

A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF  
THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH  
ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important factors that contributes to successful outcomes in today's society. Therefore, it is important to examine what makes one succeed academically. Although there have been studies done that take a look at some of these factors, not a lot has been explored across cultures that focuses on the success of some ethnicities versus others. Adding studies from families of different ethnicities to the current research base will enhance the validity of family research. Due to the fact that nearly one third of the public school population is children of color, examining factors such as academic competence for all races will contribute to the knowledge of the field of education (Gordon, 1996).

#### Background of the Problem

Academic competence is an important issue for educators and today's families. A considerable amount of research attributes the correlation of success in school to adolescents' belief in the importance of adequate school performance (Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999; Butler & Orion, 1990). According to Relick, Dubus, & Walker, (1996), there are many internal factors that attribute to successful outcomes which are influenced by motivation and perception of academic competence. Self perceptions of academic competence are also related positively to mastering tasks and classroom goals (Boggiane et al, 1988). Increasing knowledge of factors that are related

to academic competence is one of the goals for this body of research. Additionally the researcher is interested in determining if contributing factors are applicable across different ethnicities.

One of the biggest needs in family science today is for more reliable and valid data that is generalizable across cultures. A great deal of the family literature presented today does not consist of representative samples. When samples do consist of a significant amount of African Americans, the research seems to emphasize problems, deprivation, and tensions associated with the African American culture (Gordon, 1988). Although it is understood that at this time research has to accept samples that are available to them, we must be careful and not over-generalize our findings. Motivation for this study came about due to the minimal amount of adequate sampling of families of different ethnic backgrounds and the need for more cross-cultural studies. Adding cross-cultural studies will enhance the validity of family research.

Until recently many scholars traditionally were males of European ancestry. There is question as to whether this group of scholars has been able to make empirical generalizations that are value free and appropriate to the general population. Because much of the research that is reported today admits that the studies may not be applicable across cultures, more research needs to be conducted that accounts for the difference in cultural backgrounds. This is not only needed across different nations, but within the United States as well. A significant number of educators in the U. S. public school system will be working with children of many ethnicities therefore increasing their knowledge of cultural differences in academic competence is essential.



The complexity of examining family issues of many different cultures in one study is too cumbersome for one researcher to undertake. In an attempt to make a contribution to the field of family science, this body of research is designed to take a more in-depth look at cross-cultural comparisons of African American and Caucasian families. Academic competence of the African American culture is an issue of concern for many scholars of differing backgrounds that needs to be given more attention. This knowledge will assist educators in their ability to address the increasing amount of diversity in the public school system in the United States.

#### Problem Statement

When asked the question of how the typical American views African American men, several responses are evoked. Some see the African American male as “needy and lacking in intelligence and education” (B. K. Taylor, personal communication, July 21, 2000). Scholars such as Cazenave (1979) view the African American man as a phantom, stating that there is very little research that Black families are the focus in American family research. The media has portrayed the African American race in a negative fashion, which continues to repeat the exposure of racial ideologies and stereotypes. In the previous decades social scientists such as Arthur Jensen and Richard Herrnstein alleged that there were racial differences in the outcomes of "intelligence tests." They claim that intelligence is not based on environmental factors alone, but on genetics as well (Feagin & Feagin, 1999).

Despite the over-comings of these earlier findings, these negative views are not just those shared by those outside of the African American race, but families of African

descent view many African Americans in a negative fashion. Level of income for the family appears to be the strongest factor for division among different African American families.

Recent statistics state that the number of African American families displaying characteristics that are considered “social problems” is very high and steadily increasing (Elderman, 1981). In the 1990s, nationwide surveys reported that 38% of the Caucasian respondents felt that African Americans were "more prone to violence than people of other races" (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). In addition it is predicted that at least one out of every three African American males will become a “statistic” by the age of 30, by being unemployed, dropping out of school, becoming a part of the penal system or dying as a result of a violent crime committed by a fellow African American male (Elderman, 1981). This group is dealing with many social pressures as well as the continuing existence of racism. The media today portray this group of African Americans to be the most heavily involved with the juvenile justice system. A view that is held by authors such as Cazanave (1981) and McAdoo (1979) is that because children are growing up without a father and that this is the primary cause of many social problems. In a study by Stattin and Kerr (2000), adolescents with fewer social problems were more likely to successfully complete high school.

Despite the literature available that mentions the negative aspects of the African American family, there are studies such as one by Garnezy (1991) that show that African American children from differing backgrounds can achieve academically. This is in spite of poverty and what is considered to be a "breakdown" in the African American family (Garnezy, 1991).

According to Barbarin (1993) one seldom sees terms such as "competence" used to describe African American children's performance in school. According to Hattie and Marsh (1996), there has been very little systemic research that simultaneously relates self-concept to academic concepts. They noted that children and adolescents tend to perform better in educational settings when their level of academic competence is higher. Self-concept is a major contributor to academic performance (Marsh, 1989). Academic competence among adolescence is also influenced by many other factors such as the adolescent's family environment (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1995). The family environment, more specifically parenting practices, strongly influences academic functioning (Clark, Navak & Dupree, 2002; McAdoo & McAdoo, 2001).

There is a significant amount of literature on Caucasian families and the factors related to academic competence. However, this is not true of African American families. Most of the studies conducted that measure both academic achievement and academic competence consist of a majority sample of Caucasian adolescents. The remaining percentages of the samples that consist of African American, Hispanics, and Asian populations are low. It is important that a representative sample of both African Americans and Caucasians be looked at simultaneously as to the contributions that have been made to his/her level of academic competence. Many of the factors that contribute to academic achievement and high levels of academic competence for Caucasian families should also be valuable to the African American family. However, the current body of literature does not confirm or deny this. Not enough research has been conducted that provides professionals with contributions that support this.

Increasing the level of academic competence for African American adolescents will assist them in academic achievement. This achievement that leads to an increased amount of students that are completing high school and even college or trade school, should help in decreasing the amount of social problems in the African American culture. Parents and educators have a responsibility to assist in the developmental process of adolescents. Areas of development such as high levels of self-esteem, and high levels of academic competence give them the basis that they need for future development. Other factors that may affect academic competence include parental practices in the home environment as well as the family structure and/or composition. If it can be confirmed that the factors that contribute to academic competence for Caucasian students also contribute for African American students, educators can begin to emphasize its importance. However, it is important not to make these generalizations without exploring the context in which these factors exist. Parenting behavior may have different effects on adolescents when issues such as income level and family composition are taken into account. This study will examine whether the above mentioned variables (parenting behavior, family income level, and family composition) have different relationships with academic competence across the two ethnicities. An attempt will be made to give educators more insight as to what areas of development may need more attention for parents and those working with adolescents.

### Theoretical Framework

This research is designed to examine factors relating to academic competence among Caucasian and African American adolescents and to make cross-cultural

comparisons of these two groups. The researcher believes that this can be done more effectively by examining the adolescent's ecological environment. Prior research on academic success has used family and developmental theoretical frameworks such as systems theory, developmental theory and social learning theory. Some studies that examined the contributions to academic competence are atheoretical, such as the one conducted by Justice, Lindsey, and Morrow (1999). This particular study examined variables that may be associated with academic success but the authors did not use one of the family theoretical frameworks as a guide for the study. Thus the researcher has chosen to use a family theoretical study to explore associations with academic competence in this study.

The human ecological theory focuses on humans as social beings that interact with their environmental and biological organisms (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Bubolz and Sontag claim that this framework is "a general theory that can be used to study a wide range of problems related to families and their relationship with various environments including diverse levels and kinds of external systems" (p. 424). With this theoretical framework, one may study the interaction of humans and their environment, more specifically, adaptation. It is recognized that humans are both biological and social beings. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) assumes that a person's "natural" environments are major sources of contributions to development. He defines environment as "a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (p. 22). The person developing is thought to be in the middle of several environmental systems. He divides these environmental systems into four levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. Later due to the need to consider time as an important

part of the theory, Bronfenbrenner (1979) added the chronosystem as an element that incorporates time into the developmental history, especially its effect on development. Development within the microsystem context allows researchers to look at roles and relations. The system also consists of people and objects that are in a person's immediate environment. In the case of a child, this may be their parents, siblings, peers, or other family members. If the child attends day care, this may be considered another microsystem. Because these aspects are close to the individual, they tend to contribute significantly to their development. When these microsystems connect, they form the next level, the mesosystem. There is a tendency of some microsystems to connect and influence each other. An example may be the parenting style held by the primary caregiver of the adolescent. This will be related to the adolescent, his behavior, his peer interaction and his or her involvement in activities. The third level, the exosystem, is the term used to refer to the social settings that may relate to the individual and their development even though the person may not interact with the setting first hand. The effects of the objects or events in the parent's settings can have a strong impact on their child's development. An example could be a mother being laid off from her place of employment. Although the child may not interact with the place of employment directly, the loss of income can affect the child. Level of household income is the variable explored in the exosystem level of this study. The macrosystem is the fourth and broadest environmental context. All of the other systems are embedded within the macrosystem. This system includes cultural events that evolve over time and many macrosystems are different than they were in the past. It is the macrosystem that provides the basis for the cross-cultural comparison. Many African Americans have experienced

history and events that make them unique and unable to be compared with the minority without taking these issues into consideration.

Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983) advocated that there was more need to analyze the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem influences on adolescent development. Some of the influences in need of exploration are the interaction among subculture components of family, such as family form and parenting style, both of which are explored in this body of research

### Purpose and Objective

A human ecological perspective will guide this study in a more comprehensive analysis of factors associated with academic competence in adolescent African Americans and Caucasians. The purpose is to identify factors that may contribute positively to academic competence and that will assist in prevention and intervention programs designed to educate parents as well as professionals who may work with parents. For example, this body of research may assist mental health professionals with techniques designed for promoting healthier relationships among family members. This study will also assist in increasing the understanding of educators and researchers on the similarities as well as differences of factors that contribute to academic competence for African American and Caucasian families. Increased levels of academic competence are associated with academic success.

To be examined are demographic factors, parental behavior factors, and individual adolescent factors. The demographic factors of interest are family form and level of income. Parental factors include the adolescents' perception of the parental style

of his/her primary caregiver. Exploration of adolescent factors included his/her level of academic competence.

### Research Questions

Based upon the ideas presented above, the following research questions were identified:

1. What relationships exist between selected demographic variables (family income level, race, and family form), and adolescent level of academic competence?
2. What relationships exist between adolescents' perceptions of parental behaviors and adolescent level of academic competence?
3. What amount of unique variance in adolescent level of academic competence is explained by the examination of the adolescent perception of parental behaviors?

### Conceptual Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following six conceptual hypotheses: All hypotheses will be tested according to the adolescents' perception.

1. Income will predict levels of academic competence of adolescents.
2. There will be no differences in levels of academic competence between African American adolescents and Caucasian adolescents when levels of income are the same.
3. Parenting style will predict levels of academic competence of adolescents.
4. There will be no differences in adolescent's level of academic competence for African American and Caucasian adolescents from different family forms.
5. Authoritarian parenting style will predict high levels of academic competence for African American adolescents.



6. Authoritative parenting style will predict high levels of academic competence for Caucasian adolescents.

### Conceptual Definitions of Terms

The eight primary terms used in this study are:

1. *Academic competence* – Academic refers to that of, relating to, or associated with school or college (Webster-Merriam, 1995). *Competence* is defined by Kail and Cavanaugh (2000), as the upper limit of a person's ability to function in five domains, one being cognitive. Thus *academic competence* is referred to as the adolescent's view of his/her upper limit of ability to function in school or college.

2. *Adolescence*- refers to the biological and psychological changes that individuals go through at the end of childhood (Clarke-Stewart & Friedman, 1987). An *adolescent* is one that is experiencing these changes. In this study adolescents were referred to as those being ages 14 through 19.

3. *Authoritarian Parenting style*- Baumrind (1975) describes this style of parenting as one that combines high control with little warmth. These parents lay down rules and expect them to be followed without discussion or argument.

4. *Authoritative Parenting style*- According to Baumrind (1975), this style of parenting combines a fair degree of parental control with warmth and responsiveness. These parents favor giving explanations for rules and encouraging discussion (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2000).

5. *Culture*- That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of

society (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002). Culture is conveyed from generation to generation through the process of socialization.

6. *Ethnicity* – “*Ethnicity refers to connectedness based on commonalities (such as religion, nationality, region, etc.) where specific aspects of cultural patterns are shared and where transmission over time creates a common history*” (Pinderhughes, 1989, p. 6).

7. *Family Form*- Family can be defined as a group of individuals living under one roof and under one head of household. The form of the family is determined by the members that are present in the household. A single parent home would be a home in which either the mother, father or single grandparent headed without the presence of other significant adults. Dual parent homes include a mother and father or both grandparents who are married or considered to be significant to one another.

8. *Level of income*- the estimated amount of income in the household, where adolescent lived at about age 15.

9. *Permissive Parenting Style* – This parenting style consist of a high level of responsive to their children and a low level of demandingness. According to Baumrind (1975), these parents can be either neglectful or rejecting. Rejecting parents are typically hostile and intrusive while neglectful parents are indifferent.

10. *Self-esteem*- perception or evaluation of worth based on assessment of the qualities they possess that make up their self-concept (Shaffer, 1999).

#### Overview of Content of Following Chapters

Chapter II includes the history of the variables and their relationships with one another as well as their relationship with academic competence. Cross-cultural

information is provided on the African American and Caucasian family with noted similarities and differences. Each variable is discussed in its appropriate system or “layer” within Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model. A historical context is considered for the African American family due to the fact that this is the focus of the study.

Chapter III reports a discussion of the research design and operational hypotheses. The sample used in the study, data collection, coding, and data analysis procedures are outlined. Methodological assumptions and limitations are discussed in this chapter as well.

In Chapter IV statistical findings, interpretations and discussion are reported in relation to the hypotheses presented in chapter I. Bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses are detailed for the demographic variables, parental variables and the adolescent variables.

Chapter V discusses a summary of the study’s theoretical overview, related literature, results of statistical analyses and implications. The study concludes with recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The goal of this research is to examine the factors associated with academic competence among African American and Caucasian adolescents. There is a significant amount of research that addresses contributions to academic competence; however the number of African Americans sampled in these studies is low. Previous research indicates that parental strictness and supervision were positively related to academic competence for Caucasian Americans and negatively related to behavior problems (Williams, 1988). However, these findings may or may not be true for African American families. Academic competence is strongly influenced by the family environment (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1995). Issues such as family structure and income are thought to be strong influences on the outcome of academic competence. Parents who are involved with their child's school environment, quality family interaction and income all have effects on adolescent development. However authors such as Garnezy (1991) indicate that despite the breakdowns in some families, such as single parenthood, and poverty, one can achieve academically. This position stands true for all family structures including African American families. In this body of research an overview of the African American

family is presented and when information is available compared with that of the Caucasian American family. Each variable is presented within the ecological model.

### Human Ecological Theory

The Human Ecological Theory focuses on humans as social beings that interact with their environmental and biological organisms (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). The theory studies the interaction of humans and their environment, more specifically adaptation. This section will focus on a fairly detailed description on the history of the theory, key concepts, core assumptions and published works which utilized this theory and its progression for understanding human development.

In 1873 Ernest Hechel began to use the term ecology from the Greek word *oik* (place of residence) (Clark, 1993). Oekologie was the universal term "everyman's house or environment." Ellen Richards, a female chemist then joined him and stated that her belief is that the family and the home of the family were predominant to movements in ecology. Some of her work included water analysis, minerals and sanitation, food and shelter costs, and the chemical aspects of cooling (Klein & White, 1996). She advocated for women who were primarily responsible for the home and the activities that occurred in the home. During the early 1900s organizations supporting ecology were formulated and many publications occurred. Membership in these organizations grew tremendously over the next several decades (Hinckley, 1976). In 1957, Hill et al. referred to this area of interest as the household economics-home management approach. It was also termed Home Economics which primarily emphasized health and safety of the environment and on material goods and physical resources used by the family (Bubolz & Soantag, 1993).

There were concerns that derived from the home, family and their interaction with the environment. Some of the early history of the ecological model of Home Economics suggested that the approach is "holistic and interdisciplinary," grounded in science, and founded primarily by women (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993).

Charles Darwin's work in 1859 sparked the idea of natural selection and evolution. It was he who mentioned Ecology as a science. "Darwin argued that a species or population evolved principally by the process of natural selection or elimination of those members of the population that were less adapted to survive in their environment (Klein & White, 1996, p. 215). Gregor Mendel was actually the person given the credit for the term Human Ecology. This form of family theory unites ontogenetic development and environmental interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Mendel's work (1965) provided a theoretical knowledge of genetic mechanisms that impel evolution. A key process by humans is their adaptation to their environment. One view of this theory is that of interconnectedness. This means that no one aspect of human development can be totally independent of the other aspects.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) assumes that a person's "natural" environment is a major source of contribution to their development. He defines environment as "a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). The person developing is thought to be in the middle of several environmental systems. He divides these environmental systems into four levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem looks at role and relation and consists of people and objects that are in a person's immediate environment. In the case of a child, this may be their parents or siblings. If the child attends day care,

this may be considered another microsystem. Because these aspects are close to the individual, they tend to contribute significantly to their development. When these microsystems connect, they form the next level, the mesosystem. There is a tendency of some microsystems to connect and influence each other. The third level, the exosystem is the term used to refer to the social settings that may affect the individual and their development even though the person may not interact with the setting first hand. The effects of the objects or events in the parent's settings can have a strong impact on their child's development. The macrosystem is the fourth and broadest environmental context. All of the other systems are embedded within the macrosystem. This system evolves over time and many of the components of a macrosystems are different than they were in the past.

In 1989, Bronfenbrenner decided that time was as an important dimension to add to his theory. The first way that he incorporates time was by viewing his theory as a "life course" approach. The second way in which he viewed time as important was when he added the chronosystem. This system "incorporates time as the developmental history of the individual and its effect on development" (Klein & White, 1996, p. 229). His reason for adding time many years later was due to his observation of theoretical and methodological innovations with regard to the timing and happenings of life course events. The basic structures in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development will be explained in the paragraphs that follow.

#### Microsystem

In an ecological framework the microsystem is the system that is closest to the individual. This system includes individual characteristics such as habits, temperaments,

and capabilities as well as roles relationships and activities (Shaffer, 1999). As a child gets older, his/her microsystem will become much more complex. Many of the relations that occur within this system promote or undermine developmental building blocks. Further discussion of microsystem variables including self-concept will be discussed in the section on adolescent development.

### Mesosystem

The second aspect of the Human Ecological Model is the system that involves the relationships between an individual's microsystem variables. A person's experiences and values tend to be consistent between these settings and will influence a child's development. Bronfenbrenner's (1993) definition includes that it "comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (p 22)." Some examples include the mixture of day care and school or other community programs. These microsystem levels may tend to overlap and tie together experiences, attitudes and other shared behavior.

### Exosystem

In the human ecological framework, the exosystem is defined by Shaffer (1999) as a social system that children and adolescents do not directly experience but nonetheless may affect their development. One of the most mentioned aspects of the exosystem that affects families is the source of income for the family. Income has a major effect on the interaction between parents and their children, and between other members of the home. For the African American family, this effect is no different than other families with different cultural backgrounds. The individual's level of income is a variable of particular interest in this study.



### Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the “broad ideological values, norms, and institutional patterns of a particular culture” (Bulbolz & Sontag, 1993, p. 423). These patterns lay the foundation for the realms of development for that particular culture. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposes that "psychological development in all its aspects is a flow of history" (p. 289); thus a culture’s ecological setting evolves from the social order of past and present generations and sets the stage for the future. The culture of particular interest in this study includes that of the African American descent. The attitudes and experiences that have been displayed by this culture are deeply affected by this complex system.

The African American family has a historical background that entails strength in the family and in the culture. This culture is of African descent and possesses values that promote group identity, including kinship bonds, spiritualism, role flexibility, and social support (Myers, 1989). Previous research on African American families focused on the structure of the family such as marital status, parental status, and biological ties. The family structure provides implications of how the family functions with certain role assignments and decision making. Due to the stresses that have been previously placed on African American families, this unit has been able to maintain cultural flexibility within these roles and family processes.

According to Staples and Johnson (1993), one of the problems with studying African Americans was that researchers used Caucasian middle class families as a referent. Doing this gave a negative perception and minimized the strengths of African

American families. Later research found African American families to be similar to Caucasian families except for their "impoverished status and history of slavery (p. 36)." This history has produced a unique structural unit within the African American culture and has given it strength to cope with many circumstances.

Self-identity is one of the issues that are of extreme concern to the African American family. Most parents believe that they have to teach their children to not only be "Black," but also to be American. This concept fosters a sense of dual identity (Collins, 1991, 1998; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994). This process of incorporating their cultural identity into their individual identity embraces the historical familial origins, which results in a dynamic definition of the self. Family history and cultural beliefs of the African American family result in a strong practice of strength and resilience that contributes to the uniqueness of this particular culture.

The history of the Caucasian American family is not so easily summarized. Many European Americans refer to themselves as Caucasian, regardless of the ethnic background from which they arrived into the United States. Both English decent and Irish decent Americans refer to themselves as Caucasian or European American. According to Feagin and Feagin (1991), many European Americans were able to have upward mobility in America because of the time of their arrival, previous skills and less severe discrimination. What has made a difference in the history of the Caucasian and European American was the conditions of their origination in the United States. Their arrival was voluntarily which is much different than the forced conditions of the African American culture.

Myers (1987) refers to culture in a broad sense as a way of life. Members of a culture interpret reality and construct their lives based on their identification with their culture. The notion of culture is an important factor to this body of research because behavioral patterns and values will affect one's academic competence.

The history of academic performance and ability across cultures can be noted as far back as just prior to the 1900s. A number of U.S. scientists began to look at "scientific racism" (Feagin & Feagin, p. 243) claiming that a number of certain social groups were inferior to others. Arthur Jensen and Richard Herrnstein (As cited in Feagin & Feagin, 1973) alleged early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that the differences in IQ scores were not strictly determined by environment, but by genetic differences, arguing that up to 80% of one's intelligence is determined by heredity. Their belief was that Caucasians were more intelligent than African Americans and their belief influenced other studies on differences between African American and Caucasian intelligence. Michael Levin, professor at a college in New York argued against affirmative action based on his belief that "on average, Black Americans are significantly less intelligent than whites" (Feagin & Feagin, 1999, p. 244). In the 1930's researchers began to question the notion of genetics determining IQ. They found that extreme oppressive conditions of African Americans attributed to differences in IQ test scores, noting differences in previous education, level of income, and living conditions. This idea was later supported in more current research such as that by Slaughter-Defoe, Nakogawa, Takaniski, and Johnson (1990). These authors noted that little distinction is made regarding different cultural background, language, economic background and family adaptation in a broader/ecological context.

Many researchers point out that many of the educational differences are due to economic conditions rather than racial differences, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Briefly, however, it should be noted that ethnic differences in educational achievement are partly due to differences in expectations. Traditionally these expectations are lower for ethnic minorities, which is partly due to the poor training received by those who teach minority students. Expectations are also lower because poor schools in urban neighborhoods do not always encourage strong academic achievement.

Despite all the findings of Caucasian and African American differences in academic ability, Sowell, 1978 found that whether of European or non-European descent, academic performance depends on the degree of assimilation. Upward mobility, an indices' of assimilation, shows increased levels of intelligence from one generation to the next. In 1995 the Bureau of the Census reported the gap between African American and Caucasian education attainment was less than 10% for the completion of high school and slightly over 10% for those that completed four years of college, with Caucasians being the larger group. Although in general, African American adolescents have higher dropout rates and lower grades, they have increased in reaching higher socioeconomic levels. This may be due to the occupational aspirations. In a study of occupational aspirations of African Americans attending college, African Americans expected to be receiving an income of \$10,000 more than that of Caucasians (Ganong, Coleman, Thompson, & Goodwin-Watkins, 1996).

### Chronosystem

When the direction of development is influenced by the change in the individual or environment over time, Bronfenbrenner (1979) believes that it is affected by the

chronosystem. Many changes in family trends have taken place over the last decade that affects families differently than in the past.

Over the last decade, there have been significant changes for all family types including the African American family. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, 1999, some of these trends include the decline in rates of marriage (declined 3.8%) and/or later age at first marriage, and higher rates of poor and single-parent households. The change in female headed, African American households only increased by 1% from the 1980s, which is significantly lower than the change in Caucasian families (3.6% increase) (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1999).

The growing trend of the negative impacts of single parenting has been substantial in the area of family research. This may be due to the change that has occurred over the past several decades. African American families have a history of strength that has allowed African American mothers to successfully rear their children even while doing so alone. This has not been the reported pattern of European American families, from which much of the research of family science derived. It is possible that the strength of the African American families continue to be present and not adversely affected by the cultural norms that exist today. Single mothers are not expected to possess the qualities to rear their children alone. While dual parenting may be the ideal situation for children, this does not guarantee this form of family composition will enhance their development. Parenting is more about the quality of the relationships that the children are involved in, and it is important that more emphasis be placed on providing parents with the tools necessary to be effective, whether they are joined by a partner or parenting alone.

### Adolescent Development

The period of adolescence can be divided into early adolescence (approximately 11 - 15) and late adolescence (approximately 16 - 19). The entire period consists of dramatic physical, emotional and cognitive changes for the adolescent. It is here that he or she must leave childhood and enter into adulthood. Parents begin to expect a new maturity from their adolescents expecting them to be more responsible. With the combination of physical maturation and personal and social experiences adolescents are faced with new developmental tasks (Cobb, 2001). There are eight developmental tasks with the first four occurring in early adolescence and the latter four during late adolescence (See Table 2.1 for a complete list of these tasks). Of the latter four, task 5, preparing for an economic career will be discussed since this is the area of interest for this body of research. This particular task has become increasingly problematic for adolescents. The difficulty may be due to the increased amount of education needed for many jobs. In the United States between 1998 and 2008 it is projected that there will be an increase in the need for many occupations. Each of these occupations requires some degree of education beyond high school. According to Coleman (1993) approximately 40% of new jobs will require more than 16 years of preparation and training. Hoyt (1998) believes that the greatest challenge facing our nation will be to meet the needs of our adolescents that will not be college graduates.

Although unemployment rates are down for adolescent workers the amount of unemployment for African American adolescents is significantly higher than the Caucasian majority (Panel on High Risk Youth, 1993). Many affected are inner city youth. There is poverty and poor education in their communities and employment is less

Table 2.1

Developmental Tasks (Havighurst, 1972)

1. Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively	One characteristic of adolescents is their emerging, often extreme, self-consciousness about their physical selves as they reach sexual maturity. Adolescents need to accept their physiques and the pattern of growth of their own bodies, to learn to care for their bodies, and use their bodies effectively in sports and athletics, recreation, work, and everyday task.
2. Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes	Adolescents must move from the same-sex interests and playmates of middle childhood to establish heterosexual friendships. Becoming an adult means also learning social skills and behaviors required in group life.
3. Achieving a masculine or feminine social sex role	What is a man? What is a woman? What are men and women supposed to look like? How should they behave? What are they supposed to be? Psychosexual social roles are established by each culture, but because masculine-feminine roles in Western culture have undergone rapid changes, part of the adolescent maturing process is to re-examine the changing sex roles of their culture and to decide what aspects they must adopt.
4. Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults	Adolescents must develop understanding, affection, and respect without emotional dependence. Adolescents who are rebellious and in conflict with their parents and other adults need to develop a greater understanding of themselves and adults and the reasons for their conflict.
5. Preparing for an economic career	One of the primary goals of adolescents is to decide on a career, prepare for that career, and then become independent by earning their own living. Part of the task is to discover what they want out of life.
6. Preparing for marriage and family life	Patterns of marriage and family living are being readjusted to changing economic, social, and religious characteristics of society. The majority of youths desire a happy marriage and parenthood as one important goal in life and so they need to develop the positive attitudes, social skills, emotional maturity, and necessary understanding to make marriage work.
7. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior	This goal includes the development of a social ideology that takes into account societal values. The goal also includes participation in the adult life of the community and nation. Many adolescents are disturbed by the ethical quality of their society. Some become radical activist; others join the ranks of the uncommitted who refuse to act. These adolescents struggle to find their place in society in a way that gives meaning to their lives.
8. Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior	This goal includes the development of a sociopolitical-ethical ideology and the adoption and application of meaningful values, morals, and ideals in one's personal life.

accessible. So how must adolescents who may not be provided with the tools necessary for opportunity to obtain an economic career overcome this adversity? Perhaps the answer lies in the adolescent's ability to develop and maintain a strong sense of self-concept. These aspects of development are primarily determined by the family environment in factors such as family form and parenting behavior.

### The Development of Self-Concept

According to developmental research, during adolescence, self-concept reaches its most highly differentiated state (Harter, 1985). Self-concept is made up of various views that one may see about themselves. According to Markus and Ririuos (1986), these "self-conceptions" vary in their degree of activation and in their accessibility. This means that depending on the motivation and the situation certain self-concepts may be more cognitively available.

The beliefs that adolescents have about themselves determine how they react emotionally. Because these beliefs are recently formulated they are particularly vulnerable to "disconfirming evidence" (Cobb, 2001, p. 212). During later adolescence the self concept becomes more abstract and adaptive, and adolescents begin to understand how a characteristic can be a strength and a weakness. Byrne (1984) investigated the relationship between self-concept and academic variables and concluded that a relationship did exist. Hansford and Hattie (1982) also found a significant positive relationship between certain aspects of self-perception and academic achievement. Because research supports the idea that academic competence and academic achievement are related, positive correlations to academic competence should also be positively



related to academic achievement (Ford, 1982). Academic competence scales examine how one feels about their ability to perform well in academics.

### Factors Associated with Adolescents Level of Academic Competence

There are many factors that are associated with an adolescent's level of academic competence. The previous section provided information as to the development and maintenance of self-concepts. Several factors that are thought to be strongly influential to the development of the level of academic competence for adolescents are family form, parenting style and family level of income.

#### *Family Form*

Like most American families, African American families suffer from the effects of divorce, separation, and remarriage. African American mothers in particular have the highest percentage of children born outside of the marriage union. According to McAdoo (1990), 70% of black children are born to single parent mothers. Adolescent children, who are reared in an environment that does not consist of both parents, have a different set of dynamics that may or may not affect their socialization. Some of the difficulty that arises is due to the lack of father involvement in their children's lives. According to Amato and Keith (1991), it is more than the mere presence of the father or father figure in the home. What matters is the availability of support from this secondary caregiver. Zimmerman, Salem, and Maton (1985) found that two-thirds of African American children not living with their father, reported their father as being their role model. In situations where there was emotional support from fathers, children developed higher levels of self-esteem, and satisfaction with life. This positive relationship with fathers

whether in or out of the home contributes significantly to the overall development of their children, including the ability to enhance their level of academic competence.

When looking at differences among African American and Caucasian single mothers and their adjustment following divorce, it is suggested that African Americans function better than their Caucasian counterparts (Gove & Skin, 1989). These authors found evidence that divorced African American females showed less depression and fewer adjustment difficulties than divorced Caucasian females. They did not find any differences among male adjustment. Not much research is available that discussed the racial differences between single parent fathers and their adjustment following a divorce.

Some of the racial differences among single mothers may be due to the strength of the African American female prior to divorce. While reviewing role strain, African American nonmarried mothers experienced no more stress than their married counterparts (Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983). In 1978 a study by Savage et al. found that among 200 African American parent-absent families, most mothers reported the family cohesiveness as either "good" or "very good." Perhaps the single parent African American home should not be considered broken because it differs from the middle-class Caucasian ideal (Allen, 1978).

Because of the increasing prevalence of single parenting, some attention has to be given to the quality of relationships that are present in the household. What influences a child's self-concepts is not the composition of the family in which they are reared, but in the quality of the relationships within the intact family unit. It is these relationships that

form the most important basis for psychological development during adolescence (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998).

According to Schneider and Coleman (1993), when parents spend more time with their children they enhance their children's competence level in school. Single parents in the United States today have more access to public assistance programs that allow them to not spend so much time out of the home in employment positions. Financial support as well as enrollment in higher education and job training programs lessens the financial strains that have previously been in place. This is a result of strong family policies that are currently in place (Pong, Dronkers, & Hampden-Thompson, 2003).

*Extended family:* Extended family which consists of family members that exist outside the nuclear family is an additional major contribution to the well-being of the African American family. During slavery, African American adults assumed the primary caregiver role for children whose parents were separated from them because they had been sold to different slaveholders (Wilson, 1989). The availability of extended family aids in stress-coping and problem solving and also increases the family resources. These resources include material support, income, childcare, household maintenance assistance, emotional support, and instruction (Hunter, 1997). Compared to Caucasians, the African American community "shows a higher level of multigenerational households, fostering of kin and non-kin children, care for dependent family members, respect for elders, religiosity, and sacrifice efforts for the upward mobility of the members" (Staples & Johnson, 1993, p. 195). African American grandmothers in particular have a high level of involvement with their grandchildren and play critical roles in child rearing and parenting support. According to Hunter (1997), their involvement is a well-worn family strategy

with roots in traditions held by the African American family. Initially it was thought that this was more prevalent in low-income or single parent homes, however, more recent research did not support these findings. In a study by Beck and Beck (1989), there was indication that 53% of the African American elderly population shared a residence with either adult children or grandchildren.

The roles of many African American grandmothers involve Authoritative parenting styles and a high level of support or parent-like influence. A study with African American adolescents revealed that many of them viewed their grandmothers as being the most influential in teaching them about morals, values, and the importance of religious faith more so than Caucasian adolescents (Strom, Collinsworth, Strom, & Griswold, 1992-1993). According to Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1991, kinship ties are a strong contributor to the ability of African American to complete high school or obtain college experience. The family support allows them to gain the skills necessary to proceed academically and to secure and maintain employment. This emotional support is also important for it provides motivation when economic resources are unavailable. It is the role modeling from extended family that often provides affirmation and encouragement. Children who receive more support from their families report higher level of self-esteem (Wolchik, Beals, & Sandler, 1989).

The researcher included discussion on extended families in order to provide a history of its importance. During the analysis it is important to note whether or not adolescents with high levels of academic competence from single parent families have extended family that reside in their home. This factor may need to be explored in future studies.

### *Parenting Style*

According to Baumrind (1971), parenting styles can be seen along two dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness. Demandingness refers to the degree to which parents hold high expectations for their adolescents' behavior and supervise their activities. This also includes monitoring them as to with whom they are going with and to where they are going. Responsiveness includes the sensitivity, supportiveness and involvement of the parents with their adolescent child. These two dimensions crossed yield four parenting styles; Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive indulgent and Permissive neglectful.

*Authoritative parenting*, which consists of both high demandingness and high responsiveness, is thought to be the best parenting style leading to positive adolescent outcomes, including better academic performance (Steinberg, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1992), and increased levels of competence and self-esteem (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). With this parenting style parents are thought to exercise fair but firm discipline. Parents often display warmth, love and affection despite their firm discipline. These parent-child relationships often have bidirectional communication (Hickman, Bartholomoe, & McKenry, 2000). These parents also stress self reliance and independence, and attempt to balance tradition with innovation, cooperation with autonomy, and tolerance with firmness (Cobb, 2001).

*Authoritarian parenting* includes those parents who are very demanding but not responsive. Their child rearing techniques are harsher with rigid boundaries. These parents tend to be punitive, strict and demanding and there is little bidirectional communication (Baumrind, 1968). They also tend to expect their children to do as they are told without questioning them.

*Permissive parents* tend to place very little if any rules upon their children. There are two types of Permissive parenting. Permissive indulgent parents are typically responsive but not demanding. These parents may be highly involved with their children but places few limits, demands or control on them. Permissive neglectful includes parents that are uninvolved in their child's life. These parents are neither responsive nor demanding and their children tend to be socially incompetent. They provide little nurturance or supervision and are cold and uninvolved. These parents also set few limits allowing their children to control their own actions.

All parents regardless of their cultural background have the primary goal of socializing their children (Ingoldsby & Smith, 1995). Part of this socialization includes the development of educational practices and expectations. Each culture, however maintains different parental attitudes and practices that they use during the socialization process. Evidence has been submitted that the dominant culture in America has different concerns when socializing their children compared to the concerns of the minority culture.

Baumrind (1991) suggested a potential source for parenting style differences across cultures may be the concern for bicultural identity and assimilation experienced by minority cultures. Therefore parenting practices of minority parents may appear on the surface to be different from the dominant culture due to the belief that these parents must prepare their children for a different place in society. An earlier focus on parenting practices by Baumrind (1972) found that African Americans were typically portrayed as expecting unrealistic levels of obedience, participating in increased levels of power assertion, having low tolerance for child input, and lower levels of reasoning. These

finding were a result of comparing African American parents with European American families which gives an inadequate portrayal of ethnic minority parenting. These comparisons typically failed to account for social economic status differences between the two groups. In a study by Kelly and colleagues (1993) of working and middle class mothers, the most often reported parenting was reasoning, which is a characteristic of Authoritative parenting. Physical punishment, which is thought to be most often used in Authoritarian type of parenting, was rarely reported. When physical punishment is used as a form of discipline the context to which it is applied must be considered. If it is thought of as normative and is accompanied by warmth from the parents or guardian, it may not have such adverse effects (Landsford, Deater-Decker, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004). Context of individual parenting techniques may be too difficult to explore, due to the fact that many parents are reluctant to discuss and admit to using physical punishment as a form of discipline. By examining their level of warmth and control parents may be able to see the relationship between their parenting style and their child's academic competence. However because of the portrayal of more harsh discipline from African American parents, the perception of the adolescent may be that parents are Authoritarian, when parents actually display high levels of responsiveness to their children.

### *Level of Income*

Most of the research that makes comparisons with ethnic minority children, fails to separate the influences of ethnicity and social class. Poverty is thought to be a significant risk factor for adolescent development. These risk factors include lower academic performance and higher dropout rates (Pungello, Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1996). Economic hardship can be a very difficult facet for many families.

Poverty weakens individual ability to cope with problems and also increases the likelihood of mental health problems. For African American families the vulnerability to stress is higher following a negative life event, than for Caucasian families. Poor African American parents are likely to be less supportive of their children and are less likely to verbally praise their child for appropriate behavior. This lack of emotional support can have an effect on an adolescent's ability to perform adequately in school. A study by McAdoo (1985) found that children from psychologically distressed environments usually performed less well in school and had more social and cognitive problems than middle and upper class children. Because low-income families tend to reside in poor neighborhoods, the schools that the children attend are also more apt to be within a low economic environment.

Income can serve as a moderating variable between family form and academic competence, as well as between parenting style and academic competence. Single parents especially single mothers are much more likely to suffer from poverty. In homes where there is more income, there is more of a probability for available emotional support, which increases the likelihood for academic attainment. Income can also be affected by the educational level of the parents/guardians of the adolescents. In most cases higher educational levels will increase the income level of the home. Parents/guardians with more education tend to have jobs with higher paying income and benefits that contribute to the overall wellbeing of the family.

As a moderator between parenting style and academic competence it serves to examine the adolescent's perspective of parenting style displayed by the parents. Some lower income families that are viewed as Authoritarian parents may be a matter of



perception. As previously discussed, stricter, harsh discipline can be rated as high in demandingness and low in responsiveness. Some African American parents believe that this is a necessary part of parenting in order to teach their African American children to survive. However in African American families from low income homes, this may not be associated with the negative connotations that are thought to be an outcome of Authoritarian parenting style.

### Summary of Chapter

Academic competence has been of great interest to many scholars of differing backgrounds. In the last several years more attention has been given to the different cultural and ethnic differences within the American society. Because adolescence is such a significant time for cognitive and moral development it gives reason for reviewing family environment contributions to academic competence during this period. From a human ecological perspective focus has been given to the different factors within the African American and Caucasian cultures that may have contributed to the ability to successfully obtain academic competence. Some of these factors are thought to directly affect academic competence, while others may do so through an intervening or moderating variable. The addition of these factors from the macrosystem, ecosystem, mesosystem and chronosystem broadens the current research that focuses on the individual characteristics developed in the microsystem.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Academic competence is one of the many facets of development that is strongly influenced by factors in our environment. Researchers explore these factors to assist with maximizing educational performance (Paulson, Marchant, & Rothlisberg, 1998). This current body of research has been explored from an ecological framework, reviewing factors from the microsystem as well as the macrosystem. Several factors were explored for both Caucasian and African American adolescents and the factors associated with academic competence. Explored were demographic factors such as family form and the income level of the family. Parental factors explored from the adolescent's point of view were his or her parenting style. The third factor considered was the adolescent's view of his or her level of academic competence. This chapter describes 1) research design, 2) selection of subjects, 3) instrumentation, 4) pilot study, 5) method of data collection, and 6) data analysis, 7) statistical procedure, and 8) research hypotheses.

#### Research Design

This study is a descriptive, exploratory and correlational study. Descriptive research defines and describes social phenomena (Schutt, 1999). Good descriptive research is considered the cornerstone for the scientific research process and is an essential part in understanding the social world. This design describes events that are already in place and involves gathering data, interpreting data and analyzing data.

A correlational research design was chosen to examine the strengths of the relationship between identified variables (Isaac & Michael, 1995). This approach allows the researcher to explore the level of covariation among naturally occurring variables. The four independent variables for this study were (a) income level of the adolescents' family (b) adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parental style (c) ethnicity and (d) adolescents' family form. For all variables, adolescents' academic competence served as the dependent variable. In an additional analysis, level of income variable served as a covariate between other independent variables and the dependent variable academic competence (See Figure 3.1). Correlational designs typically enable researchers to empirically examine relationships between variables (Miller, 1986).

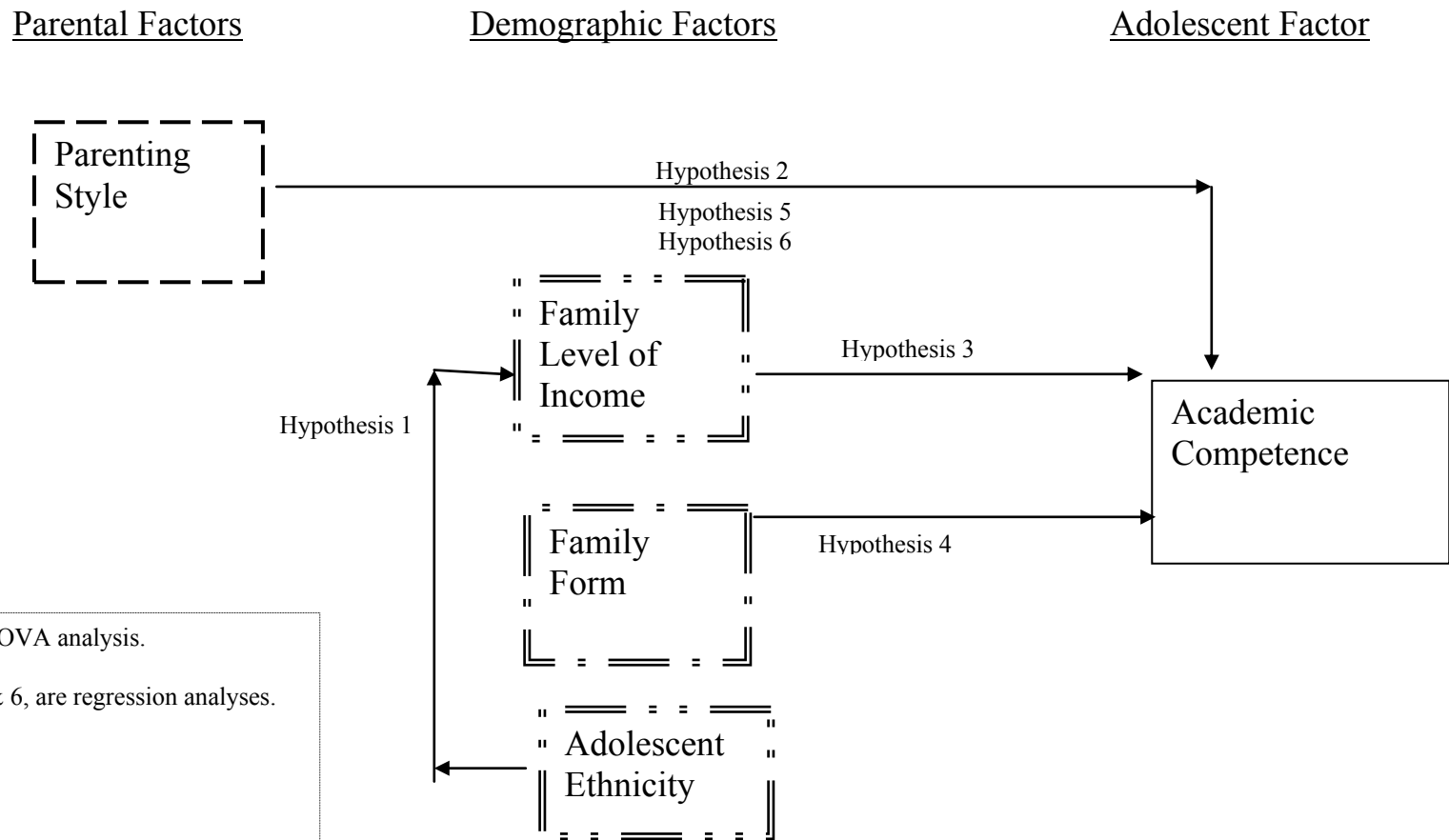
A multiple regression analysis was used to interpret the exploratory aspect of this study. The independent variable parenting style, also served as a predictor variable with the criterion, academic competence. Exploratory research is used when social phenomena are investigated without a priori expectations, in order to develop explanations of them (Schutt, 1999). The researcher wanted to determine whether or not parenting style was a significant predictor, and if so whether or not there were differences between the two cultures.

#### Selection of Subjects

The data used for this study was collected from two high schools in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, forty two students from Edmond and twenty from Millwood. A

## A Cross Cultural Comparison of the Contributions to Perceived Academic Competence

Figure 3.1



non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling was used. This method is appropriate in social research when exploring and or trying to get an idea of how something is (Schutt, 1999). Surveys were administered to all participants that returned written consent forms from their parents. This involved the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their response to a question. There are three features of survey research that made it attractive for this study:

1. Versatility: A well designed survey can enhance our understanding of social issues and can be used to cover a wide range of topics.
2. Efficiency: Data can be collected from many people at a relatively low cost and in most cases more quickly than interviews or observational studies. Many variables can be measured at one time frame which also decreases cost and/or time.
3. Generalizability: Survey methods lend themselves to probability sampling from large populations. Surveys are also the preferred method when cross-population generalizability is an important issue.

Permission was requested with several Oklahoma City Metro area high school administrators to enter into high school classrooms during the Spring and Fall 2006 semesters. Administration informed the researcher that the classrooms will be selected according to availability, teacher cooperation, as well as student behavior. Surveys were collected from all students that were given permission to participate although the focus of this study is on African American and Caucasian students.

## Instrumentation

Self-report questionnaires were used for data collection in this body of research. Both categorical and continuous variables were used in the surveys. Well designed questionnaires increase the likelihood of achieving the research goal and increasing significance. Several instruments included in this study are the 1) Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents, 2) Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), and 3) a demographic instrument. These instruments are discussed further in the section to follow.

### Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents.

This scale designed by Harter (1988) measures nine specific domains. These domains include school competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, romantic appeal, behavior and close relationships and a global self-esteem measure. The area of interest for this research was that of scholastic competence (academic or school competence). This subscale taps the adolescent's perception of his/her competence or ability within the realm of scholastic performance, for example how well he/she is doing in class work and how smart or intelligent one feels. Similar studies measuring self concept have used this scale such as Chan (2002). It also was used on an African American sample of adolescents in a study by Thompson and Zand (2002).

Using this scale, the adolescent's make a choice between two statements of which is more like he/she and then determines how strongly it applies to them (See Appendix A). The range of responses is continuous being from 1 to 4, for a total of 5 questions. From each of the 5 questions, a number ranging from 1 – 4 was provided from the responses. These numbers were added to provide a total score on academic competence ranging from 5 to 20 with higher numbers indicating higher levels of academic

competence. Some of the items were reverse coded in order that higher responses reflected higher levels of academic competence. Items number 1, 3, and 5 are coded with the higher numbers indicating higher levels of academic competence. Items 2 and 4 indicate lower scores for higher levels of academic competence and therefore were reverse coded. The instrument yielded an internal consistency reliability of .81 according to Harter (1988), however in this study an alpha of .78 was found.

#### Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)

The parental authority questionnaire by Buri (1991) is designed to measure Baumrind's (1971) Permissive, Authoritarian, and Authoritative parenting types (see APPENDIX B). Other studies such as Dwairy (2004) used this scale to examine parenting style with mental health. There are 30 questions for which the adolescent reported for his/her father and the same for his/her mother. Response choices were on a 5- point Likert scale and response choices ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

The PAQ instrument consists of 30 items which are designed to measure the adolescent's point of view. The response ranges were from 10 to 50 for each of the subscales that were measured. The 30 items are divided three ways to determine the level of Permissiveness, Authoritarian, and Authoritative types of parenting of the adolescents' primary caregivers. The PAQ has good internal consistency with Alphas ranging from .74 to .87 for the subscales. The stability is also good with two-week retest reliabilities that range from .77 to .92.

In this study the researcher used average scores from both the mother and father when there were two scores reported. Of the 30 questions, there were three sets of ten questions each that were added together for an average score on each of the three parenting styles (Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive). These scores were totaled for both parents if applicable, then added together and averaged. The scores were then entered as continuous in the statistical analysis. Parenting types were not divided as categorical variables however each student reported his/her parent as having a level of each of the parenting types. Some scores were higher than others, yet each parent reported a score for each parenting type. This study reported a reliability of .68.

#### Demographic Measure

During the time of data collection a self-report questionnaire (see APPENDIX C) was used to report five items: the adolescents' age, gender, race, classification and family form. The income level of the family was asked on the parental consent forms and was attached to the demographic measure at time of collection. The students responded to several choices for age ranging from 16 to 19. They also responded to the "other" category should their age not fall in the range. Gender has two responses 1 for male and 2 for female. The choices for race included being African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian-American, American Indian and Other. Adolescents who considered themselves bi-racial could respond to more than one category that was addressed in coding. The question of current school classification provided choices of being either a freshman, sophomore, junior or senior.



The fifth question on the demographic form asked for the adolescent to indicate which adults currently reside in their home. There were 11 response choices including an “Other” response that may list those that are not previously stated. The last question was an open ended question that just asked the student to describe whether or not there had been a change in their current living situation with their parents. A verbal explanation was provided for this response. This area allows students to state whether or not they had lost one parent in the home or perhaps a remarriage had occurred. This question was added in order that the researcher might determine if recent changes in the household could be a factor in the adolescent’s view of their parenting behavior.

### Pilot Study

The investigator conducted a small pilot study to accomplish the following goals.

1. to determine the readability of the survey instruments, and
2. to determine the amount of time that it takes to complete the instruments. (A discussion of the findings of the pilot study is presented below).

### Sample

This sample consisted of only nine subjects who volunteered to complete the study, five females and four males. All of the subjects were twelfth graders from high schools in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. With the exception of obtaining written consent, the procedure described in the Data Collection and Recording section of this chapter were followed. The ethnic composition of the sample consisted of only one male and one female Caucasian. The remaining subjects were African American.

### Instrumentation

In the initial pilot study the Hare Self-Esteem Scale, both the Home Self-esteem Scale and the Academic Self-esteem 10-item scale were used and considered for adjustment. Several of the sample members suggested reversing the order of the responses, so that “A” would indicate “Strongly Agree” as opposed to the previous order that was presented in the survey. The Academic Self-esteem scale also had strong inter-correlations with the Academic competence scale. As a result this scale was deleted from the study.

The PAQ scale was used to look at the student’s interpretation of his/her parenting style. The demographic questionnaire examined the basic information of the adolescent, such as age, classification, race, gender and with whom the child currently resides.

### Analyses and Results

With the exception of the reversing of the Hare Self-esteem Scale responses, the readability of the survey instrument appeared to be adequate. There were minor questions that were asked of the researcher such as, “What if I never knew my father?” on the PAQ Scales. The average length of time that it took the sample to complete the instruments was approximately 25 minutes. Some suggested that this was too long and that they became bored with filling out the survey after about 15 minutes. For this reason as well as the high correlation with the Self Perception Profile the Hare Self-Esteem scale was deleted from this study. This appeared to shorten the instrument by about 3 to 5 minutes.

### Discussion

The pilot study proved to be successful in achieving the identified goals. The sample was able to identify the readability of the survey and provide feedback that

resulted in the deletion of the Hare Self-Esteem scale as well as the addition of the question “Have there been any changes to your family composition in the last three years” on the demographic form. This was added due to the fact that a couple of the students asked questions like "What if my parents got a divorce when I was 10?"

The second goal was to determine the amount of time needed to complete the survey. As some of the sample indicated, a 25 minute survey was too long for this volunteer population. Because all other variables in the study were important to the researcher, and the variables academic self-esteem and academic competence were strongly correlated, academic self-esteem was removed. This assisted in decreasing the amount of time needed to complete the survey.

#### Data Collection

The researcher entered into several classrooms, four at Edmond and nine at Millwood on several occasions in the Spring and Fall of 2006 and administered a written explanation of the study, parental consent as well as student assent forms (see Appendix D, E, & F, respectively). Information including contact information for Oklahoma State University Research supervisors (IRB) was given out and an explanation of the study was provided. Students were advised that participation in the survey was strictly voluntary and that they would not be penalized if they chose not to participate. After a couple of days the researcher returned to the classrooms in which the consent and assent forms were administered. To participate in the study, students had to return a signed consent form giving them permission to participate in administering the surveys. Students must also sign the Assent form prior to the survey completion. (See APPENDIX F).

On the day of administration, the researcher collected the consent forms that were returned. For coding purposes, an identification number was written on the bottom of the consent form (income question that the parents completed) and on the top of the questionnaire issued to the student. The students completed the questionnaires at that time and returned them to the researcher. The income portion of the consent form was then disconnected and stapled to the top of the questionnaire form that was filled out by the student. The researcher remained in the presence of the consent forms and questionnaires at all times and was available for questions as the questionnaires were being completed. The students were reminded at that point to maintain their letters that had the researcher's contact information and the University's contact information for them and their parents for future reference. This process was repeated for each classroom that was chosen.

### Data Analysis

This study used data collected to answer two questions; what are the relationships between the pairs of variables selected and what proportion of variance in academic competence is accounted for by parenting style, income, and family form.

All data were verified for completion at the point of collection. Data were then entered into SPSS 14.0 by the researcher for analysis and interpretation. Family form variable had to be recoded prior to analysis. All students who responded to only having one parent in the home were coded as a single parent and assigned a zero. This included those students who reported that they currently lived with one of their grandparents or an aunt or uncle. Students who reported living with two parents, biological or step parents

were coded as dual parent families and assigned a one. For parenting style the students' scores for each type were averaged and used as a continuous variable for analysis. Parents may have been higher in a particular parenting type, however they were not assigned a category.

### Operational Hypotheses

Using a sample of African American and Caucasian adolescents, this study tested the following operational hypotheses:

1. Income level will significantly predict high levels of academic competence for adolescents.
2. Race will predict higher levels of academic competence when levels of income are the same for African American and Caucasian adolescents.
3. Parenting style will significantly predict high levels of academic competence for adolescents.
4. There will be a significant difference in levels of academic competence in African American and Caucasian adolescents from different family forms.
5. Authoritarian parenting style will significantly predict academic competence for African American adolescents.
6. Authoritative parenting style will significantly predict academic competence for Caucasian adolescents.

### Statistical Procedure

The statistical procedures to test the hypotheses were analysis of variance and multiple regression analysis. Analysis of variance designs are used to determine the

difference between groups on selected variables. Multiple regression analysis examines the effects on a dependent or criterion variable of any number of predictor variables (Keppel, 1991). Design requirements that must be met to use multiple regression analysis are (a) one criterion variable or two or more predictor variables, (b) the criterion variables can be either continuous or categorical, and (c) the ratio between the numbers of subjects to number of variables is no smaller than 1:15 (Newton & Rudestam, 1999). The computer program SPSS 14.0 was utilized for data analyses.

### Methodological Assumptions

According to Vogt (1999), in a correlational design there is the assumption that the variables involved are not manipulated. Vogt "uses measures of association to study their relationships." All variables used in this study were non-experimental. There are also four methodological assumptions underlying multiple regression analysis: (a) the sample subjects were representative of the sample population, (b) sample subjects understood the content of the assessment instrument, (c) sample subjects responded honestly to the assessment instrument, and (d) no errors were made in the coding and data entry (Pedhazur, 1997)

### Descriptive Data

Two high schools in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan area were visited to collect data for this study. All students completed a demographic form, The Adolescent Self-Perception Profile and the Parental Authority Questionnaire. A total of 68 adolescents participated in the completion of the surveys. There were N = 21 African American, N = 4 Bi-racial, N = 41 Caucasian and N = 2 Native American. Since the focus of this study

was on African American and Caucasian adolescents, only those two groups were selected for a total of  $N = 62$ .

The annual household income question was originally broken down into four categories. Ranges included: Under \$25,000 per year, \$25,001 to \$40,000 per year, \$40,001 to \$60,000 per year and more than \$60,000 per year. Of the data that were collected, annual income included  $N = 4$  with incomes under \$25,000 per year;  $N = 11$  with income from \$25,001 to \$40,000 per year;  $N = 17$  with income from \$40,001 to \$60,000 per year: and  $N = 30$  with income of more than \$60,000 per year. For data analysis and interpretation the income variable was re-coded into two categories, high and low. All income less than \$40,000 were coded as lower income and the high income category consisted of all income levels of \$40,001 or higher. Low income  $N = 32$  and High income  $N = 30$ .

There were 20 single parent families and 42 dual parent families. Of the parenting types the choices were Permissive Parenting ( $N = 5$ ), Authoritative Parenting ( $N = 32$ ) and Authoritarian Parenting ( $N = 25$ ). To obtain the accurate parenting score, when adolescents reported a score for both the mother and father, answers were combined and averaged. When only one set of scores were reported, these scores were transferred over as the average parenting scores. The student's age ranged from 15 to age 18. Twenty six of the students were male and 35 were female. One of the gender questions contained missing data. For a complete list and summary of this descriptive data see Table 3.1 and Table 3.4 for means and standard deviations. Following the review of the descriptive information are several tables of categorical comparisons (see Tables 3.2 – 3.4)

Table 3.1

*Descriptive Data for the Adolescent Sample*

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American	21	33.9
Caucasian	41	66.1
<u>Total</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>100</u>
<b>Annual Household Income</b>		
Under \$40,000 per year	32	51.6
More than \$40,001	30	48.4
<u>Total</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>100</u>
<b>Family Form</b>		
Single Parent Families	20	32.3
Dual Parent Families	42	67.7
<u>Total</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>100</u>
<b>Age</b>		
15	8	12.9
16	13	21.0
17	15	24.2
18	26	41.9
<u>Total</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>100</u>



Table 3.1 (continued)

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	26	41.9
Female	35	56.5
Missing	1	1.6
<u>Total</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>100</u>

Table 3.2

*Categorical Comparisons*  
*Family Form and Income (N = 62)*

	Family Form	
	Single Parent Family	Dual Parent Family
<b>Income</b>		
Low Income	N = 8	N = 7
High Income	N = 12	N = 35
<b>Total</b>	N = 20	N = 42

Table 3.3

*Categorical Comparisons*  
*Ethnicity and Family Form (N = 62)*

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	Ethnicity	
	African American	Caucasian
Family Form		
Single Parent Family	N = 11	N = 9
Dual Parent Family	N = 10	N = 32
Total	N = 21	N = 41

---

Table 3.4

*Categorical Comparisons*  
*Income and Ethnicity (N = 62)*

---

	Income	
	Low Income	High Income
Ethnicity		
African American	N = 9	N = 12
Caucasian	N = 6	N = 35
Total	N = 15	N = 47

---

Table 3.5

Income Level, Family Form, Parental Types and Academic Competence:  
Descriptive Statistics (N = 62)

Variable	<u>M</u>	SD	Range
Income	1.48	.504	1-2
Level of Academic Competence	15.21	3.47	5-20
Average Permissiveness	23.54	6.51	12-43
Average Authoritarian	32.64	4.94	18.5- 42.5
Average Authoritative	34.49	6.25	20-26
Family Form	.68	.47	0-1

Income Level: 1 = *lower income under \$40,001 annually* 2 = *higher income over \$40,001 annually*. Family Form: 0 = *single parent homes*, 1 = *dual parent homes*.

#### Limitations

A methodological limitation of this study was the use of self-reported data. With research some students will respond in a manner which they feel the researcher expects. Others may be fearful of the possibility of intervention if they score very low on some scales and therefore not respond accurately. Social desirability will be a factor, in that adolescents will typically respond to surveys in a manner they feel society expects. The study could benefit from the report of one or more variables from a source other than the adolescent. This was difficult however due to confidentiality and age of subjects.

An additional limitation is the use of non-probability sampling. A random selection procedure was not feasible for this study and therefore the researcher had to use the sample that was available. An attempt was made however to include students in several income levels, and geographic areas of Oklahoma City so that the findings are more representative of the population of the area.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study was designed to examine contributions to academic competence for adolescents. Variables used in this study included adolescent factors, parental factors and three demographic variables. Adolescent factors explored included the adolescent's view of his/her level of academic competence. Parental factors explored were the adolescent's perception of his/her parent's parenting styles. And the demographic variables included the ethnicity of the adolescent, the level of income of the family as well as the family form (e.g. single parent home, dual parenting). Each of the hypotheses will be discussed and findings from each analysis will be described.

#### Results

The SPSS Base 14.0 graduate statistical package (2005) was used to analyze all data. Frequencies were run on all of the descriptive data to check for accuracy of data entry. For Hypothesis one a hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the data. Hypotheses 2, 3, 5 and 6 were analyzed by a multiple regression analysis. Hypothesis 4 was examined by a one-way analysis of variance to compare group means between the variables.

Hypothesis 1 examined whether or not income level when entered as either high or low significantly predicted academic competence. Income was not found to be a significant predictor for academic competence with this sample  $F(1, 60) = .680, p > .05$ . (see Table 4.1) When examining the Coefficients and t-values, no significance was found (see Table 4.2 for Standardized and Unstandardized Beta's). To determine practical significance, the researcher looked at the Omega squared value. According to this value income level had very little effect on academic competence (.005). This indicates that .5% of the variability in academic competence was due to income level.

In Hypothesis 2 the researcher used hierarchical regression to determine whether or not the addition of race to income level would increase the amount of shared variance with academic competence. No significance was found  $F(2, 59) = .336, p > .05$  (see Table 4.1). The r-squared value did not change and remained .011 (see Table 4.2).

Whether or not the different parenting styles served as significant predictors for adolescents' levels of academic competence, was examined in Hypothesis 3. A regression analysis was used in this statistical analysis. This regression analysis did not reach statistical significance  $F(3, 57) = 2.581, p > .05$  (see Table 4.1). The R-squared value was .120. When reviewing the Betas and looking at the individual parenting style, the two variables/predictors to show significance were Permissiveness parenting style ( $t = -2.44$ ) and Authoritarian ( $t = -2.133$ ). Authoritative was non significant ( $t = -1.404$ ). It appears that the higher the scores in both Permissiveness and Authoritarian style, the lower level of academic competence (see Table 4.2). The practical significance reached a value of .072. According to Cohen (1982) this is slightly above a medium effect.

Table 4.1

Summary of Regression Analyses for  
Variables Predicting Adolescents' Level of Academic Competence  
African American & Caucasian Adolescents  
ANOVA Summary Table

Source	df	MS	F	p
<b>Hypothesis 1</b>				
Income	1	.174	.680	.413
Within Group	60	.255		
Error	61			
<b>Hypothesis 2</b>				
Income X Race/Ethnicity	2	4.135	.336	.716
Within Group	59	12.305		
Error	61			
<b>Hypothesis 3</b>				
Parenting Styles	3	29.140	2.581	.062
Within Group	57	11.291		
Error	60			

Table 4.2

Summary of Regression Analyses for  
Variables Predicting Adolescents' Level of Academic Competence  
African American and Caucasian Adolescents  
Coefficients

---

Variable	$\beta$	$SE \beta$	$\beta$	t	sig
<b>Hypothesis 1</b>					
Income	-.015	.019	-.825	-.825	.413
$R^2 = .011; \Delta R^2 = -.005$					
<b>Hypothesis 2</b>					
Race/Ethnicity	.020	.360	.008	.055	.956
Income	-.757	1.022	-.110	-.741	.462
$R^2 = .011; \Delta R^2 = -.022$					
<b>Hypothesis 3</b>					
Permissiveness	-.200	.082	-.369	-2.44	.018
Authoritarian	-.226	.106	-.320	-2.13	.037
Authoritative	.098	.070	-.177	-1.40	.166
$R^2 = .120; \Delta R^2 = .073$					

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Hypothesis 4 was analyzed using an analysis of variance to examine the relationship between family form and the adolescents' levels of academic competence.



This was non significant  $F(1, 60) = .062, p > .05$ . There was no significant difference in level of academic competence between single and dual parent families (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Analysis of Variance for Academic Competence

Source	df	MS	F	p
<b>Hypothesis 4</b>				
Family Form	1	.753	.062	.805
Within Group	60	12.225		
Error	61			

To examine Hypothesis 5 several analyses were run. The first analysis entered race and all three parenting types as predictors with the criterion academic competence. All four variables combined were not found to be significant predictors  $F(4, 56) = 2.011, p > .05$  (see Table 4.4). Again there were two significant predictors which were Permissive parenting ( $t = -2.485$ ) and Authoritarian ( $t = -2.182$ ). Race was a non significant predictor ( $t = -.622$ ) as well as Authoritative parenting ( $t = -1.30$ ). The R-squared value was .126 (see Table 4.5).

In the second step all three parenting types were entered as predictors for African American adolescents only. No significance was found  $F(3, 17) = 1.05, p > .05$  (see Table 4.4). When looking at each parenting type individually no significance was found for Permissive, Authoritative or Authoritarian parenting types ( $t = -1.157, t = -1.216$  and  $t = -.261$  respectively). The R-squared value increased slightly to .156 (see Table 4.5).

The author reviewed the level of practical significance for Authoritarian Parenting type with levels of Academic Competence for African American adolescents and found an Omega Squared value of .034. According to Cohen (1982) this is a large effect although it did not reach statistical significance.

The last step to explore Hypothesis 6 was examining the three parenting types as predictors for Caucasian adolescents only. No significance was found  $F(3, 36) = 2.151, p > .05$  (see Table 4.4). However of the three predictors Authoritarian was found to be significant ( $t = -2.511$ ) (see Table 4.5).

Due to the focus of the study being to compare the different associations of race and selected other variables with academic competence, additional analyses were conducted to further explore results from the above hypotheses. This included the exploration of the interaction between race and the different types of parenting styles. No significance was found when the overall regression model of the three parenting styles as predictors with academic competence were examined, or when the three predictors were entered and separated by race. However Permissive parenting and Authoritarian parenting style continue to be significant negative predictors with academic competence. Therefore the researcher ran three additional analyses by entering Permissive parenting and Authoritarian parenting as predictors with academic competence first with both ethnicities combined. These variables were explored from a significance level of .10 for marginal significance. The R-squared value was .089. This did reach statistical significance at the .10 level  $F(2, 58) = 2.839, p < .10$  (see Table 4.4).

The second step was to enter the two predictors for African American adolescents only. This yielded non-significant results  $F(2, 18) = .807, p > .10$  (see Table 4.4). R-squared value = .082. However for Caucasian adolescents only both Permissive and Authoritarian parenting types combined produced significance at the .10 level  $F(2, 37) = 3.01, p < .10$  (see Table 4.4). This R-squared value = .140. Beta results produced negative significance for Authoritarian parenting style with academic competence ( $t = -2.440$ ) (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.4

Regression Analyses for Academic Competence

Including Race/Ethnicity

ANOVA Summary Table

Source	df	MS	F	p
<b>Hypothesis 5</b>				
Regression	4	22.958	2.011	.105
Within Group	56	11.414		
Error	60			
<i>African American Only</i>				
Regression	3	19.997	1.045	.398
Within Group	17	19.127		
Error	20			

Table 4.4 (*continued*)

Source	df	MS	F	p
<b>Hypothesis 6</b>				
<i>Caucasian Only</i>				
Regression	3	17.426	2.151	.111
Within Group	36	8.101		
Error	39			
<b>Additional analysis (Authoritarian &amp; Permissive Parenting only)</b>				
<i>Both Ethnicities</i>				
Regression	2	32.589	2.839	.067
Within Group	58	11.480		
Error	60			
<i>African American Only</i>				
Regression	2	15.855	.807	.461
Within Group	18	19.635		
Error	20			
<i>Caucasian Only</i>				
Regression	2	24.041	3.007	.062
Within Group	37	7.995		
Error	39			

Table 4.5

Regression Analyses for Academic CompetenceIncluding Race/Ethnicity

Variable	$\beta$	$SE \beta$	$\beta$	t	Sig
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**Hypothesis 5**

## Step 1

## Parenting Styles

Average Permissiveness	-.206	.083	-.380	-2.485	.016
Average Authoritarian	-.235	.107	-.332	-2.182	.033
Average Authoritative	-.092	.071	-.167	-1.300	.199
Race/Ethnicity	-.193	.310	-.079	-.622	.537

$$R^2 = .126. \Delta R^2 = .063$$

## Step 2

## African Americans Only

## Parenting Styles

Average Permissiveness	-.195	.169	-.395	-1.157	.263
Average Authoritarian	-.081	.309	-.089	-.261	.797
Average Authoritative	-.205	.169	-.276	-1.216	.241

$$R^2 = .156; \Delta R^2 = .007$$

Table 4.5 (continued)

Variable	$\beta$	$SE \beta$	$\beta$	t	Sig.
<b>Hypothesis 6</b>					
Caucasian Adolescents Only					
Parenting Styles					
Average Permissiveness	-.145	.106	-.234	-1.362	.182
Average Authoritarian	-.257	.102	-.434	-2.511	.017
Average Authoritative	-.052	.072	-.112	-.720	.476
$R^2 = .152; \Delta R^2 = .081$					

Table 4.6

Regression Analysis for Academic CompetenceAdditional Exploration of Variables

Variable	$\beta$	$SE \beta$	$\beta$	t	Sig
Both Ethnicities					
Parenting Style					
Average Permissiveness	-.180	.081	-.332	-2.214	.031
Average Authoritarian	-.207	.106	-.293	-1.953	.056
$R^2 = .089; \Delta R^2 = .058$					
African Americans Only					
Parenting Style					
Average Permissiveness	-.181	.171	-.366	-1.061	.303
Average Authoritarian	-.107	.312	-.118	-.343	.735
$R^2 = .082; \Delta R^2 = -.020$					
Caucasian Adolescents' Only					
Parenting Style					
Average Permissiveness	-.135	.105	-.218	-1.286	.206
Average Authoritarian	-.244	.100	-.413	-2.440	.020
$R^2 = .140; \Delta R^2 = .093$					

## Chapter V

### Discussion

The basic purpose of research is to seek new knowledge that is needed in order to understand social phenomena. This knowledge is used for application in current and future issues (Miller, 1991). The purpose of this study was to identify factors that may have contributed to adolescents' perception of their level of academic competence. Human Ecological theory looks at individuals and how they relate to their social environment. Aspects of the social environment tend to interact with one another and often time overlap. Any changes in one part of the system affects the entire system as a whole as well as the parts of the system (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Factors such as the income level of the home, the dynamics of a single or dual parent environment, and the method of parenting that is chosen, all directly affect an adolescent's view of his or her level of academic competence.

In previous studies factors such as Authoritative parenting style and family income were thought to be highly associated with higher levels of academic competence. This was particularly true for Caucasian families; however the studies that included African American samples were typically low. The goal was to find significant associations or predictors for both African American and Caucasian adolescents, then to determine whether or not there were any differences between the two cultures. Data for



this study was collected from a total of 62 students (21 African American and 41 Caucasian) in urban and suburban areas in central Oklahoma. Analysis of variance and multiple regression analysis revealed that there were significant predictors for Academic competence in this population of students that shows that certain parenting styles predict lower levels of academic competence. Each hypothesis is discussed further in the section to follow.

Hypothesis one: Whether or not higher levels of income predicted higher levels of academic competence was explored in hypothesis one. During the original data collection process, income was collected on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4, with group one being the lower income group. However, for data analysis the researcher re-coded income into two categories high and low in order to assure that there was a significant amount of students in each group for data analysis. All three of the lower income levels were entered as one category and the top income level was entered as the high income group. Income level as a predictor for academic competence did not reach statistical significance. The literature discussed income as being a possible predictor of academic competence due to the increase in the resources available to families with higher income levels. Home environments where there are lower levels of income create more stressful environments for children and these children typically perform less well in school (McAdoo, 1985). The mean for academic competence in this study was 15.21 in a range of 5 – 20. Most of the students in this sample had high levels of academic competence. Perhaps in a sample where there was more variation in levels of academic competence, more differences may have been found.

Hypothesis two: The first hypothesis examined whether or not income predicted academic competence. In hypothesis two, the researcher wanted to determine whether or not the addition of race while controlling for income would make a significant contribution to academic competence. There were no significant differences in levels of academic competence between African American and Caucasian adolescents when the levels of income were the same. The data collected from both of the schools in this study were from higher income level groups. A majority of the income level was in the two higher end categories of income. This may be the reason for no significant differences found between the two ethnic groups. According to literature social resources relate to higher levels of academic competence. Because both groups were from income levels that were fairly close, it is less likely to find any differences. From the original data collection there were only four subjects from families that had income of less than \$25,000 a year and 11 were from incomes of under \$40,000 a year. This means that a majority of the subjects in this study were from income groups of more than \$40,000 a year. Children from families of higher income groups have more exposure to resources with less risk factors and lower drop out rates (Pungello, Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1996). This supports the finding that no differences were found between the groups.

Hypothesis three: Parenting style was thought to significantly predict academic competence. Studies on parental discipline and risk factors determined that there are several factors that affect children's behavior, however harsh discipline is thought to attribute more to these risk factors (Deater-Deckard, & Dodge, 1997). This study did not find all three types of parenting to be significant predictors of academic competence

when entered simultaneously. However when looking at the individual parenting types, two were found to be significant and they were negatively related. Permissive and Authoritarian parenting style were significantly negatively related to academic competence. For this sample, the higher the parents were in their level of Permissiveness and Authoritarianism, the lower the adolescent's level of academic competence. Further exploration of these variables and ethnicity differences will be discussed in the hypothesis to follow.

Hypothesis four: Previous research on family form suggests that dual parent family homes have more positive outcomes than single parent homes. In the study there were no significant differences between the two groups on adolescent's level of academic competence. This may also be a result of the higher income level groups in that even the single parent homes had more available resources. Another observation made with this particular data set was that most of the adolescents reported parenting styles for both parents whether they reported they currently resided with both parents or not. This would suggest that the students have an interaction with both parents regardless with whom they live. These relationships may affect the adolescent's level of academic competence. This would have to be explored in further studies.

Hypothesis five: The initial belief in this study was that parenting styles affected adolescents from different ethnicities in different ways. Many of the previous studies on parenting style predict that Authoritative parenting style produces the most positive outcomes for adolescents. However for African American adolescents, there still remain some inconsistent findings in research that this is the case. Some studies suggest that adolescents perceive their parents differently depending on the culture in which they are

raised. African American adolescents typically view their parents as more strict which may or may not be viewed as an Authoritarian parenting type. To explore this, the researcher wanted to determine if Authoritarian parenting style significantly predicted academic competence for African American adolescents. When both ethnicities were entered in the analysis Authoritarian parenting style significantly negatively predicted academic competence. However with the African American sample only, no significance was found. Others studies by Baumrind (1971) report that Authoritarian parents are not repsonsive however they are more demanding. IT would be suspected that this would be true for the current sample, however the amount of African American participants in this study was very low (N = 31). In multiple regression analysis this low number is unlikely to present any significant results. There were only eight students whose parents scored the highest of the three parenting types as Authoritarian parenting. Possibly a study with more African American students would produce different results.

Hypothesis 6: This hypothesis looked at whether or not Authoritative parenting significantly predicted academic competence for Caucasian adolescents. With the data sample, it did not. When all three parenting types were entered into the regression analysis Authoritative was not found to be one of the significant predictors, although the other two parenting types were. Permissive and Authoritarian parenting predicted low levels of academic competence. However there was not enough support to say that Authoritative has a positive relationship with academic competence.

An additional analysis was conducted to determine if and how the predictors related to academic competence when only the significant predictors were entered. When both Permissive and Authoritarian parenting was entered as predictors for African

American and Caucasian adolescents, they were found to be significant for Caucasian adolescents but not for African American adolescents. For both ethnicities the higher the parents were on their level of Permissiveness and Authoritarianism the lower the level of academic competence for the adolescent when controlling for the other variable (i.e. ethnicity). However when the groups were separated by ethnicity, there was no significance for the African American sample and only Authoritarian parenting was significant with the Caucasian sample. Several factors such as marital status of parents, academic performance, parental interaction and social economic status influence adolescent behavior no matter what ethnicity (Seinbert, Mounts, Lamborn, and Dornbusch, 1991). With an adequate sample size it is difficult to determine how all of these factors when being controlled for affect academic competence. Again much of the significance was likely lost due to the low sample size in this study. It is probable that a higher number of participants would have increased the statistical power of this study.

#### Unanticipated factors

Adolescent research can be a very complex task for several reasons. Prior to this study the researcher believed that the primary difficulty would be with obtaining written consent from parents. Because of all of the law suits, and past behavior of adults involving their interaction with minor children, it has become increasingly difficult to obtain permission to work with children that are not of legal age. At the start of this study, the researcher had obtained permission from six principals in several high schools in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan area. Several teachers had agreed to work with the researcher in obtaining data as well. However, when permission was requested from the school boards, only two of the original four school boards gave permission to enter into

the schools. The school board with the largest population was one of the districts that decided against granting access to the students for the research. Due to this, less than one-third of the number of students estimated to be available were actually accessible for the study.

Additionally, the researcher was very optimistic in believing that the students would be willing to participate in a study that would only require twenty minutes of their time. The belief was that if the school staff was supportive, the receipt of parental permission would be at least one in four students. It was found that many of the parents that were presented with the consent forms did agree. However, the difficulty that the researcher had was in getting the adolescents to take the consent forms to their parents. The motivation for the study came about in trying to find positive outcomes for African American adolescents, since this population is under-represented in positive outcome research studies. There was a great deal of disappointment when the greatest level of difficulty was with getting the African American students to participate. The availability of African American students was higher than or equal to the availability of Caucasian students for this study. However, the response was less than half for the African American students. When the researcher returned to the classes to collect data from the African American population, many of the students would reply that they lost their form, forgot to take it home, or just didn't even think about it. The researcher returned to the predominantly African American classrooms for data collection five times the amount of times needed for the predominantly Caucasian classrooms.

For these two reasons, inability to obtain permission to survey students in two schools and low participation from the African American population, the researcher had

low *Ns* for this study. The researcher's desire for positive outcomes was not supported by the results. It is unknown whether or not more subjects and or an additional population would have produced more significant findings.

#### Suggestions for future research

Research conducted to explore positive outcomes for African American adolescents is still a needed task. The following are suggestions for future research that may assist in obtaining these positive outcomes:

1. Possibly exploring African American adult families that have become successful and discussing their previous adolescent behavior would be a more promising research study. Pursuing the same variables including family form, income level, and parenting style and collecting those variables from his or her recollection of their adolescents or late childhood, might yield more positive results.
2. If the research is conducted with adolescents with an incentive in place, more adolescents may be willing to participate.
3. Conducting the study using a previously collected data set may also provide a larger *N*.

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APPENDIX A

ADOLESCENT SELF-PERCEPTION PROFILE

## APPENDIX A

## Adolescent Self-Perception Profile

## Academic competence

Please select the response to the following that is most applicable. You will only have one response for each of the five sections. For each section first decide whether or not column A or column B best describes you. Then choose whether the statement is really true about you or sort of true.

**Column A****Column B**

Really  
True

Sort of  
True

Sort of  
True

Really  
True

1) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers feel that they are just as smart as others their age.	BUT	Other teenagers aren't so sure and wonder if they are as smart.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers are pretty slow in finishing their school work.	BUT	Other teenagers can do their school work more quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers do very well at their classwork.	BUT	Other teenagers don't do very well at their classwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers have trouble figuring out the answers in school.	BUT	Other teenagers almost always can figure out the answers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some teenagers feel that they are pretty intelligent.	BUT	Other teenagers question whether they are intelligent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX B  
PARENTAL AUTHORITY QUESTIONNAIRE

## APPENDIX B PAQ Pertaining to Mothers and Fathers

Instructions: For each of the following statements, circle the number of the 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) that best describes how that statement applies to you and your parents. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your parents when you were about age 16. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

- 1 = Strongly disagree  
 2 = Disagree  
 3 = Neither agree nor disagree  
 4 = Agree  
 5 = Strongly agree

		MOTHER					FATHER				
1.	While I was growing up my parents felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Even if their children didn't agree with them, my parents felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what they thought was right.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Whenever my parents told me to do something as I was growing up, they expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4.	As I was growing up, once family policy had been established, my parents discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My parents have always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My parents have always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7.	As I was growing up my parents did not allow me to question any decision they had made.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8.	As I was growing up my parents directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My parents have always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

		MOTHER					FATHER				
10.	As I was growing up my parents did not feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11.	As I was growing up I knew what my parents expected of me in my family, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with my parents when I felt that they were unreasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My parents felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
13.	As I was growing up, my parents seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Most of the time as I was growing up my parents did what the children in the family wanted when making family decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15.	As the children in my family were growing up, my parents consistently gave us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
16.	As I was growing up my parents would get very upset if I tried to disagree with them.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
17.	My parents feel that most problems in society would be solved if parents would <i>not</i> restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
18.	As I was growing up my parents let me know what behavior they expected of me, and if I didn't meet those expectations, they punished me.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
19.	As I was growing up my parents allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from them.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
20.	As I was growing up my parents took the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but they would not decide for something simply because the children wanted it.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5



		MOTHER					FATHER				
21.	My parents did not view themselves as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior as I was growing up.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
22.	My parents had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but they were willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
23.	My parents gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and they expected me to follow their direction, but they were always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
24.	As I was growing up my parents allowed me to form my own point of view on family matters and they generally allowed me to decide for myself what I was going to do.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
25.	My parents have always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to as they are growing up.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
26.	As I was growing up my parents often told me exactly what they wanted me to do and how they expected me to do it.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
27.	As I was growing up my parents gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but they were also understanding when I disagreed with them.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
28.	As I was growing up my parents did not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
29.	As I was growing up I knew what my parents expected of me in the family and they insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for their authority.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
30.	As I was growing up, if my parents made a decision in the family that hurt me, they were willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if they had made a mistake.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

## APPENDIX C

<b>Demographic Information</b>
--------------------------------

The following information is considered confidential. Please complete all questions and choose the response that is most applicable to you by circling or filing in the blank. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. What was your age at your last birthday?
  1. 15
  2. 16
  3. 17
  4. 18
  5. 19
  6. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your current classification?
  1. Freshman
  2. Sophomore
  3. Junior
  4. Senior
  
3. What is your gender?
  1. Male
  2. Female
  
4. What is your race?
  1. African American
  2. Asian-American
  3. Bi-Racial (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)
  4. Caucasian
  5. Hispanic
  6. Native American
  7. Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)
  
- 5) Please check all of the following that apply to the ADULTS who currently reside in your home:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a) Mother
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b) Father
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c) Step Mother
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d) Step Father
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e) Grandmother
  - \_\_\_\_\_ f) Grandfather
  - \_\_\_\_\_ g) Aunt
  - \_\_\_\_\_ h) Uncle
  - \_\_\_\_\_ I) Cousin
  - \_\_\_\_\_ J) Older sibling (age) \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ k) Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)
  
- 6) Have you had any major events in the last 3 years that has changed the composition of your family with whom you live?
 

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If Yes, please describe:

APPENDIX D  
LETTER TO PARENTS

Appendix D  
Letter to Parents

February 2006

Dear Parent:

As you may be aware, research is one of the major contributions to the improvement in the educational environment. Participation in research projects is not only appreciated by the researcher, but by society as a whole. You are the persons that make this possible.

My name is Mariechia Palmer and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. As part of my academic requirements, I have designed a research project that involves gathering information from adolescents in grades 9 to 12. The data collection process will be approximately 25 minutes and consists of the children completing a written survey. These surveys will gather information about your child's age, gender, race, their view of his or her parents parenting style and their level of academic competence. Attached you will find a summary of the project and a description of the tools to be used. You are welcome to log on to my website at [www.palmer-cargle.com](http://www.palmer-cargle.com), to review an exact copy of the forms that will be administered to your child. Go to the "My dissertation" link.

One of the variables in the research design includes gaining information as to the social economic status of the family which whom the child resides. I am asking that you choose one of the categories at the bottom of the consent form. In order to protect your confidentiality, the income statement will not be attached to the consent form once it is returned.

My dissertation chair is Dr. Beulah Hirschlein. If you have any questions or concerns, you can reach her at 405-744-8357 or myself at 405-623-1976.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Mariechia L. Palmer, M.S.  
Principal Investigator  
Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX E  
CONSENT FORM

Appendix E  
Consent Form

**Parenting Style & Background Characteristics as Moderators between  
Ethnicity & Perceived Academic Competence**

A part of the Dissertation process for:

Principle Investigator: Mariechia L. Palmer, 405-623-1976  
Advisor: Dr. Beulah Hirschlein, 405-744-8347  
Department of Human Development and Family Science, Oklahoma State University.

By signing this form, you state that you are giving permission for your child to take part in a 25 minute survey that has been approved by the (school district name). There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. The following instruments will be completed:

- \*Demographic Instrument (providing their sex, race and age)
- \*PAQ (Parental Authority Questionnaire) Scale
- \*Adolescent Self-Perception Profile (Academic Competence sub-scale)

The researcher will take every measure possible to ensure you and your child's confidentiality. All data will be stored in a private location of the researcher for a minimum of two years. Consent forms will be stored separately from income statements. The income section below will be separated prior to your child's completion of the surveys and only connected with a number that will be assigned.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and fully understand the consent form  
(Please print name of parent)

and I authorize \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the  
(Please print students name)

administration of survey's and completion in the classroom during regular school hours.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Participation in this study is voluntary, any students may refuse to participate without fear or concern. You may request information from the IRB about your rights as a research subject by contacting Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, IRB Chair, 415 Whitehurst Hall, 405-744-1676, or IRB@okstate.edu.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Survey Number \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose one of the following that best describes your total annual household income.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1) under \$25,000 per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \$25,001 to \$40,000 per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \$40,001 to \$60,000 per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4) More than \$60,000 per year.

APPENDIX F  
STUDENT ASSENT FORM



## Appendix F

## Student Assent Form

**Parenting Style & Background Characteristics as Moderators between  
Ethnicity & Perceived Academic Competence**

This study is being conducted as part of an academic requirement for the researcher:	
Mariechia Palmer PhD Candidate	Dissertation Chair: Dr. Beulah Hirschlien
Oklahoma State University	Oklahoma State
University	
P.O. Box 754	244 HES
Spencer, OK 73084	Stillwater, OK 74075
405-623-1976	405-744-8347

Completion of the survey instruments provided with this study will take an average of 25 minutes and is strictly voluntary. Although your participation in this study is appreciated, it is not required. You may choose not to participate at any time without consequences. This study is designed to assist in programs that may improve parent child relationships. Data will be kept confidential and you will not be asked to place your name on the surveys.

If you have any questions, you may ask at any time. The researcher will be present during the survey administration.

I have read and fully understand the assent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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**Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board**

Date Tuesday, November 28, 2006 Protocol Expires: 2/14/2007  
IRB Application HE0623  
Proposal Title: A Cross-Cultural Comparisons to the Factors Associated with Academic Competence  
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)  
**Modification**

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s) :

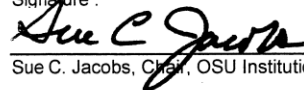
Mariechia Palmer Beulah Hirschlien ✓  
605 NW 121st Terrace 244 HES  
Okla. City, OK 73114 Stillwater, OK 74078

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The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

Signature :



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair, OSU Institutional Review Board

Tuesday, November 28, 2006  
Date

# Vita

Mariechia L. Palmer

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: A CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON OF THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

Major Field: Human Environmental Science

Biographical:

**Education: Attended Rose State College, Midwest City, OK**

General Courses Summer 1990, Fall 1991 and Summer 1992. Received a Bachelor of Science in Family Relations and Child Development December of 1994 from Oklahoma State University, in Stillwater, OK. Received a Master of Science in Education in May 1999 with an emphasis in Family & Child Studies from the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond OK Completed Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in July 2007.

Experience: Instructor from January 2005 to May 2005 for two courses in Human Development & Family Sciences, College of Human Environmental Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

Instructor for the following courses: Human Development within the Family: A Life Span Perspective (HDFS 2113) and Parenting (HDFS 3123). Teaching Associate for two courses from August 1999 to May 2001. Assisted with Human Development (FRCD 2113). And Families a World Perspective (FRCD 4793).