as themselves for a moment. This will foster a unique bond between the school and the community. Therefore it is recommended that further research be done to determine the extent to which teachers, administrators and society use the messages received from African American students,

especially those whose social skills had been negatively affected. Researchers should not generalize findings that deal with race, class, or gender issues. Studies must call into question the monolithic and polarized construction of identity for African American students. One cannot understand the African American girl without understanding the unique nature of her African American heritage.

Perhaps a study similar to this using white adolescents as respondents would also yield valuable information. I believe European American experiences would have been different than the respondents in this study. The primary obstacle that the African American students experienced was being able to function in multiple worlds due to race, class, and gender issues. I do not believe that the European American students would have shared those sentiments but it would have been interesting to hear their stories and the obstacles they face during adolescence. In addition, I think it would be interesting to repeat this study with a group of African American students from a more diverse background and not just those African American students with a 3.0-4.0 grade point average. Although the target group was specifically African American girls, I also noticed some African American males in The Academy and another study can be administered to review the gender differences among same race peers. If any of these variables were different, it would likely yield very different results.

Discussion

The respondents were asked to participate in the study solely because they were African American adolescents who had achieved in spite of adversity. I did not require those who succeeded academically from other ethnic backgrounds to participate in the

study. It was not until I reviewed the adversity questionnaires of all eighth grade girls that I realized that those who were not African American could likely have told stories that would have been just as profound and moving. Many of these students' academic successes could have been the product of self-efficaciousness and resiliency as well.

This study had a tremendous impact on my view of schooling and meeting the needs of all individuals involved. It is my opinion that the teachers in The Academy did indeed use more of a constructivist teaching style or method. The students were able to freely learn from each other while the regular classroom teaching styles appeared to be more of the "drill and kill" technique.

I believe that those responsible for educating future teachers and the hiring procedure of new teachers must continue research on meeting the needs of minority students. I also believe that racial composition was obvious in teacher placement in The Academy. With the exception of one teacher, all teachers in The Academy were European Americans. Recruiting minority teachers should be encouraged and promoted. Not one African American girl mentioned a teacher as her mentor let alone an African American teacher. Black and White teachers alike need to understand multiple cultures and multiple conflicts. This should be emphasized in the colleges of education striving to prepare quality teachers with mastery skills for meeting the needs of all children.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires:

Date : Monday, April 24, 2000

IRB Application No: ED00255

Proposal Title: THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS

Principal
Investigator(s) :

Mildred M. Pearson
3711 W. 15th
Stillwater, OK 74074

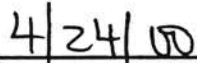
Nan Restine
245 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

Signature: 

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance



Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX B

LETTERS

Date

Name
Title
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear

Thank you for opportunity of interviewing with you at _____ on last week. I sincerely appreciate the time you took to share your story with me. Your experiences will prove to be invaluable as I analyze the information for my dissertation. The insights you offered through your story has been of great benefit to me. If I may be of assistance to you please contact me.

Sincerely,

Mildred M. Pearson

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-2130

ALBERT BANDURA
DAVID STARR JORDAN PROFESSOR
OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY

PHONE: 415-725-2409
FAX: 415-725-5699
e-mail: bandura@psych.stanford.edu

June 24, 1999

Mildred Pearson
3711 West 15th
Stillwater, OK 74074

Dear Ms. Pearson:

You have permission to use the children's academic self-efficacy scale, and yes, it can be used with middle-school age children.

Sincerely,

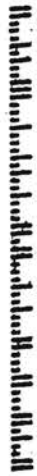
Pat Weaver
Administrative Associate
for Albert Bandura

ALBERT BANDURA
DAVID STARR JORDAN PROFESSOR
OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-2130

Mildred Pearson
3711 West 15th
Stillwater, OK 74074



74074-1441 11



APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Demographics
A. Background Information

Please complete the following:

1. Name _____ Grade: _____
2. Ethnic Background: _____ African American _____ European American
 _____ Native American _____ Hispanic American _____ Asian American
 Other _____
3. Approximate GPA _____ 1.0-1.9 _____ 2.0-2.9 _____ 3.0-3.9 _____ 4.0
4. Extracurricular Activities: (Please check all that applies to you)
 _____ Track _____ Karate _____ Soccer
 _____ Basketball _____ Cheerleaders/Pom-Pom _____ Band/Orchestra
 _____ Softball _____ Speech/Drama _____ Choir
 _____ Volleyball _____ Other
(Tennis, Math Counts, Pro-team or Academic League, Leadership, Peer Mediator)
5. If you participate in any extracurricular activities, please check the appropriate answer as it may apply to you.
 _____ Captain _____ Co-Captain _____ Team manager _____ Asst. Manager
6. Do you like school? _____ yes _____ no
7. Do you like to study? _____ yes _____ no

B. Family Data

8. Check the appropriate answer that may describe your household/family:
 _____ I live with my mother only _____ I live with my mother and father
 _____ I live with my father only _____ I live with my grandmother
 _____ I live with my grandfather _____ Other

If other, Explain

9. Parental Education-The highest level of education completed by my parent (s)

Mother:

_____ Less than grade 12

_____ Grade 12

_____ Some college but no degree

_____ College Degree

_____ Vo-Tech

_____ Graduate School _____ Masters _____ Above Masters

_____ Don't Know

Father:

_____ Less than grade 12

_____ Grade 12

_____ Some college but no degree

_____ College Degree

_____ Vo-Tech

_____ Graduate School _____ Masters _____ Above Masters

_____ Don't Know

10. Do you have any siblings (brother or sisters)? If so, how many do you have? _____

APPENDIX D

ADVERSITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Adversity Questionnaire

1. Have you ever experienced any of the following problems or difficulties below?
If yes, please check any of the following you have faced.

_____ Parents Divorce

Death of a love one: _____ mother _____ father _____ sister

_____ brother _____ grandmother _____ grandfather _____ friend

_____ Others (*Aunt, Uncle, Cousin*)

2. Do you suffer from any kind of serious illness/handicap?

_____ yes _____ no

If yes, your explanation is optional:

3. Have you ever been asked to do something unlawful by peers or anyone else such as drugs, alcohol, or participated in any gang related activities?

_____ yes _____ no

4. Describe the best thing that has ever happened to you?

5. Describe the worst thing that has ever happened to you?

6. What adversities (obstacles, problems) have you had to overcome in the last two years?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW LETTER

Interview Participant Letter

My name is Mildred M. Pearson and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I am writing a dissertation investigating what influences academic achievement and academic performance of Middle School African American girls. This investigation will present an overview of how middle school African American girls are able to succeed academically in spite of problems. I need your help in sharing your experiences and explaining your story. I want to be as accurate as possible and include as many girls who are successful in school by making good grades.

Each participant will be asked to engage in a thirty to forty-five minute interview, fill out a Survey, and a questionnaire. All interviews will be tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. All audiotapes will be destroyed after transcription. Substitute or made up names will be used. The researcher will have the only copy of the names. Your surveys and questionnaire will be given a number and not your real name. I will keep all of your information under lock and key to protect your confidentiality. You do not have to answer any question that you choose not to answer. You may also stop the interview at any time.

I am available to meet with you before school, after school, during school hours and on weekends. My home phone number where I can be reached is (405) 372-0898 and my pager number is 1-888-731-7935. Feel free to contact me for any additional information. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Mildred M. Pearson

APPENDIX F

CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

Name _____

Grade _____

Advisory Teacher _____

Children's Self-Efficacy Survey

Children's Self-Efficacy Scale

This questionnaire is designed to help us get a better understanding of the kinds of things that are difficult for students. Please indicate your opinions about each of the statements below by circling the appropriate number. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name. Please give your frank opinions.

Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources

1. How well can you get teachers to help when you get stuck on schoolwork?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

2. How well can you get another student to help you when you get stuck on schoolwork?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

3. How well can you get adults to help you when you have social problems?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

4. How well can you get a friend to help you when you have social problems?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement

5. How well can you learn general mathematics?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

6. How well can you learn algebra?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

7. How well can you learn science?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

8. How well can you learn biology?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

9. How well can you learn reading and writing language skills?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

10. How well can you learn to use computers?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

11. How well can you learn a foreign language?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

12. How well can you learn social studies?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

13. How well can you learn English grammar?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning

14. How well can you finish homework assignments by deadlines?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

15. How well can you study when there are other interesting things to do?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

16. How well can you concentrate on school subjects?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

17. How well can you take class notes of class instructions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

18. How well can you use the library to get information for class assignments?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

19. How well can you plan your school work?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

20. How well can you organize your school work?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

21. How well can you remember information presented in class and textbooks?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

22. How well can you arrange a place to study without distractions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

23. How well can you motivate yourself to do school work?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

24. How well can you participate in class discussions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Efficacy for Leisure Time Skills and Extracurricular Activities?

25. How well can you learn sports skills?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

26. How well can you learn dance skills?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

27. How well can you learn music skills?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

28. How well can you do the kinds of things that are needed to work on the school newspaper?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

29. How well can you do the kinds of things that are needed to be a member of the school government?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

30. How well can you do the kinds of things that are needed to take place in school plays?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

31. How well can you do regular physical education activities?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

32. How well can you learn the skills needed for team sports (for example, basketball, volleyball, swimming, football, soccer)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Regulatory Efficacy?

33. How well can you resist peer pressure to do things in school that can get you into trouble?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

34. How well can you stop yourself from skipping school when you feel bored or upset?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

35. How well can you resist pressure to smoke cigarettes?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

36. How well can you resist peer pressure to drink beer, wine or liquor?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

37. How well can you resist peer pressure to smoke marijuana?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

38. How well can you resist peer pressure to use pills (uppers, downers)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

39. How well can you resist peer pressure to use crack?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

40. How well can you resist peer pressure to have sexual intercourse?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

41. How well can you control your temper?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Efficacy to Meet Others Expectations?

42. How well can you live up to what your parents expect of you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

43. How well can you live up to what your teachers expect of you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

44. How well can you live up to what your peers expect of you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

45. How well can you live up to what you expect of yourself?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Social Self-Efficacy

46. How well can you make and keep friends of the opposite sex?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

47. How well can you make and keep friends of the same sex?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

48. How well can you carry on conversations with others?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

49. How well can you work in a group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Assertive Efficacy

50. How well can you express your opinions when other classmates disagree with you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

51. How well can you stand up for yourself when you feel you are being treated unfairly?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

52. How well can you deal with situations where others are annoying you or hurting your feelings?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

53. How well can you stand firm to someone who is asking you to do something unreasonable or inconvenient?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

Self-Efficacy for Enlisting Parental and Community Support

54. How well can you get your parent (s) to help you with a problem?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

55. How well can you get your brother (s) and sister (s) to help you with a problem?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

56. How well can you get your parents to take part in school activities?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

57. How well can you get people outside the school to take an interest in your school (for example, community groups, churches)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well at all		Not too well		Pretty Well		Very Well

APPENDIX G

CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY KEY

CSES KEY

Academic Self-Efficacy Items

5. How well can you learn general mathematics?
7. How well can you learn science?
8. How well can you learn biology?
9. How well can you learn English language/writing skills?
10. How well can you learn to use computers?
11. How well can you learn foreign language?
12. How well can you learn social studies?
13. How well can you learn grammar?
14. How well can you finish homework assignments by deadlines?
15. How well can you study when there are other interesting things to do?
16. How well can you concentrate on school subjects?
17. How well can you take class notes of class instruction?
18. How well can you use the library to get information for class assignments?
19. How well can you organize your school work?
20. How well can you plan your school work?
21. How well can you remember information presented in class and textbooks?
22. How well can you arrange a place to study without distractions?
23. How well can you motivate yourself to do schoolwork?
42. How well can you live up to what your parents expect of you?
43. How well can you live up to what your teachers expect of you?

Social Self-Efficacy Items

24. How well can you participate in class discussions?
25. How well can you learn sport skills?
31. How well can you do regular physical activities?
32. How well can you learn the skills needed for team sports (for example, basketball, volleyball, swimming, football, soccer)?
44. How well can you live up to what your peers expect of you?
45. How well can you live up to what you expect of you?
46. How well can you make and keep friends of the opposite sex?
47. How well can you make and keep friends of the same sex?
48. How well can you carry a conversation with others?
49. How well can you work in a group?
50. How well can you express your opinions when other classmates disagree with you?
51. How well can you stand up for yourself when you feel you are being treated unfairly?
52. How well can you deal with situations where others are annoying you or hurting your feeling?

Self-Regulatory Efficacy Items

- 33. How well can you resist peer pressure to do things in school that can get you in trouble?**
- 34. How well can you stop yourself from skipping school when you feel bored or upset?**
- 35. How well can you resist peer pressure to smoke cigarettes?**
- 36. How well can you resist peer pressure to drink beer, wine, or liquor?**
- 53. How well can you stand firm to someone who is asking you to do something unreasonable or inconvenient?**

APPENDIX H

NINE DIMENSIONS OF CHILDREN'S
SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

NINE DIMENSIONS OF CHILDREN'S
SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

Dimension	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
(1) Self-Efficacy in Enlisting Social Resources	37	5.635135	0.63627
(2) Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement	37	6.024024	0.54630
(3) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning	37	5.93120394	0.74548
(4) Self-Efficacy for Leisure time skills and Extracurricular Activities	37	5.810811	0.72026
(5) Self-Regulatory Efficacy	37	6.462462	0.71411
(6) Self-Efficacy to Meet Others Expectation	37	6.101351	1.05320
(7) Social Self-Efficacy	37	6.391892	0.75586
(8) Self-Assertive Efficacy	37	5.932432	0.80504
(9) Self-Efficacy for Enlisting Parental and Community Support	37	5.405405	1.22241

APPENDIX I

CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

CONSENT FORM**Authorization**

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Mildred M. Pearson and Dr. Nan Restine, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

Description

The investigation is entitled: The Influence of Self Efficacy on Academic Achievement and Academic Performance of Selected Middle School African American Girls. This is a study that involves research with adolescents under the age of 18 and is conducted by a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University.

The purpose of the research is to collect data on African American girls' who achieve academically in school in spite of problems. The duration of the project will be scheduled to take approximately four weeks to six weeks. Most interviews should last approximately thirty to forty five minutes, the adversity questionnaire and the survey will last approximately twenty minutes each.

Method that will be used for this research will be through interviews, the questionnaire, and The Children Self-efficacy Survey. The individual has a right to choose not to answer any questions at any time during the interview. After the interview has been transcribed, the interviewee has the right to examine the transcription to make any clarification, if they so choose. The responses will be used to present the view of the participants.

Although there are no questions of a personal or intrusive nature intended, any questions causing discomfort will be discontinued. The benefit to the subject or to others that reasonably may be expected from the research is advantageous. The academic school experiences among African American girls are becoming a popular and growing interest among educators and researchers. Those who are interested in feminist theory or involved in gender studies would benefit from this type of study. This research study could also provide invaluable information for schools and counselors who are dealing with a target group with similar characteristics, especially at the middle level where limited research has been done.

Confidentiality will be implemented by the use of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms will be used in the final analysis and research study. Only the researcher will have access to the actual names of the participants. All participants will be coded into the research so individuals cannot be identified directly or through coded identifiers such as numbers (i.e. 01, 02, etc). All collected data such as the demographic information sheet, the survey, the questionnaire and the interview tapes will be recorded and kept in a secure location under lock and key. Only the researcher will have access to the student's information to maintain complete confidentiality. The researcher will interview each participant in a secure area provided by the school administrator to provide and ensure complete privacy of interview responses. Tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed, destroyed by taping over the interviews, and then discarded. Any information deemed

unacceptable by the interviewee for permanent documentation will be omitted. There will be no risk involved.

This research study is done as part of an investigation. I understand that participation is voluntary; that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify the project director.

I may contact Mildred Pearson at (405) 466-2941 or Dr. Nan Restine at Oklahoma State University (405) 744-8976. I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been provided for me.

Date: _____ Time: _____(a.m./p.m.)

Signed: _____
Signature of Subject

Person authorized to sign for subject, if required

Witness(es) if required: _____

ASSENT FORM

My name is Ms. Pearson and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I am doing some research to write a dissertation on what causes Black girls to be successful in school in spite of problems they may have. This study will tell me how middle school African American girls are able to bounce back and keep their grades up even when problems come up. I need your help in sharing your experiences and explaining your story. I want to be as accurate as possible and include as many girls who are successful in school by making good grades.

If you would like to participate, you will be asked to be involved in a thirty to forty-five minute interview, fill out a Survey, and a questionnaire. All interviews will be tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. All audiotapes will be destroyed after transcription. Substitute or made up names will be used. I will have the only copy of the real names. Your surveys and questionnaire will be given a number and not your real name. I will keep all of your information under lock and key to protect your privacy and confidentiality. You do not have to answer any question that you choose not to answer. You may also stop the interview at any time. This is not a requirement and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am available to meet with you before school, after school, during school hours and on weekends. My home phone number where I can be reached is (405) 372-0898 and my pager number is 1-888-731-7935. Feel free to contact me for any additional information or Dr. Nan Restine at (405) 744-8976. You may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Ok 74078; (405) 744-5700.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Ms. Pearson

Student's Signature

Date

APPENDIX J

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me why do you think you do well in school?
2. What enables you to do well in school?
3. In what ways do your peers/friends play a role in your academic success in school?
4. What are some of the obstacles you faced while in middle school?
5. What you would do differently to achieve success earlier during your middle school years?
6. What do you think are some barriers that you face now in school?
7. How do you deal with these barriers?
8. How do you maintain your grades or remain focused on your studies when problems arise?
9. Who would you consider to be the best mentor who contributed to your success in school? Why?
10. Why do you think others do not perform well in school?
11. What suggestions would you make for the success of other African American girls in school?

APPENDIX K

PROBING INTERVIEW EXAMPLES

Probing Technique for Responses to CSES

After each topic is discussed, use the following prompts when necessary to keep the respondent talking.

Topic:

POSSIBLE PROMPT QUESTIONS INCLUDE:

Tell me more about _____

How _____?

Why _____?

For example _____?

APPENDIX L

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

**FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE AND
PARTICIPANTS COMMENTS**

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Please select one of the choices listed below:

- Most of my experiences were very well represented in this research study.
- Many of my experiences were well represented in this study.
- Some of my experiences were well represented and some were not.
- Some of my experiences were represented well, but most were not.
- Most of my experiences were not represented well in this study.
- Other, list comments below.

Please select one of the choices listed below:

- I agree with almost all of the interpretations made in this research study.
- I agree with most of the interpretations made in this research study.
- I agree with many of the interpretations made in this research study.
- I agree with some of the interpretations made in this research study.
- I only agreed with a few of the interpretations made in this research study.
- I disagreed with most of the interpretations made in this research study.
- Other, list comments below

APPENDIX M

SCHOOL SCHEDULE

STUDENT'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

A DAY

PERIOD	SUBJECT	TEACHER	ROOM
ADVISORY	ADVISORY		
A - 1			
A - 2			
A - 3			
A - 4			
A - 5			
B DAY			
ADVISORY	SAME AS "A" DAY		
B - 1			
B - 2			
B - 3			
B - 4			
B - 5			

A DAY

MONDAY
WEDNESDAY
EVERY OTHER
FRIDAY

B DAY

TUESDAY
THURSDAY
EVERY OTHER
FRIDAY

COUNSELOR: _____

BELL SCHEDULE
SCHOOL YEAR 1999-2000

GROUP A

9:10-9:25-ADVISORY
9:30-10:50-TB1
10:50-11:25-LUNCH
11:30-12:50-TB3
12:55-2:15-TB4
2:20-3:40-TB5

GROUP B

9:10-9:25-ADVISORY
9:30-10:50-TB1
10:55-11:30-TB2
11:30-12:05-LUNCH
12:05-12:50-TB2
12:55-2:15-TB4
2:20-3:40-TB5

GROUP C

9:10-9:25-ADVISORY
9:30-10:50-TB1
10:55-12:15-TB2
12:15-12:50-LUNCH
12:55-2:15-TB4
2:20-3:40-TB5

APPENDIX N

AWESOME PUBLIC SCHOOL GOALS

AWESOME PUBLIC SCHOOL GOALS 1997-2000

Goal I: To have all students read at their appropriate level.

Goal II: To Provide students in every classroom with an equal opportunity to learn, to be critical thinkers, technologically literate, and effective communicators.

Goal III: To expect and enforce high standards for student behavior through character education and code of conduct.

Goal IV: To provide safe, clean, well-maintained buildings and grounds with adequate space for educational needs.

Goal V: To increase the involvement of parents, patrons, business, and others in achieving the goals of Awesome Public Schools.

Goal VI: To manage the financial and human resources in ways that advance the education of children and inspire the confidence of the public as we work to enhance district funding.

Goal VII: To encourage a culture in the district which exhibits respect for others, innovations, educational reform, and accountability.

Goal VIII: To set high expectations and clear standards of performance for all personnel and students and to recognize achievement.

APPENDIX O

HILLTOP MIDDLE SCHOOL CREED

HILLTOP MIDDLE SCHOOL CREED

*Hilltop Students
will become successful,
life long-learners. We
will become
contributing members
of our community
because we have learned
the meaning
of the three R's of
education: Respect,
Responsibility, and the
Right Attitude. Every
day, in and out of the
classroom, we will
respect ourselves and
others; we will take on more and more
responsibility for our own behavior and for
what happens to us, and we will demonstrate
a positive attitude toward ourselves and
others, toward the school, and toward the
community.*

APPENDIX P

THE ACADEMY APPLICATION PACKET

“THE ACADEMY”

**Application for the
2000-2001 School Year**

Application Dates: February 1, 2000 to April 20, 2000.

Mail Completed Application Packet to:

HILLTOP MIDDLE SCHOOL

PRESENTS

“THE ACADEMY”

**FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 6TH THRU 8TH
ENROLLING FOR THE 2000-2001 SCHOOL YEAR**

**A SERIOUS ALTERNATIVE FOR STUDENTS
PREPARING FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND**

APPLICATION FOR ACCEPTANCE

HILLTOP MIDDLE SCHOOL

THE ACADEMY

2000-2001

GOAL

The goal of "THE ACADEMY" at Hilltop Middle School is to provide an academic plan of study, which prepares students for an advanced, college prep high school curriculum.

OBJECTIVE

Upon completion of "THE ACADEMY" at Hilltop Middle School, students will be prepared to enter and participate successfully in T.H.E. ACADEMY at Jackson Miller High School.

MISSION

To provide Hilltop Middle School academy students the opportunity to experience advanced academic, fine arts, and foreign language classes.

CURRICULUM

"THE ACADEMY" at Hilltop Middle School operates as a "school within a school." The curriculum consists of accelerated classes, specialized course offerings, and various electives. Elective offerings include fine arts, performing arts, visual arts, and foreign language. The curriculum is geared to assisting students in scoring high on the I.T.B.S. and C.R.T. exams. Further, eighth grade academy students are encouraged to obtain high school credits through concurrent enrollment at Jackson Miller High School. Concurrent enrollment enhances the elective curriculum mentioned above.

“THE ACADEMY” FOR 2000-2001

Applications will be accepted between February 1, 2000 and April 20, 2000 for THE ACADEMY, at Hilltop Middle School. THE ACADEMY is designed for highly motivated students in Academics, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and Foreign Language. Students must score in the 70% on the standardized test and have maintained a GPA of 3.00 to apply, as well as, recommendations from two educators and two references. Some exceptions may be included if during the interview the committee feels the student should be given an opportunity on a one semester trial basis.

Members of the school improvement committee felt it was important for the educators, as well as the students to make a total commitment to THE ACADEMY program. Teachers who were selected for THE ACADEMY have expertise in their field of study and were selected through the application process. Students who are not accepted in the fall may re-apply the following year.

If accepted, students will be required to enroll in Honors Language Arts, Honors Social Studies, Honors Science, and Honors Mathematics (sixth grade), Pre-Algebra (seventh grade), and Algebra I (eighth grade) one foreign language class, and a fine arts class (performing or visual).

Information pertaining to the application packet or the application process may be directed to The Hilltop Middle School Academy at 2001 N.W.215th Circle, Southwestern Region, 74334 or you may call the school at 921-1020.

“THE ACADEMY”
A
FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Thank you for considering THE ACADEMY. THE ACADEMY functions as a school within a school. THE ACADEMY goals meet or exceed district and state standards. This program provides academically advanced students an opportunity to choose from fine arts, performing arts, visual arts, and foreign language curriculum. THE ACADEMY consists of accelerated classes, specialized course offerings, various electives, and highly motivated educators committed to helping each student reach their potential.

Students who are accepted into THE ACADEMY as sixth graders, will enroll in a three-year plan of study, seventh graders a two-year plan of study, and eighth graders a one-year plan of study. THE ACADEMY is a public preparatory school for students who are talented in academics, foreign language, visual arts, performing arts, and show promise of exceptional achievement.

THE ACADEMY students will be prepared to compete in academic and fine arts completions at the local, district, and state levels. In addition, students may choose to participate in athletics and other extra-curricular activities with the full support of the teaching staff, coaches, and sponsors.

THE ACADEMY has several unique features to keep in mind when considering where you want to attend middle school. THE ACADEMY fosters interdisciplinary units of learning (core knowledge) in the core classes. THE ACADEMY offers eighth grade students the opportunity to obtain high school credits with concurrent enrollment at Jackson Miller High School.

“THE ACADEMY”

CURRICULUM

GRADE SIX

HONORS LANGUAGE ARTS
 HONORS SOCIAL STUDIES
 HONORS MATHEMATICS
 HONORS SCIENCE
 JUNIOR GREAT BOOKS

Choose three semester classes from the following list of elective subjects of which two must be foreign languages: Introduction to French, Introduction to German, Introduction to Spanish, Introduction to Computer Education, Vocal Music, Visual Art, Drama, Music Appreciation and Creative Writing.

Full year elective subject options are:

Beginning Band, Beginning Orchestra, Show Choir, and Academic Competition Team.

GRADE SEVEN

HONORS LANGUAGE ARTS
 HONORS SOCIAL STUDIES
 HONORS PRE-ALGEBRA
 HONORS SCIENCE

Semester elective subject options are:

Beginning French, Beginning German, Beginning Spanish, Creative Writing, Computer Education, Vocal Music, Visual Arts, Music Appreciation, Drama & Speech, Literature, and Learning Strategies.

Full year elective subjects are:

Intermediate Band, Intermediate Orchestra, Show Choir, Modern Dance, and Academic Competition Team.

GRADE EIGHT

HONORS LANGUAGE ARTS
 HONORS SOCIAL STUDIES
 HONORS ALGEBRA I
 HONORS SCIENCE

Semester electives subject options are:

Intermediate French, Intermediate German, Intermediate Spanish, Creative Writing, Advanced Computer Education, Advanced Visual Art, Humanities, Music Appreciation, and Learning Strategies.

Full year elective subject options are:

Advanced Band, Advanced Orchestra, Choir, Journalism, Yearbook, Newspaper, Drama, Show Choir, Modern Dance, Astronomy, Advanced Spanish, and Academic Competition Team.

Courses to be offered in the future are:

Russian and Computer Programming.

“THE ACADEMY”

Application for the 2000-2001 School Year

PARENT/STUDENT INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT)

Student Name: _____
(Last) (First) (M.I.)

Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Sex: M ____ F ____

1998-1999 School of Attendance (current): _____ Grade Level _____

Address: _____ Zip Code _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Relationship to Student: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

RELATED BACKGROUND ACTIVITIES

Please list hobbies and interests. Describe Briefly.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please list academic achievement and awards. Describe Briefly.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please list other achievements and awards. Describe Briefly.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please indicate participation in special programs outside of the school day. Some examples are academic camps, fine arts activities, sports, or organized programs.

Activity	Date	Description
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

(If more room is needed please use additional paper.)

“THE ACADEMY”

Personal Recommendation Form

(Educator, Minister, Counselor, Coach, Etc.)

Do not use family members

Student Name: _____

Recommended By: _____

Position: _____

Please provide the following information about the applicant and return by April 20, 2001. Describe the following traits of the applicant: 1. Character 2. Leadership 3. Commitment 4. Dependability, Reliability, and Responsibility.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

“THE ACADEMY”

CONFIDENTIAL TEACHER RECOMMENDATION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL APPLICANTS

TO THE TEACHER: We value your professional expertise in helping us determine the suitability of this student for our school. All information you provide will be held strictly confidential. Thank you for your time in completing this evaluation.

APPLICANT NAME: _____ **CURRENT GRADE** _____

Please fill in the appropriate box for each description:
(1 being least suited — 3 being most suited)

GENERAL ACADEMIC ABILITY AND PERSONAL BEHAVIOR:

	1	2	3	NA
Academic potential:	()	()	()	()
Academic achievement:	()	()	()	()
Intellectual curiosity:	()	()	()	()
Ability to concentrate:	()	()	()	()
Ability to write:	()	()	()	()
Critical/abstract thinking:	()	()	()	()
Reasoning/problem-solving:	()	()	()	()
Oral expression of ideas:	()	()	()	()
Self-motivation:	()	()	()	()
Good study habits:	()	()	()	()
Participation in discussion:	()	()	()	()
Follows directions:	()	()	()	()
Seeks help when needed:	()	()	()	()
Integrity and honesty:	()	()	()	()
Consideration of others:	()	()	()	()
Complies with rules:	()	()	()	()
Fulfills responsibilities:	()	()	()	()
Emotional stability:	()	()	()	()
Self-confidence:	()	()	()	()
Involved in school activities:	()	()	()	()
Gets along well with peers:	()	()	()	()
Shows respect for adults:	()	()	()	()
Good classroom conduct:	()	()	()	()
Grooming and attire:	()	()	()	()

APPENDIX Q

ADVERSITY TABLE

ADVERSITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Best Experiences	Worst Experiences	Problems to Overcome
Life	Death	Death/trauma
Winning	Menstrual cycle	Peer pressure
Academic achievement	Medical attention	Family member incarcerated
Birth of a loved one	Abuse of family member	Poor academic achievement
Traveling	Incarceration	Family turmoil
Church attendance	Display bad manner	Distrust parents
Phone privileges	Secrets discovered	Being disobedient to parents
Family bond	Fighting	Accident
Supportive friends	Peer pressure	Fighting
Change of neighborhood	Parent's divorce	Alternative choices
Employment		Teasing insults for academic success
Separation of siblings		Parent separation
Becoming a teenager		Friendship problems
		Self-improvement

APPENDIX R

SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY
SURVEY (CSES)

SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

Student ID	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	5.25	5.22222	5.09091	6.750	7.00000	5.50	7.00	6.25	5.25
2	5.75	5.33333	6.36364	5.875	6.55556	6.50	6.75	5.75	6.00
3	5.50	5.66667	6.18182	6.375	6.44444	6.25	6.50	6.50	2.50
4	5.50	6.22222	5.27273	5.125	6.11111	6.25	6.75	4.75	6.50
5	5.50	6.33333	6.81818	5.750	7.00000	7.00	6.25	7.00	4.75
6	6.50	6.66667	7.00000	6.500	7.00000	7.00	6.75	7.00	6.75
7	6.50	6.66667	6.63636	6.500	6.33333	6.75	6.75	6.75	5.25
8	4.75	6.33333	4.45455	4.875	6.66667	6.00	6.00	6.25	4.25
9	5.75	6.33333	6.09091	6.875	5.44444	6.75	5.50	5.75	4.75
10	5.75	6.44444	6.09091	5.875	6.88889	6.75	6.75	5.50	6.25
11	6.00	6.00000	6.18182	6.125	7.00000	6.50	6.50	6.00	5.00
12	6.00	6.00000	5.90909	5.375	7.00000	6.25	6.50	6.50	4.75
13	5.50	6.66667	6.27273	6.875	6.66667	7.00	6.75	6.25	6.50
14	6.25	6.22222	6.36364	4.625	6.66667	6.25	6.25	5.00	5.50
15	5.50	5.88889	5.27273	5.125	6.44444	5.75	6.25	7.00	5.75
16	6.00	5.44444	4.72727	5.250	6.88889	6.25	7.00	5.75	5.00
17	6.00	6.66667	5.63636	6.000	7.00000	5.75	6.25	6.50	5.75
18	6.00	5.11111	5.27273	6.625	5.33333	5.75	6.00	4.00	7.00
19	5.50	5.55556	6.45455	6.750	6.66667	6.75	6.75	6.50	6.00
20	5.50	5.11111	5.00000	5.125	3.33333	4.50	3.00	5.25	6.00
21	5.75	5.55556	4.81818	4.875	6.22222	4.75	5.00	4.75	4.50

SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY - Continued

Student ID	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
22	6.50	5.33333	5.09091	6.000	7.00000	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.50
23	5.00	6.44444	6.27273	4.500	6.66667	6.25	6.00	5.75	5.50
24	6.00	6.44444	6.81818	7.000	5.88889	1.00	7.00	5.50	1.00
25	5.75	5.33333	4.81818	5.375	6.44444	6.25	7.00	5.50	6.25
26	5.75	6.66667	6.72727	5.875	6.33333	3.25	5.50	6.25	6.00
27	6.25	5.88889	6.09091	6.000	7.00000	6.50	7.00	7.00	6.25
28	6.00	6.66667	6.81818	6.000	6.33333	6.25	5.75	6.50	6.25
29	6.25	6.66667	7.00000	6.375	7.00000	7.00	6.75	7.00	6.75
30	6.00	6.33333	6.45455	5.500	7.00000	6.25	7.00	5.25	5.50
31	6.25	6.66667	7.00000	6.375	7.00000	7.00	7.00	7.00	6.75
32	4.75	6.44444	6.09091	6.625	6.44444	6.75	6.75	6.00	5.75
33	4.75	6.22222	6.63636	5.875	6.44444	5.75	6.50	5.25	4.50
34	4.25	5.33333	5.81818	5.375	6.00000	5.75	6.75	6.25	6.25
35	5.50	5.44444	5.54545	4.875	6.00000	5.50	7.00	5.00	3.75
36	5.25	6.33333	4.90909	5.375	6.88889	7.00	6.00	5.50	4.50
37	3.50	5.22222	5.45455	4.625	7.00000	5.50	6.75	4.25	4.50

Note: 1 = Enlisting Social Resources; 2 = Academic Achievement; 3 = Self-Regulated Learning; 4 = Leisure Time Skills and Extra Curricular Activities; 5 = Self-Efficacy Regulatory; 6 = Self-Efficacy in Meeting Others Expectations; 7 = Social Self-Efficacy; 8 = Self-Assertive Efficacy; 9 = Enlisting Parental and Community Support.

VITA

Mildred M. Pearson

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED MIDDLE SCHOOL AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS.

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Washington High School, Milwaukee Wisconsin in 1982; received a Bachelor of Arts in English Education degree from Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma May 1986; received a Masters in Secondary Education degree from University of Central Oklahoma in 1989. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Curriculum and Educational Administration at Oklahoma State University in July 2000.

Professional Experience: Employed by Guthrie Job Corp. Center 1987-1989. Received Standard Teaching Certificate in English in 1987; employed by Oklahoma City Public Schools 1989-1996. Taught Freshman English at Langston University part-time for the Upward Bound Program in 1993. Employed as Education Administrator for the Best for Life Program in 1996 at Langston University. Received Elementary & Secondary Principal Standard Certificate in 1996. Served as teaching assistant, graduate assistant, and research assistant at Oklahoma State University from 1996-1998. Employed by Langston University as Adjunct Professor in 1998 and later employed full-time to present.

Professional Memberships: American Education Research Association (AERA), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Administrators, Phi Delta Kappa Administrators, Kappa Delta Pi National Council Teachers of English.