Perceptions of black male students and their parents about the academic achievement gap between black and white students at the elementary school level.

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PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS ABOUT THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

A Dissertation Presented

by

GLORIA B. WILLIAMS

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DEDICATION

"Impossibilities are merely things which we have not yet learned."
Charles W. Chestnutt (1858 - 1932).

This research is dedicated to my mother, Evergreen W. Bass, who continually shares her wisdom and love with me; my husband, Bud L. Williams, whose love, encouragement, advice, and unyielding support helped me to remain steadfast in my pursuit of this research; and my children, Keisa, Kamari, and Ashley, who supported my effort by showing love and patience, when they needed my attention. I love all of you very much.
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• To my friend Mary Moore, thank you for your invaluable encouragement and technical assistance throughout this process.
ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS ABOUT THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of African-American students and their parents about the academic achievement gap between African-American students and their White counterparts at the elementary school level in urban school districts. The study was also aimed at determining the extent to which socioeconomic factors contribute to the achievement gap between African-American and White students. A survey of African-American students and their parents was conducted to collect data for the study. The data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative procedures to provide answers to the research questions and to test the research hypotheses. Consistent with the related literature, the findings indicate that the existing achievement gap between African-American and White students is primarily impacted by a number of socioeconomic factors including single-parent family structure, lack of equal educational opportunities, lack of appropriate self-esteem and/or necessary self-confidence among African-American children, peer pressure, and little participation of African-American parents in their children’s educational accomplishment due to financial restraints, job-related obligations, and other family commitments.
Conclusions derived from examining the research questions and hypotheses are summarized as follows: (a) as a result of low family socioeconomic status, a majority of the African-American children have the disadvantage of not being able to enjoy the quality education they deserve; (b) younger parents of low socioeconomic status are more likely to show dissatisfaction with the quality of education provided their children as compared to older parents with higher income status; (c) the more educated African-American parents are, the more likely they show commitment to their children’s academic achievement; (d) the older African-American parents are, the more likely they value the relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement; (e) fifth graders are doing best in science and writing, while third graders are doing best in reading; (f) while both third grade and fifth grade children agreed that teachers do not show favoritism toward African-American or White students, fifth graders showed a relatively higher degree of agreement; and (g) while both third grade and fifth grade children disagreed that even when they work hard, they receive poor grades, fifth graders showed a relatively higher degree of disagreement. The study was concluded with several suggestions for future research as well as a number of recommendations to school boards, to educational policy makers, to school administrators, to school teachers, and to the African-American community.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Change is one thing. Progress is another.
- Bertrand Russell -

Background of the Study

Historically there has been a gap between the academic achievement of African-American and White students. African-American students consistently have performed at much lower rates than White students. In fact, the Longitudinal Survey of Youth Child Data (1986-1994) reported Black students on average scored lower than 75% of White students. These results included reading, math and vocabulary tests, as well as tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). The gap appears prior to the Black student’s entrance into kindergarten, and it is pretty consistent throughout adulthood. The “experts” have put forth many theories, mostly related to social pathologies within the African-American culture that contribute to the academic achievement gap, i.e., the lack of ambition, poor role models, single-parent female headed households; peer pressure (students afraid of being perceived as “acting White”). “The attempt by any individual Black to achieve success is seen as a betrayal because it would involve eventually conforming to the norms of White behavior and attitudes.” (Fordham, 1996, p. 285). If this claim is true, this burden causes immense problems for those students who have higher academic aspirations. They are afraid that attaining high academic achievement will alienate them from their “friends”.
The most extreme view of the reasons for the existing achievement gap is best represented by Herrnstein and Murray (1994), authors of the *Bell Curve*. They concluded that the educational disparity is the result of genetic inferiority. Their argument perpetuates the belief that African-Americans simply do not have the genetic intellect to compete with Whites. However, literature related to the achievement gap produced little evidence to support the argument that African-Americans are genetically inferior to Whites (Carter, 1991; Clark, 1965; Cremin, 1970; Fredrickson, 1988; Howard & Hammond, 1985; Howard & Hammond, 1989; Miller, 1995; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Steele, 1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Other theories frequently cited relative to the persisting achievement gap indicate African-American students lack: basic intellectual capacities, specific learning skills, motivation, interest in education, the desire to succeed, etc. (Foster, 1984; Graham, 1989; Osborne, 1997). However, much research now focuses on teachers’ interactions with their students, specifically teacher expectations. The term “self-fulfilling prophesy”, coined by Merton (1948), means that students perform in ways which teachers expect (Nieto, 1999). Their performance is based on subtle and sometimes not so subtle messages from teachers about students’ worth, intelligence, and capacity.

Research has consistently documented that teacher expectations influence student outcomes. These expectations are communicated via specific classroom behaviors and practices that differ substantially for low- versus high-expectation students. Expectations to a large extent are a part of a personal belief system influenced by prior experience with diverse students, teachers’ role definition, knowledge of appropriate strategies and
techniques, and support services available (Winfield, 1986). As indicated by Winfield, for example, in urban schools where there are large proportions of academically poor students, these factors interact to determine whether or not students receive instruction necessary to improve their low achievement levels.

The academic achievement gap between African-American and White students continues to emerge as a major controversy in our educational system. According to Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1988), since the demise of segregated schools, the academic performance level of African-American students has consistently been lower than that of White students. Education experts have offered varied theories relative to the persisting achievement gap between racial/ethnic minorities and their White counterparts. Some indicating that African-American students lack basic intellectual capacities, specific learning skills, motivation, interest in education, the desire to succeed, etc. (Foster, 1984; Graham, 1989; Osborne, 1997). In a nationwide study of student academic performance, for example, Castenell (1983) found that Native American, Hispanic, and African-American students, particularly males, have exhibited the least successful ratings on standardized academic performance test scores. However, the literature has also consistently addressed the negative impact of socioeconomic obstacles on the academic achievement of the racial/ethnic minorities (Washington, 1973; Washington, 1989, Zigler, 1982). Washington (1989), for example, believes that “African-American students may experience cultural disequilibrium in American schools due to conflict between components of school culture and student racial identity.” His 1989 article focuses on a number of issues affecting academic performance of African-American students.
issues include cultural background, cultural awareness, racial identification, self-concept, self-esteem, multicultural education, teacher attitudes, and school responsibility. He recommends a therapeutic instructional process of cultural clarification to encourage positive self-image among African-American students through peer learning, television, memorizing, imagining and pretending, art, and music. Zigler (1982) believes that socioeconomic and environmental variations can produce substantial variations in children's IQ. He also believes that the environment and heredity substantial impact on variations in children's intelligence.

The goal of public education must be the same for all students; that is, to help students achieve their fullest potential. Unfortunately, such a goal often creates problems for many teachers. Many teachers are cross-culturally competent, committed and sensitive to the educational and social needs of students from diverse cultural, racial, and language groups; however, the majority of formal teacher training programs do not address the issue of how to teach culturally different children in the classroom. Many teachers hold the belief that color and culture make no difference and that all people are the same. These same teachers hold the belief that European-American cultural values, attitudes, and traditions are presumed to be universally applicable, beneficial, and desired by all non-European-Americans (Kunjufu, 1995).

Poverty reports offer the central explanation that African-American children do less well than White children because they are poor. However, according to Miller (1995), while this seems to be plausible explanation, this conclusion is not based on the result of an econometric analysis. Clearly, schools are not serving African-American and
Hispanic students well. Standardized test scores reflect these disparities. Data on suspensions, expulsions, retentions, and dropout rates indicate that a disproportionately larger percentage of Black and Hispanic youth are being “distanced” from mainstream America. The continued underachievement, isolation and exclusion of such a large and growing population is a major concern facing our nation today. Unless this is resolved, the U.S. will remain “A Nation at Risk.”

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Black male students and their parents about the academic achievement gap between Black male students and their White counterparts at the elementary school level in urban school districts. The study was also aimed at determining the extent to which certain socioeconomic factors contribute to the perceptions of the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. In pursuing these objectives, the researcher conducted a survey of African-American students and their parents to determine their perceptions of the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students at the elementary school level.

**Statement of the Problem**

This study examines the perceptions of African-American parents and children concerning the academic achievement gap between Black and White students. The poor performance of African-American children is a problem that threatens their own future well being and burden the larger community.
The startling reality for many ethnic minority students including African-Americans and Latinos is that the gap between their academic achievement and their White counterparts continues to widen (Castenell, 1983). Although the low academic performance of African-American students is not a new development, national attention is focused on the academic achievement gap, thanks to the widely publicized high stakes tests. The achievement of African-Americans, Latino and Native American students have lagged behind their White peers. According to Noguera and Akom (2000), the gap is also present in graduation and dropout rates, grades and most other measure of student performance. The consistency of such patterns in almost every school district in the country has the effect of reinforcing well-established assumptions regarding the relationship between race, academic ability and intelligence. Noguera and Akom (2000) claim that achievement test results reflect more than just racial disparities. Their research indicates that test scores of students in schools reflect close correspondence to broader patterns of social inequality. With few exceptions, children of the affluent were found to outperform children of the poor (Noguera & Akom, 2000). This trend has been consistently observed across types of schools and geographic boundaries.

What makes the racial gap uniquely paradoxical is the fact that the benefits typically associated with middle-class status fail to accrue to middle class African-American students. Minority students from middle-class, college-educated families lag significantly behind White students in most achievement measures. The lag in performance of the middle-class African-American students places a focus on the relationship between race and educational performance. According to Kozol (1991), the
specific issue at hand is that of less than productive school performance of middle-class African-American students, there is a vital need of strategies for positive change.

In the analysis of race and social class differences in achievement, a central conceptual issue has been that of intrinsic motivation. Katz (1971), for example, attributed minority children’s deficiencies in academic performance to their relative inability to sustain effort in tasks that are not immediately associated with extrinsic reinforcement. In this regard, a general hypothesis is that minority and lower-class individuals fail to perform as effectively or be as effectively achievement motivated, as White middle-class persons in the absence of material or concrete reinforcements.

According to a report by the National Urban League (1992), “Black youth are being buffeted by a series of [socioeconomic and environmental] forces that, if allowed to go unchecked, could create a lost generation.” Yet, if this generation is lost, much of our hope for economic, social, and technological survival is also lost. The problem of educating our youth must be addressed, or the consequences will be shared by each of us.

A research study by Kunjufu (1995) concludes that African-American males comprise 6% of the United States population, but represent more than 50% of students placed in special education classes (of those, 85% are African-American males) and 50% of the inmates. The study also indicates that “A major reason why Black boys are placed in special education is because many teachers don’t appreciate the idea that children learn in different ways and they bond less with children who don’t look like them. There are
also teachers who are afraid of Black boys.” The study found that, on average, a White male with a high school diploma earns more than a Black male with a college degree.

This pattern of failure in school achievement seriously threatens the development of future African-American leadership. Effective leadership is essential to African-American survival in our nation. As the achievement problems worsen, the need to address them becomes more urgent. The problem is that there is always a diversity of opinions about issues related to the academic achievement of ethnic minority and African-American students. For example, the following provides two different views in response to the question of “Should we create separate classrooms for Black males?” Kunjufu author of Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys (1995), answered in the affirmative and added that in is desired to keep African-American males in the heterogeneous classroom with more African-American male teachers, higher teacher expectations, more holistic lesson plans, a more relevant curriculum, and the use of cooperative learning rather than dividing children by ability. He indicates that, most schools have not responded fast enough to this emergency, and African-American males remain on the endangered species list. Showing concern about this statement of separation instead of integration, John McAdoo, co-editor of Black Children: Social Educational and Parental Environments, responded in the negative and explained that African-American males will learn in any environment that positively supports their learning needs. He further indicates that African-American males learn best in a firm, structured environment, where the learning, behavior expectations and goals are clearly contracted with them and their parents.
There is limited research that specifically targets the educational attainment of African-American male children in the early years of schooling. It is disturbing that the failures of the education system seem to reflect disproportionately in the African-American culture and more specifically among African-American males. For this reason, the focus of this study is on the educational status of African-American students by analyzing their perceptions as well as their parents’ perceptions about the impact of socioeconomic factors in their academic performance.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the academic achievement gap between Black male students and their White counterparts and to determine the extent to which certain socioeconomic factors contribute to the perception of academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. The following research questions were developed and examined to achieve the purpose of the study:

**Research Question 1.** What are the perceptions of parents of African-American male students regarding the causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students?

**Research Question 2.** Is there a relationship between the socioeconomic status of the participating parents as defined in terms of occupation, family income, level of education, family structure, the sex and age of siblings living in the household, and receiving Title I support services and their perceptions regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students?
**Research Question 3.** What are the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences while in school?

**Research Question 4.** What are the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement?

**Research Question 5.** What are the parents’ perceptions of their relationship with their children’s school?

**Research Question 6.** How do the students perceive their academic achievements in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters?

**Research Hypotheses**

Six research hypotheses were formulated and then tested through appropriate inferential statistical procedures: (1) to examine the extent to which age, level of education, and family income of the participating parents are correlated with their perceptions regarding (a) their own academic experiences while they were attending school; (b) their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in their homes; and (c) their relationship with their children’s school; and (2) to determine whether or not significant differences exist between the perceptions of the participating third grade and fifth grade students regarding (a) their academic achievements in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters; (b) their academic progress and experiences in school; and (c) their perceptions of the academic achievement gap between African-American students and their White counterparts.
Research Hypothesis 1. Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences.

Research Hypothesis 2. Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 3. Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of the relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 4. There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters.

Research Hypothesis 5. There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

Research Hypothesis 6. There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in school.

Contributions of the Study

The study will provide data for educators, parents, business, and community leaders to assist in understanding what needs to be done to ensure that racial and ethnic minorities reach educational parity with the mainstream “majority” population in a timely
and focused manner. Among many other aspects of the study, it is hoped that the findings help provide a better explanation of the scope and the nature of the problem as they relate to the academic achievement of all students.

It is very likely that African-Americans fail to see unemployment and low socio-economic status as a problem of education but as a problem of being Black. In fact, youth unemployment over the past two decades has been between 16% and 25%. Black youth statistics indicate a rate twice the national average (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Special Labor Force Report 225). Major reasons often cited are racial discrimination, teenage pregnancy, distance, and lack of work readiness (Kunjufu, 1986).

The semi-skilled jobs that appeal to young men no longer exist in the inner cities. According to Kunjufu, a major reason for the decline in male-headed household and participation in family is due to the change in economy; thus, increasing the likelihood that females are raising many African-American children. Kunjufu further indicates that although there may be some exceptions, the majority of uneducated males will be unable to find employment that will raise their low socioeconomic status and provide adequate financial resources to support their offspring; thus, possibly relegating their children to a lifetime of poverty. Many uneducated and unemployed African-American males will need to find alternative ways to survive economically. They seek opportunities for survival. The employment opportunities are few for the unskilled, and what is available to them is not always legal. Consequently, many uneducated, unemployed African-American males may end up in the nation’s penal institutions.
The continued existence of a substantial educational achievement gap is prohibitively costly, not only for minorities, but for the nation as a whole (Miller, 1995). According to Miller, among the most compelling reasons for seeking to eliminate these educational achievement gaps are:

1. The achievement of significantly higher minority education levels is essential to the long-term productivity and competitiveness of the U.S. economy.

2. If minorities are to enjoy the full benefits of their hard won civil rights, they need formal-education-dependent knowledge and skills much closer in quantity and quality to those held by Whites.

3. The maintenance of a humane and harmonious society depends to a considerable degree on minorities’ reaching educational parity with Whites.

**Limitations of the Study**

The findings of this study should be cautiously generalized due to a number of limitations which might affect its validity:

1. Since there was difficulty in finding a larger sample and it was necessary to include a number of elementary schools with a large number of African-American students, the findings may not reflect the perceptions of the entire population of African-American students at the elementary school level.

2. While the survey instrument for data collection from parents included an open-ended question intended to elicit their personal reflections and perceptions regarding the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White male students, most of the items were multiple-choice responses, and such a response method may not adequately reflect the richness of their opinions and perceptions.
3. The survey made no attempts to conduct an experimental research design to explain the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

**Delimitations of the Study**

The scope of this study is delimited based on the fact that (a) only a particular population of third grade and fifth grade African-American students and their parents were included in the study; (b) only a limited sample of students and their parents were selected for and participated voluntarily in the study; and (c) the data collection for the study was limited to the perceptions of the participant based on the survey instruments that focused on specific aspects of the academic achievement gap between African-American male students and their White counterparts.

**Preliminary Assumptions**

Similar to other studies that seek to learn more about individuals’ perceptions, the scope of this research is based on the following assumptions:

1. Each of the two survey instruments developed for the study has a sufficient degree of content validity to allow for gathering information reflecting the genuine perceptions of the participant.

2. Responses of the individuals to the items of each questionnaire reflect their perceptions, without the imposition of any personal biases on the part of this researcher.

3. Throughout this dissertation, the merits of the primary and secondary sources (including those searched in libraries and those found on the internet) are reflected accurately in the discussion and analysis herein.
Definition of Terms

While many of the terms used in this study are commonly understood, some of the terms used herein are found by specific usage. The following operational and technical terms are consistently used throughout this study:

Definition of Operational Terms

Several operational terms that were particularly used throughout this dissertation are defined as follows:

**Race.** The term is used here to describe groups of people who tend to share certain physical characteristics: skin color, hair texture, and facial features.

**Ethnicity.** The term refers to groups of people who tend to share distinctive cultural attributes: language, religion, family customs, food preferences, as well as a common national identity, and common historical origins.

**White, Black, Asian, and Native American.** Primary terms used to categorize the American population by race. Due to the diversity of individuals (and groups) to whom these apply, the descriptive value of these terms is inherently limited.

**Blacks and African-Americans.** Will be used interchangeably.

**European Americans and Whites or Anglo.** Will be used interchangeably.

**Hispanic/Latino.** Refers to people whose self-identify or share cultural attributes with one or more Latin American societies.

**Majority.** Refers to the non-Hispanic White population.
**Minority.** Refers collectively to African-Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, the racial/ethnic groups that are doing less well educationally academic achievement under existing societal categories.

**Equality of Educational Opportunity.** The opportunity for students to attain a quality education without regard to socioeconomic status, race, sex, color or creed.

**Socioeconomic Status (SES).** Factors that determine a family’s social and economic level; a combination of: (a) family income, (b) family educational background, (c) family occupational status, (d) number of children, and (e) family structure.

**De jure Segregation.** Lawfully sanctioned segregation.

**De facto Segregation.** Segregation through occurrences.

**Respondents.** Students and parents who were interviewed and responded to the survey questions as a part of this study.

**Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.** A nationally standardized test used to determine students’ academic grade level performance.

**Definition of Technical Terms**

In addition to the operational definition of the terms stated above, the following technical terms are also occasionally used in this study as a part of literature review, and are thus described here for further clarification:

**Survey Instrument.** Walsh (1993) defines a survey instrument as: “a self-reporting questionnaire used to gather information about a particular phenomenon.” (p. 18)
Survey Research. Survey research is defined as “The assessment of the current status of opinions, beliefs, and attitudes by questionnaires or interviews from a known population.” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1998, p. 544)

Reliability of Survey Instrument. Reliability of a survey instrument is defined by Slavin (1992) as “the degree to which the instrument consistently measures whatever it is intended to measure.” (p. 252)

Validity of Survey Instrument. Validity of a survey instrument, as cited by Slavin (1992), is “the degree to which the instrument actually measures the concept it is supposed to measure.” (p. 255)

Perception. Perception is defined as the process of determining the meaning of what is sensed by an individual on a particular issue or in response to a specific question (Glover, Bruning, & Filbeck, 1993, p. 592).

Attitude. Attitude is defined by Gorham (1988) as “the subjective experience of individuals, including the evaluative statements of judgments in regards to specific issues or objects.” (p. 5)

School Curriculum. School curriculum has been defined by Walsh (1993) as “a planned set of learning experiences with intended outcomes supervised under the auspices of the educational institution.” (p. 8)

Curriculum Effectiveness. Walsh (1993) refers to curriculum effectiveness as “the extent to which a curriculum is effective in preparation of students for future academic success and career accomplishments.” (p. 9)
Assessment. Assessment is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (1998) as “the act of determining the standing of an object on some variables -- for example, testing students and reporting raw scores.” (p. 531)

Evaluation. Evaluation is defined by Slavin (1992) “a systematic collection of evidence to determine whether certain desired changes are taking place in the learner.” (p. 238)

Educational Evaluation. Stufflebeam, Foley, and Merriman (1997) refer to educational evaluation as “the process of delineating, seeking, obtaining, and providing necessary and useful information for decision-making in education.” (p. 353)

Formative Evaluation. Formative evaluation is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (1998), “formative evaluation is designed and implemented to improve a particular practice, especially when it is still in the process of development.” (p. 591)

Summative Evaluation. McMillan and Schumacher (1998) referred to summative evaluation as a type of “evaluation designed to determine merit, worth, or both of a developed practice and to make implications regarding its adoption, implementation, and widespread use.” (p. 599)

Nonparametric Statistics. Nonparametric statistics are referred to by Slavin (1992) as those types of “statistics designed for use with distributions that do not meet assumptions associated with parametric statistics.” (p. 249)

Parametric Statistics. Parametric statistics are those types of statistics designed for use with distributions that meet assumptions of homogeneity, normality in the population distribution, and continuity and equal intervals of measures or ratio scales (Slavin, 1992).
Organization of the Study

The study is organized into six chapters including an introduction, a review of the literature, methods and procedures, a presentation of the findings, discussion, and a review of the conclusions, implications, and recommendations inspired by this study.

Chapter 1. This chapter includes a background of the study, the purpose of the study, a statement of the problem, a historical perspective of the problem, research questions, research hypotheses, a discussion of contributions of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, preliminary assumptions, definition of operational and technical terms, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2. A review of the literature related to the topic is presented in this chapter. The chapter contains a review of the economic, educational, and social/psychological issues that impact the so-called academic achievement gap between African-American students. The first part includes a review of the literature reflecting the impact of socioeconomic status on children’s academic achievement. The second part provides a review of the literature pertinent to the effects of racism and discrimination on the academic achievement of children. The third part presents the literature related to the effects of teacher expectations on the child’s academic achievement. The fourth part presents a review of the literature regarding the impact of desegregation on the academic achievement between children. The final part deals with the effective policies and practices designed to overcome the academic achievement gap between the diverse population of students. A summary of the literature is also presented at the end.
Chapter 3. This chapter describes the methods and procedures used including a restatement of the study’s goals, questions and hypotheses, research outline, research design, selection of the subjects for the study, the development of the survey instrument, data collection procedures, description of the variables, and treatment of the data. A summary of the methods and procedures is presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4. This chapter presents the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data collected for the study. The qualitative analysis of the data includes providing answers to the first research questions associated with the open-ended item of the parent survey instrument. The quantitative analyses include: (a) examining the remaining five research questions through the use of appropriate descriptive statistics; and (b) testing the null hypotheses derived from the sixth research hypotheses through the use of appropriate inferential statistics. A summary of the findings is also included at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5. A discussion of the study findings as a result of examining the research questions and testing the research hypotheses is included in this chapter.

Chapter 6. This final chapter presents a summary of the study, a summary of the findings, general conclusions and implications, recommendations to: (a) school boards, (b) educational policy makers, (c) school administrators, (d) school teachers, and (e) African-American community. The chapter is concluded with suggestions for future research and the researcher’s concluding remarks.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature reveals a multitude of issues concerning the combined effect of race, economic variables and academic underachievement. While many researchers agree that both race and economic variables play a significant role in the challenge to educate disadvantaged children, they differ on the scope and the degree of their respective importance. This chapter contains a review of socioeconomic and educational issues that impact the achievement gap between Black and White students. The chapter is organized into five major parts. The first part includes a review of the literature reflecting the impact of socioeconomic status on children’s academic achievement. The second part provides a review of the literature pertinent to the effects of racism and discrimination on the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. The third part presents the literature related to the effects of teacher expectations on the child’s academic achievement. The fourth part includes a review of the literature regarding the educational consequences of public schools desegregation. The final part examines the effective policies and practices designed to overcome the academic achievement gap between the diverse population of students across the nation. The policies and practices are related to state and district role, early childhood development initiatives, school climate, school organization, teaching and learning, school management, family support, and community involvement. A summary of the literature review is presented at the end.
Academic Achievement and Socioeconomic Status

One of the most important governmental reports affecting education issues of Black students is The Coleman Report (Equality of Educational Opportunity, 1966). The Coleman Report evaluated the equality of equal opportunity in the United States of America. Since that publication, the strong relationship between social class and educational outcomes of students has been confirmed by many studies. Consequently, researchers commonly collect socioeconomic information on students as part of variables included in their studies. Information gathered in the research studies is usually generated through questionnaires completed voluntarily. Sometimes questions are asked about the types of books and periodicals available in the home and the range of cultural/educational activities engaged in by the family on a regular basis; such questions represent an attempt to measure home atmosphere attributes that are associated with successful academic performance (White, 1982). It seems likely that such attributes are more direct measures than social class of education-relevant family resources (or the inclination and capacity to use these resources). Even though information of this kind is often easiest to gather in a one-of-a-kind study, some ongoing standardized testing programs collect such information (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988).

According to Miller (1995), low-income/poverty is an important predictor of below-average educational achievement. But there may be much more to the story as it pertains to explaining the difference in achievement patterns among racial/ethnic groups. As Wilson (1987) has argued, the concentration of poverty among minorities in our
nation's central cities is accompanied by social isolation, and this combination creates a more extreme form of poverty than is typically experienced by poor Whites. If Wilson is correct, we have reason to believe that data reflecting this hypothesis do not describe the full impact of poverty on the academic achievement of the inner-city poor.

In 1986, Mary Kennedy, Richard Jung, and Martin Orland in association with several other colleagues completed a report that was part of an assessment of the federal government's *Chapter 1* program for disadvantaged children, measured the degree of a family's poverty on the basis of the length of time the family had been in poverty (born into poverty or temporary condition) and the proportion of the student population of the school the children attended who were poor. There are no national trend data available on the impact of the duration of poverty on student achievement. It is unknown, therefore, whether children born in, perhaps, the 1960's experienced more or less long-term childhood poverty than did children born in 1970 or 1980 (Miller, 1995). Kennedy and her colleagues, however, were able to draw on data from a national sample of children born in the mid- to late 1960s who had been tracked into the 1980s as a part of a study of family income and labor-market participation patterns. Thus, we do have longitudinal data on a national sample of children who were growing up during a period when the poverty rate leveled off after a long decline. These data show that 78% of Black children in the sample experienced at least some level of poverty during childhood, compared to 25% of their White counterparts. More importantly, 46% of the Black children but only 5% of the White children were poor for five or more years. These data also provide sufficient information regarding the impact of poverty on the academic achievement.
On average, Black children experienced five years of poverty during the fifteen-year period from 1968 to 1983 while the non-Black children were poor for an average of one year. Moreover, these different averages were not simply a product of differences in the proportions of the two groups that experienced conditions associated with poverty. For example, single-parent family status has a relatively strong correlation with poverty among young children, and higher proportions of Black children than non-Black children are in single-parent homes. However, non-Black children in the sample who were members of a single-parent family were poor for an average of three years, while Black children in such families were poor for an average of seven years (Kennedy et al., 1986).

Kennedy and her colleagues were also able to estimate the impact of the duration of poverty on student’s academic progress as measured by whether they were enrolled in the modal grade for their age as teenagers. They found that the longer the duration of poverty, the greater the likelihood that 16-year-olds in the sample were at least one grade below the modal level (tenth grade) for their age. About 22% of all students in the sample who did not experience poverty during their childhood were at least one grade level above the tenth. In contrast, they concluded that 42% of the students who were poor for eight or more years during childhood were below their modal grade. The researchers also looked at the impact of the intensity of poverty on the academic performance of children in school, relying on the Sustaining Effects Study data base for information on elementary school students in the mid- to late 1970s and the High School and Beyond data base for information on high school sophomores and seniors in the early 1980’s. Both studies were large-scale, federally funded enterprises. The research reports indicate that large
academic achievement gaps among students from different social classes (and racial and
ethnic minority groups) tend to emerge in the early elementary school year and are
sustained through the high school years.

**Early Learning Patterns of Children in Poor Schools**

Data presented in the Sustaining Effects report on reading and math achievement
of elementary school children (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990)
provide important information relative to the formation of group achievement patterns in
the early elementary years. This is very important information because available evidence
indicates that these patterns change relatively little after the middle elementary school
years for most age cohorts of students, regardless of social class or race/ethnicity.

Reading and math achievement tests were administered to participating students in both
the fall and the spring of each school year over a three-year period, a total of six times.
This approach provides information regarding learning gains (and losses) during both the
school year and the summer vacation. For first graders at the start of the study, this means
that longitudinal data are available on their reading and math achievement scores up to
the third grade, the crucial mid point of the elementary school years, when age-cohort
achievement patterns are largely locked in.

The Sustaining Effect data also revealed the average reading achievement scores
for students in high-poverty schools beginning in the first grade indicate a significant
disadvantage in reading preparation relative to students in low-poverty schools and a 15-
point difference in average reading test scores in the fall of first grade. This gap is not
surprising, given the high proportion of children from economically disadvantaged circumstances in the high-poverty schools. The achievement gap also grew substantially during the school year and continued to grow rapidly over the summer. By the beginning of second grade, the reading achievement score gap between children in the high-poverty schools and those in the low-poverty schools had risen to almost 48 points. By the spring of the third grade, the gap had grown to 56 points, which was slightly higher than the 51-point gap between the average reading scores of sixth graders in the low-poverty schools. A similar tendency was found on the math achievement test. These data suggest that if the nation wishes to use schools to reduce achievement differences among groups, it must maximize its efforts in the early years. By third grade, the problem appears to be less a matter of preventing large achievement gaps from developing than of finding ways to cover its lost ground. This substantiated hypothesis invites an opportunity to offer viable strategies and suggestions as to how we can begin to close the achievement gap between African-American and White children at the elementary school level.

In his book: *An American Imperative: Accelerating Minority Educational Advancement*, Miller (1995) offers an analysis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1984) reading and math trend data. At that time, he suggested that, over two decades, there have been few changes in the school’s capacity to serve children from different social classes. His examination of an analysis of the relationship between academic achievement patterns and the intensity of poverty suggest that the longer children are poor, the greater the likelihood that they will be in a lower grade than would be expected for their age. These data also indicate that Black children are much more
likely to experience long-term poverty than White children. In addition, there is a relationship between the level of concentration of poor children in a school and the academic performance of the student body as a whole. High level of poverty was associated with low levels of academic performance for both poor and non-poor children and vice versa (Miller, 1995). This is a potentially important finding given the general concern about the negative consequences of poverty for the urban poor. Research also shows that the academic achievement gaps between students in high- and low-poverty concentration schools develop rapidly in the early elementary school years -- especially for Black males students -- and are a combined result of educational gaps that existed between poor and non-poor children prior to entering first grade (Miller, 1995).

Research has identified multiple sources of racial disparities, many of them having to do with differences in family background. Socioeconomic status is important because of its consequences for family educational resources (DiMaggio, 1982; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1998). Family structural differences across racial groups are likewise important, having implications for parental time, supervision, and socialization (Downey, 1995; Green, 2001; Powell & Steelman, 1990; Sandefur & McLanahan, 1994).

Educational outcome disparities, however, are not only a function of family attributes. School and classroom processes are also important in shaping achievement differences. The consequences of *de jure* segregation and *de facto* segregation of schools, for example, have received attention regarding achievement differences (Coleman, 1966; Crain & Mahard, 1983; Entwisle & Alexander, 1995; Orfield and Eaton, 1996; and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, 1997), as have material resource differences
across poor and non-poor schools (Lockheed, 1990; Monk, 1981; Sutton, 1991; Wise & Gendler, 1989). Certain processes within schools, such as ability grouping (Gamoran, 1992; Meier, 1991; Oakes, 1985) and differential teacher expectations (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), also appear to vary by race, and thus, play a role in persistent Black-White outcome differentials (Miller, 1995).

A new American Youth Policy Forum report (Walker, Jurich, & Estes, 2001), supported by the William T. Grant Foundation, details a two-year effort to find, summarize and analyze evaluations of school and youth programs that show gains for minority youth across a broad range of academic achievement indicators. Raising Minority Academic Achievement: A Compendium of Education Programs and Practices provides an accessible resource for policymakers and practitioners interested in promoting the academic success of racial and ethnic minorities from early childhood through advanced post-secondary study. Since many of these young people continue to be under-represented among academic achievement gains and over-represented in poor and poorly performing schools, the Compendium's findings underscore the rich potential of investing in all our young people through concrete strategies to help them succeed academically. Evaluations of early childhood programs were particularly strong and positive. When compared to control groups, minority children who attended early childhood development programs were more likely to remain in school, complete more years of education, and require less special education. Elementary through middle school evaluations were almost exclusively focused on test scores, which generally showed incremental improvement, but continued achievement gaps. The high school transition
programs that were studied showed increased high school graduation, more high school credits earned, higher GPAs earned or increased enrollment in higher-level courses. All programs used a combination of strategies to improve student performance, not a single intervention. The ten most frequent strategies identified in those programs showing gains for minority youth are: (a) quality implementation, leadership, accountability; (b) scholarships and other financial supports; (c) academically demanding curriculum; (d) professional development for teachers and staff; (e) family involvement; (f) reduced student-to-teacher ratios; (g) individualized supports for students; (h) extended learning time; (i) community involvement; and (j) long-term (multiple year) programs.

While some research theoretically acknowledges interrelations between family background and inequalities occurring in the school and classroom, few analyses of racial disadvantage actually implement this understanding. Instead much of the research focuses on only one of these dimensions (i.e., family effects, classroom processes, or school resources). The fault lies partially with a lack of inclusive data reporting on both students’ families and classrooms/schools (Roscigno, 1999). A broader approach to examine these patterns and institutional connections would be useful, especially given the persistence of group disadvantage over time (Mills, 1992; Orfield, 1994; Roscigno, 1999).

**Family- School Links and the Child’s Academic Achievement**

Family and school rather than being independent institutions, likely overlap and intrude on one another. Although limited with regard to race and education specifically, there is some research on family-school linkages from which to draw. Research on
teacher expectations, for instance, suggests that socioeconomic status is consequential. In general, poor students are expected by teachers to do less well than their middle- and upper-class counterparts regardless of ability (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; Erickson, 1987; Beady & Hansell, 1981; Rist, 1970). Evidence likewise suggest that students of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to be placed into academic tracks conducive to higher achievement (Alexander & McDill, 1978; Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987; Gamoran, 1992; Oakes, 1985). On the basis of this evidence track placement and teacher expectations processes likely translate into African-American student disadvantage, given the disproportionately lower socioeconomic status of African-American children (Roscigno, 1999).

The availability of resources and class and race composition at the school level may also be tied to a child’s background. Several research studies suggest that poorer students are more likely to be concentrated in classrooms and schools that have less in the way of important educational resources (Bowles, 1992; Ginsburg, Moskowitz, & Rosenthal, 1980; Levin, 1968; Lockheed, 1990; Sutton, 1991). Several researchers have found that students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds are quite likely to face de facto race and class educational segregation (Coleman, 1966; Crain & Mahard, 1982; Crain & Mahard, 1983; Roscigno, 1999). They also indicate that race and class educational segregation, may have a negative effect on academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. They argue that processes of educational stratification are permeable and particularly vulnerable to patterns of family inequality. Family socioeconomic status and structural differences across racial lines likely affect
achievement at least partially through their influence on expectations and track placement. Acknowledging family-school connections is important given the persistent and increasing Black-White disparities in socioeconomic status and family structure.

The research findings of William T. Grants Foundation (Walker, Jurich, & Estes, 2001) indicates that involvement of African-American parents is a powerful influence in children’s educational success. The findings reveals that when parents are involved in their children’s education at home, their children do better in school -- they have higher grades and test scores, they have better attendance, they complete homework more consistently, and they exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior. In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children not only improves, it can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains.

According to Walker, Jurich, and Estes (2001), children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution. In a review of the literature, they concluded that parent and family involvement have significant effects on the school quality since the literature findings emerged that: (a) schools that work well with families have improved teacher morale and achieve higher ratings of teachers by parents; (b) schools where parents are involved have more support from families and better reputations in the community; (c) school programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement; (d) schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in
their child’s education; and (e) the school’s practices to inform and involve parents are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children’s education than are parent education, family size, marital status, and even student grade level. The research findings further indicates that: (a) the more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement; (b) for low-income families, programs offering home visits are more successful in involving parents than programs requiring parents to visit the school; (c) when parents become involved at school, their children make even greater gains; (d) when parents receive frequent and effective communication from the school or program, their involvement increases, their overall evaluation of educators improves, and their attitudes toward the program are more positive; (e) when they are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, parents put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective, but have been hesitant to contribute; and (f) one of the most significant challenges to conducting an effective program is the lack of instruction on parent and family involvement that educators and administrators receive in their professional training.

Much of the research relative to socioeconomic status and the Black-White achievement gap suggests that a substantial portion of the racial gap achievement is accounted for by both family and classroom/school characteristics; the influence of family background on achievement is partially mediated through classroom and school processes. What this suggests is that the institution of education, as it currently stands, partially reproduces the inequalities that children walk into school with (Roscigno, 1999).
The Effects of Racism and Discrimination

This part presents an overview of prejudice and discrimination experienced by racial/ethnic minority children in the United States schools followed by a review of the literature pertinent to the impact of racial and ethnic discrimination on the quality of education and opportunity for African-American children, as well as a brief review of the literature on educational consequences of prejudice, racism, and discrimination against African-American children.

An Overview of Racial/Ethnic Prejudice and Discrimination in Education

For many years John Ogbu, an anthropologist, has been concerned with discovering why some minority groups have done well academically in American schools while others have done poorly. Ogbu (1988) observed that the more academically successful groups have been voluntary minorities -- those who migrated to the United States in the hope of improving their circumstances. In contrast, the less academically successful groups have typically been involuntary minorities, people who originally did not want to be part of the American population. Those who came from eastern and southern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are obvious examples of voluntary migration groups that have successfully joined the American mainstream. Africans brought to this country in bondage, as well as Hispanics and Native Americans who were incorporated into the United States population through territorial conquest and expansion, are among the primary examples of involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1988). Obviously, the involuntary population needed to work harder to cope with problems.
Ogbu (1988) believes that voluntary minorities have typically been reasonably well prepared to cope with at least some problems in their new country associated with being considered foreigners; they anticipated some degree of prejudice and discrimination against them as an inevitable cost of coming to the United States. Many could ultimately take this perspective because they were able to compare the United States with their country of origin in terms of the quality of life it offered. In most cases, Ogbu (1988) believes that the comparison was favorable to the United States experience. In contrast, groups that were involuntarily incorporated into the United States were likely to be preoccupied with what they had lost.

According to Scott Miller’s analysis of Ogbu’s work, more important over the long term has been the quality of the opportunity structure for racial and ethnic minorities. He points to Ogbu’s assertion that the voluntary immigrants from Europe were subjected to much less discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity than were the involuntary immigrants. For example, although most immigrants from eastern and southern Europe at the turn of the century had little formal education, they had ready access to low-skilled industrial jobs that paid enough to support their families, and their children were able to take advantage of the public schools available in the northern cities (Kasarda, 1983). By the time these children reached adulthood, they were collectively much better educated and generally more acculturated than their parents (Olneck & Lazerson, 1974). Because they were White, they were able to use these advantages to secure better jobs and higher social positions than their immigrant parents. This process of intergenerational advancement repeated itself in subsequent generations, with the result
that present-day descendants of turn-of-century European immigrants are now basically full members of mainstream society (Neidert & Farley, 1985).

Landry (1987) believes that most mainstream minorities confronted a much greater barrier to the mainstream than a low level formal education status. African-Americans were enslaved for well over two centuries and subsequently subjected to another hundred years of pervasive race-based subordination. And until recent decades those Blacks who did succeed in obtaining a substantial amount of formal education were usually prevented from seeking employment consistent with their education in White-dominated institutional settings (Landry, 1987). Ogbu believes that having been blocked from access to mainstream society, many members of America’s involuntary minorities eventually developed definitions of themselves that were oppositional to the majority culture. They developed a dislike of Whites so great that they did not want to take on attributes they identified with White culture, especially attributes that Whites possessed that actively prevented them from cultivating certain aspects of their own culture (Miller, 1995). The cost of rejecting some aspects of White culture (European classical music, for example) was often inconsequential for involuntary minorities, but it has been extraordinarily high for other aspects, including education. Ogbu (1990) believes that the severe truncation of the educational and occupational structure Blacks experienced eventually led many of them to define substantial amounts of formal education and the jobs it led to (such as engineer or scientist) as ‘White,” not Black.” Some Blacks developed extremely low academic motivation because there was little prospect of gaining a high occupational return on their efforts.
According to Ogbu (1990), the development of this oppositional orientation toward education is probably relatively recent. Long before the end of slavery, free Blacks in the North pursued educational advancement with remarkable dedication despite the obstacles erected by the White community. Newly freed slaves in the South manifested a similar passion for education. In 1910, in many northern cities a higher percentage of African-American children were enrolled in school than of American-born children of European immigrants. This continued to be true in many racial/ethnic groups. This means that, although heredity may now explain about 50 percent of the variation in White children’s intelligence test scores, it probably explain much less than 50 percent of the variation among African-Americans and some other minority groups. In many southern cities as late as 1930, in spite of the large migration of rural southern Blacks, most of whom had relatively little formal education (Anderson, 1988; Weinberg, 1977).

The victories of the civil rights movement, particularly the landmark case of *Brown v. the Board of Education, Topeka* (1954) was a turning point in American history as well as for the future of African-American students. By striking down the separate but equal doctrine the Supreme Court created an opportunity for legal access to educational and occupational advancements for African-Americans, but the damage had already been done. Poverty rates among southern African-Americans continued to be high, and large numbers of northern African-Americans had been confined to poverty in central cities for two generations. Studies by researchers such as Wilson (1987) and Kasarda (1993), for example, have found that poverty among urban African-Americans in the north has been largely associated with a shortage of low-skill, adequately paying jobs.
However, African-Americans were made even more vulnerable to these structural problems in the economy by the institutionalized racism that characterized the period before the civil rights movement. In the job market this discrimination took two forms. First, Blacks were blocked artificially from gaining access to most professional and skilled jobs in the mainstream of the economy. This is what Ogbu and others have referred to as the “job ceiling.” (Miller, 1995). Second, in those areas in which Blacks could seek employment, Whites were usually hired first. This overt job market discrimination took an especially heavy toll in bad economic times. Ogbug (1988), Singham (1998), and Fordham (1998) have collaboratively done extensive fieldwork to support this line of analysis. They have explored academic attitudes and behaviors among students in a mostly Black school in Washington, D.C. They found that the peer culture of the African-American students strongly rejected behaviors that could be construed as “acting White”, in other words, studying hard to get good grades.

One of the conflicts with this approach is that African-Americans are not as impressed with the virtues of Whites as Whites are and see no need to emulate them. Given the behavior of Whites during the time of slavery, to ask African-Americans to regard Whites as role models for virtuousness seems presumptuous, to put it mildly. It would also be presumptuous to assume that rejecting the White behavior model is an act designed merely to give perverse satisfaction to African-Americans, even if it might hurt their chances of economic and educational success in life (Singham, 1998).

Researcher Fordham (1998) found that there is a marked difference in attitudes toward academic and career successes between the generation of African-Americans that
came of age during the civil rights struggle and their children. Much of the literature presented by Ogbu and Fordham indicate evidence that pressures against academic achievement experienced by Black students do not originate exclusively with their peers; they also come from some adults in the African-American community including parents. This should not be surprising, for many African-Americans have extensive experience with the lack of economic opportunity. Moreover Blacks’ stereotypes of Whites include profound distrust. Researchers have repeatedly found that many African-Americans are alienated from Whites and mistrustful of mainstream institutions, including schools and White teachers and administrators (Miller, 1995).

Singham (1998) believes that for Black parents the success of any one person in any new field was perceived also as a vicarious victory for the whole Black community because that individual was opening doors that hitherto been closed to Blacks. Other Blacks could then emulate the example of the pioneer and follow in his or her footsteps. Thus, eventually the community as a whole could pull itself out of the miserable conditions that were the legacy of slavery. For example, the Black community rejoiced when Thurgood Marshall became a Supreme Court justice, and when others became lawyers, doctors, nurses, college professors and other kinds of professionals. It seemed to be only a matter of time before all members of the Black community would obtain their share of the American dream that had long been denied them. Singham (1998) also emphasize that these Black pioneers paid a price for their successes. As a matter of feeling a sense of responsibility not to jeopardize the chances of those who were to come after them, these trailblazers had to prove themselves “worthy” in the eyes of Whites, and
this was done by “acting White,” by adopting the values and behavior of the White-
dominated establishment they were trying to penetrate.

In her study of young Black students attending a high school in Washington, D.C.,
Fordham (1998) found that these young people see things quite differently. The students
observed that the success of the pioneers did not breed widespread success. A few more
Blacks made it into the professions but nowhere near the numbers necessary to lift up the
whole community. Fordham reports that young Blacks see the strategy of using individual
success to lead to community success as fatally flawed. They have replaced it with a
largely unarticulated but nevertheless powerfully cohesive strategy based on the premise
that the only way that the Black community as a whole will advance itself is if all its
members stick together and advance together. This way they can keep their ethnic identity
intact (i.e., not have to “act White”). Hence the attempt by any individual Black to
achieve academic success is seen as a betrayal because it would involve eventually
conforming to the norms of White behavior and attitudes.

This view causes immense problems for those Black students who have higher
academic aspirations. Many are torn between wanting to achieve academic success
because of their parents’ expectations and sacrifices on their behalf and the natural desire
to stay in step with their peers and retain important adolescent friendships. As a result of
this strategy they adopt themselves to the mainstreaming educational process. Fordham
calls their strategy “racelessness” -- behaving in what they see as a race-neutral manner so
as not to draw attention to themselves. Whether this approach is successful in coping with
mainstreaming problems is another important issue which requires further research.

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Fordham’s explanation of why Black students underperform may not suffice as the most compelling reason for this phenomenon. The results of a 1995 study, conducted by Steele and Aronson on college students at Stanford University and the University of Michigan indicate that other complementary factors contribute to the poor academic performance of Blacks. The conclusion of this particular study indicates that when students are placed in a situation in which a poor performance on a standardized test would support a stereotype of inferior abilities because of the student’s ethnicity or gender, then, the student’s performance suffers when compared with those who do not labor under this preconception. For example, when given tests that they were told measured their academic abilities, Black students fared worse than Whites. But when a control group of Black students and Whites were given the same test but were told that the test did not have any such significance but was merely a laboratory tool, the difference in performance disappeared. He calls this phenomenon “stereotype threat.”

Zigler (1982), a leading early childhood expert, believes that environmental variations can produce IQ score variations of as much as 20 to 25 points. He further emphasizes that both heredity and the environment have substantial impact on variations in intelligence for a number of reasons as follows:

First, the relative influence of the environment on intelligence is largely a function of the degree to which the environment tends toward heterogeneity or homogeneity. The more individuals tend to experience very similar environments, the greater the relative impact of genes on variations in intelligence. Conversely, the more individuals tend to experience very different environments, the less the
impact of genes. An estimate that about half of the current variation in intelligence can be explained by the environment suggests that, on average, contemporary America is somewhere toward the middle of the homogeneity-heterogeneity continuum. Second, environment has both physical-organic and social-cultural dimensions. For example, differences in health habits and access to regular health care among pregnant women can produce a range of fetal experiences that have organic consequences associated with variations in intelligence among children. Similarly, differences in child-rearing practices between well-educated and less well-educated parents can produce culturally based variations in intelligence among youngsters. The relative importance of the organic and cultural dimensions varies with the circumstances. Third, there is much more homogeneity among Whites in contemporary America regarding environment-related conditions that shape intellectual development than there is among other racial/ethnic groups. This means that, although heredity may now explain about 50 percent of the variation in White children’s intelligence test scores, it probably explains much less than 50 percent of the variation among Blacks and some other minority groups. (pp. 624-5)

Steele’s 1992 study also highlighted the fact that the “threat” of stereotyping that depresses performance does not have to be very obvious. Just being required to check off their gender or ethnicity on the answer sheet was sufficient to trigger the weaker performance by students. Steele concludes that the fear that a poor performance on a test will confirm a stereotype in the mind of an examiner imposes anxiety on the test-taker
that is difficult to overcome. In light of the widespread belief that Blacks are unlikely to be stellar academic performers, they enter the test-taking situation with a disadvantage compared to those who do not have this fear. Steele (1992) concludes that it is this fear that causes their disinvestments in education, to the assertion that it is not important and that they are not going to expend any effort mastering it. As a result a poor performance is only a measure of the individual's lack of interest in the subject and is not a sign of his or her inability to master it (Singham, 1998).

Ogbu (1991) and other researchers' studies of minority/majority relationships on academic achievement performance are a bit more complex. Ogbu emphasizes the importance of the perception of the relationship between effort and reward. People are more likely to work harder if they can see a benefit in return and have a realistic expectation of receiving that benefit. In the case of education, this link lies in the belief that educational effort leads to academic credentials as well as to gainful employment. This effort reward scenario lies at the basis of the White work ethic and forms an important component of the lectures delivered to Blacks by those who adhere to the sociopathological view of underachievement. Ogbu's research points out that the effort/reward relationship is not obvious to Blacks. As history reveals, for years Blacks were denied employment and education commensurate with their efforts. It did not matter how much they valued education or strove to master it; higher levels of education and employment were routinely denied them purely on the basis of their ethnicity. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect them to see the work/credential/employment linkage as applying to them, as most Whites do (Singham, 1998).
It could be argued that this difference in perception is something that will disappear with time (or, as some might contend, should have disappeared by now if not for Blacks’ clinging to their “victim” status). However, Ogbu points out a more pernicious effect still at work. He finds that the value of the “reward” lies very much in the eye of the beholder because this perception is strongly affected by the group with which one compares oneself. Ogbu (1991) argues that members of voluntary minorities (i.e., the immigrant groups against whom Blacks are routinely and adversely compared) judge their status and rewards against those of their peers whom they left behind in their native countries. So even if they are working in lower-status jobs in the United States than those they left behind to come here, they tend to be earning more than their peers who stay at home, and they also feel that their children will have greater educational opportunities and chances for advancement than the children of their peers in their homeland. Consequently, they have a strong sense of achievement that makes them strive even harder and instill values in their children.

Ogbu (1991) believes that Blacks (an involuntary minority) have a different group as a basis for comparison. He indicates that Blacks have no reference points to groups outside the United States. Their achievement is compared with that of Whites (usually suburban, middle-class Whites), and they invariably suffer in the comparison. Reflecting on his interviews with “successful” Blacks, Ogbu indicates that it does not take long for the sentiment to be expressed, that if they had been White, they would have been more successful, and perhaps advanced more quickly. Therefore, for Blacks, the perceived link between effort and reward is much weaker than it is for Whites and voluntary minorities.
Consequently, we should not be too surprised if the weakness of this link manifests itself in a lower commitment to academic effort.

Based on an analysis of Ogbu, Fordham and Steele’s research relative to their studies of the existing academic underachievement of minority students. They conclude that the causes of the underachievement gap cannot simply be swept away by legislative or administrative action, by exhortations, or by identifying people with racial prejudice and weeding them out of public life. They lie in factors that are rooted deeply in history and that will not go away by themselves and may even worsen if not addressed.

Much of the literature review thus far has focused on the historical impact of racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination and to the emergence of a negative educational and occupational opportunity structure for some minorities and, as a consequence, may have helped undermine the academic motivation of students from minority groups.

**The Impact of Racial/Ethnic Prejudice and Discrimination in Education**

As a result of extensive research, Miller (1995) seeks to uncover the relationship between contemporary racial/ethnic prejudice and the quality of the opportunity structure being experienced by minority children. He asserts that a case can be made that the unwillingness of some Whites to support government policies to improve the circumstances of economically disadvantaged segments of some minority groups is due to their belief in the cultural or innate inferiority of particular racial/ethnic groups. In this way, contemporary prejudice may play a crucial role in perpetuation of academic motivation and the achievement problems among economically disadvantaged minorities.
Much of the literature indicates that Whites’ perception of the intellectual inferiority of Blacks is weighted quite heavily as a reason for the academic gap between these two groups. Therefore, an assessment of the current impact of White racism on the academic performance and educational prospects of minorities, especially African-American students warrants a brief review.

For more than sixty years, researchers have explored the attitudes and beliefs Whites hold about racial/ethnic issues, especially those concerning African-Americans. In 1939, for example, a nationwide survey funded by National Opinion Research Center and conducted by the Roper Organization to analyze the attitudes of Americans toward the Black minority. The study included a sample of more than five thousand Americans. In response to the question of “Do you think Negroes now generally have higher intelligence than White people, lower, or about the same?”, about 71% indicated that they thought Blacks were less intelligent than Whites, 22% indicated that they thought that Blacks and Whites had about the same intelligence, less than 1% indicated that Blacks were more intelligent than Whites, and the remaining 6% indicated that they did not know (National Opinion Research Center, 1939). The respondents who said they thought Blacks were less intelligent than Whites were asked, “Do you think this is because: (a) they have lacked opportunities, or (b) they are born less intelligent, or (c) both?” About 44% said it was because Blacks were born less intelligent, 22% said it was due to a combination of lack of opportunity and differences in intelligence at birth, 32% indicated that lack of opportunity alone was to blame, and 3% had no opinion. The Roper Report data suggests that 47% of the entire national sample of Americans held the view that
Blacks are innately less intelligent than Whites. They also suggest that about 45% of the total sample did not believe that there were innate differences in intelligence between Blacks and Whites (National Opinion Research Center, 1939).

According to a paper presented by Harris (1991) at the annual meeting of the Education Commission of the States, since 1963, he has been regularly asking national samples of White Americans whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: “Blacks have less native intelligence than Whites.” In his 1963 survey, thirty-nine percent of Whites indicated that they agreed with that statement. In his 1967 survey, this figure changed to forty-six percent. These findings were somewhat similar to those that Roper Organization and the National Opinion Research Center obtained in similar surveys conducted in the 1939-42 period. In his 1991 survey, Harris found that about one in ten Whites indicated a belief that Blacks are innately less intelligent than Whites. Because of the direct wording of the Harris question, at least some of the respondents who believed in the inherent intellectual inferiority of Blacks may have refrained from saying it. This suggests that more weight should be given to data previous to his more recent survey.

Educational Consequences of Racism and Discrimination

This section will review the research findings of social scientists and educators, many of them African-American leaders in education, regarding the influence of racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination on the academic performance and educational prospects of African-American children, particularly males. The following, provides a literature review to examine how racial/ethnic prejudice works to undermine minority
educational aspirations and performance directly through the school via the low 
expectations and perceptions of teachers, administrators, and others for Black children.

African-Americans offer strong reactions to the notion of Black inferiority. In 
1985, Jeff Howard, social psychologist, and Ray Hammond, a physician and ordained 
minister, made one of the most compelling statements in this regard. They were well 
aware of data indicating that Blacks students at all socioeconomic levels tend, on average, 
to perform less well on standardized test than Whites. They believe that the educational 
performance gap is grounded in the historical and contemporary influence of the belief by 
Whites that Blacks have innately inferior abilities:

The performance gap is largely a behavioral problem. It is the result of a 
remedial tendency to avoid intellectual engagement and competition. Avoidance is 
rooted in the fears and self-doubt engendered by a major legacy of American racism: 
the strong negative stereotypes about Black intellectual capabilities. Avoidance of 
intellectual competition is manifested most obviously in the attitudes of many Black 
youths toward academic work, but is not limited to our children. It affects the 
intellectual performance of Black people of all ages and feeds public doubts about 
Black intellectual ability (Howard & Hammond, 1985).

There is ample reason to believe that a significant number of Whites are still 
convinced of the inferiority of Blacks. Howard and Hammond link the persistence of this 
belief to the impact of the academic debate about Black intellectual ability that emerged 
in the late 1960’s: “For 15 years news magazines and television talk shows have
enthusiastically taken up the topic of Black intellectual endowment. We have watched authors and critics debate the proposition that Blacks are genetically inferior to Whites in intellectual capacity.” If the academic performance gap between Blacks and other groups is to be closed Howard and Hammond (1985) argue, the African-American community must make intellectual development and competition a primary objective, and the White community must abandon its low expectations for the academic achievement of Blacks and become unambiguously supportive of their educational progress.” (Miller, 1995)

Howard and Hammond have great support in the African-American community for their concern about the “rumor of inferiority.” A 1989 article, Visions of a Better Way: A Black Appraisal of Public Schooling, published by the Joint Center for Political Studies (JCPS), a nonprofit research and public policy institution concerned with issues of importance to African-Americans states:

We hold this truth to be self-evident: all Black children are capable of learning and achieving, others who have hesitated, equivocated, or denied this fact have assumed that Black children could not master their schoolwork or have cautioned that Blacks were not “academically oriented.” As a result, they have perpetuated a myth of intellectual inferiority, perhaps genetically based. These falsehoods prop up an inequitable social hierarchy with Blacks disproportionately represented at the bottom, and they absolve schools of their fundamental responsibility to educate all children, no matter how deprived (Committee on Policy for Racial Justice, 1989).
In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the rumor of the inferiority problem was presented to national audiences by twin (African-American) brothers Claude M. Steele of Stanford University and Shelby Steele of San Jose State University. In his vision of Race in America, Shelby Steele (1990) emphasizes the self-doubt that he believes many African-Americans feel regarding their ability to compete academically as a result of Whites historical view that Blacks are inferior to Whites. In his 1992 article, Claude Steele discusses the tendency of many African-Americans to “disidentify” with academic achievement and thus avoid competing for high grades. He took the position that the disidentification process is heavily associated with deep-seated worry that if Blacks do not do well in school this will confirm Whites’ belief that Blacks in general are intellectually inferior (Miller, 1995). Howard and Hammond, the Steele brothers, and others have emphasized the psychological costs that this belief imposes on African-American students through self-doubt an aversion to academic competition.

Fredrickson (1988) in his book, The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality, points out that a full-blown theory of Black inferiority was not the original cause of the race-based caste system in the United States but delayed justification for it. Although the nation’s historical caste system has been largely dismantled and its legal foundations swept away, the negative stereotypes that were used against African-Americans by Whites to justify the system live on with sufficient vigor to weaken the contemporary societal response to the pressing problems of poverty, unemployment, and under-education; that these problems that are in many respects legacies of that system seem to have been forgotten.
Prejudice and discrimination influence not only the academic motivation and performance of minority students through the creation or maintenance of a negative opportunity structure, but also the opportunities for learning within the school itself (Miller, 1995). Although there are no empirical data to support his belief, Miller maintains that there is reason to believe that White educators have been as likely to hold negative racial/ethnic stereotypes as the White population as a whole. He gives the following example of an anecdote drawn from the 1933 Carter G. Woodson’s book entitled *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933):

At a Negro summer school two years ago, a White instructor gave a course on the Negro, using for his text a work, which teaches that Whites are superior to Blacks. When asked by one of the students why he used such a textbook, the instructor replied that he wanted them to get that point of view. Even schools for Negroes, then, are places where they must be convinced of their inferiority. The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies. (p. 28)

Pertaining to the same issue, three decades later, another African-American, the social scientist Kenneth B. Clark, wrote: In the late 1950’s a number of teachers in the New York public school system told White student interviewers assigned by the author that Negro children are inherently inferior in intelligence and therefore cannot be expected to learn much or as readily as White children; and that all one would do, if one tried to teach them as if they could learn, would be to develop in them serious emotional disturbances, frustrations and anxieties (Clark, 1965).
A quarter century later, Carter, a Yale Law School professor, born in 1954 -- the year of the famous *Brown* case whereby the Supreme Court declared racially segregated public schools unconstitutional, was an excellent student as a youngster and the child of well-educated parents who maintains that he was unable to avoid the “rumor of inferiority.” Carter (1991) indicates his belief that relatively little has changed since he was a student. In his opinion, many Whites continue to believe that the most intelligent African-Americans are not as able as the most intelligent Whites. He calls this phenomenon “the best Black syndrome.” He notes “All Black people who have done well in school are familiar with it.” He further indicated that “We are measured by a different yardstick: first Black, only Black, best Black”.

According to Miller (1995), Carter recognizes that many White educators continue to expect that few Blacks will perform as well academically as the best-performing Whites, he also is aware of an enormous obstacle to changing this expectation: at all levels of the educational system, African-Americans continue to be under-represented among students who score highly on standardized tests and who earn high grades (Carter, 1991). Even though African-Americans and some other minorities have made considerable academic progress over the past twenty-years, they remain quite under-represented among high-academic achievers and very over-represented among low-academic achievers, a problem that exits at all social class levels (Miller, 1995).

The literature relative to schools in America clearly reflects many fewer educational opportunities to minority groups than to their White counterparts. And it is reasonable to assume that some White educators still do no expect African-American
students and students from some other minority groups to do as well in school, on
average, as White students (Miller, 1995).

Kunjufu (1995) refers to Black boys as an “endangered species.” This label is also
often used in many research reports, teachers’ reflections and other literature relative to
the academic status of African-American boys. Kunjufu asserts that Black boys are
systematically programmed for failure so that when they become adults they pose little
danger to the status quo. He cites the public school as being the most flagrant institution
that contributes to the destruction of Black boys. This destruction can be clearly observed
during the fourth grade when many Black boys begin to exhibit signs of intellectual
retrogression. Unfortunately, most never recover, and as a result, a disproportionate
number of them find themselves ill prepared to survive in a “racist educational system.”

Teacher Expectations and the Child’s Academic Performance

Research has consistently documented that teacher expectations influence
academic performance of students. These expectations are communicated via specific
classroom behaviors and practices that differ greatly for high- versus low-expectation
students. As indicated by Winfield (1986), researchers often define expectations as a part
of a personal belief system influenced by experience with diverse students, teachers’ role
definition, knowledge of appropriate strategies and techniques, and support services
available. In urban schools where there are large numbers of underachieving students,
these factors interact to determine whether or not students receive instruction necessary to
improve their low academic achievement levels (Winfield, 1986).
There are a number of areas that impact the education of African-American children. For example, many researchers and educators readily point to socioeconomic factors related to home environment, student’s innate ability, lack of parental involvement, students’ motivation (or lack of), lack of effort, and racism in education as primary factors contributing to the academic achievement gap. According to Miller (1995), there are many teachers who believe the reason why children do not learn lies in the social demographics of the home. That is, children residing in single-parent female-headed households who are called “culturally deprived,” and not expected to learn.

Many teachers also believe that the reasons for the academic achievement gap between White and Black students lies in ability as described in the inferiority theory promoted by Herrnstein and Murray (1994) widely promoted *Bell Curve*. However, teacher expectations are consistently identified throughout the literature as the most influential factor impacting the existing academic achievement divide. The following provides a review of the literature relative to the belief that teacher expectation is the major factor impacting the academic achievement of African-American students.

In 1968, researchers Rosenthal and Jacobson presented a controversial Pygmalion study that ignited a flurry of research about whether (and how) teacher expectations shape student learning. They specifically emphasized on the research findings of a number of researchers including Brophy (1984), Cooper (2000), Good (1981), Locurto (1991), and Nash (1976). The conclusion, which met with much criticism over experimental design, is straightforward: Teachers’ expectations influence how much children learn in the classroom. This result has both positive and negative connotations. Although it
encourages teachers who expect much of their students to help these students learn, it also suggests that harmful consequences accrue when teachers do not believe that their students can learn what they are taught.

Teachers’ expectation for students’ performance can also be examined as an organizational property of schools. High expectations, communicated between teachers, engender mutual support for academic objectives. Literature supports the idea that a norm of high expectations is part of a school’s social context, encouraging an organizational press towards academic goals (Baker, Terry, Bridger, & Winsor, 1997; Cook & Evans, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2001). Lee and Smith (1996) found that teachers’ collective responsibility for student learning influenced high school students’ learning. When a climate of low expectations is evident, however, teachers feel free to abandon an academic agenda. Teaching is seen as difficult, even unreasonably so, given what students are expected to achieve. Lowered expectations, typically associated with student background, allow teachers to reduce the pressure on students, whose social disadvantage is seen as a major barrier to their success in school. The level of expectations held by a school’s teachers for students is a “brick” upon which the structure of academic press for (or relaxation of) academic goals is built (Wehlage, 1989).

Teacher Expectations and Academic Performance Patterns

In the late 1940s sociologist, Robert Merton coined the term self-fulfilling prophecy, something that happens when “a false definition of the situation evokes anew behavior which makes the original false conception come true (Merton, 1948). According
to Kenneth Clark (1965), assumptions that Whites make about the inferiority of African-Americans are self-fulfilling prophecies for the following reasons:

Once one organizes an educational system where children are placed in tracks or where certain judgments about their ability determine what is done for them or how much they are taught or not taught, the horror is that the results seem to justify the assumptions.... Children who are treated as if they are uneducable almost invariably become uneducable. This is education atrophy. It is generally known that if an arm or a leg is bound so that it cannot be used, eventually it becomes unusable. The same is true of intelligence. (pp. 127-28)

In terms of the academic achievement of children, the notion that what you get is what you expect quickly became influential in educational circles as a result of two independent lines of research: that of identifying attributes of schools that are instructionally effective with disadvantaged children and that of understanding how teachers’ perceptions of their students’ capacities influence how pupils perform. Both led specifically to an interest in the role educators’ expectations play in shaping students’ academic achievement patterns. The Coleman Report (1966) stimulated the search for “effective schools.” According to Miller (1995), although Coleman found that differences in the education-relevant resources of families were the primary cause of racial/ethnic differences in test score patterns, some educators and researchers believed that some schools must be exceptions to this rule. If the characteristics of these schools could be identified, they reasoned, it should be possible to adapt them successfully to other schools. Among the first to undertake search for instructionally effective schools for
disadvantaged urban children was George Weber, associate director of the Council for Basic Education. Edmonds (1979), Weber (1971), and other leading researchers found that a primary attribute of instructionally effective schools is that the teachers and administrators have high expectations for all students. In Edmond's words, these schools "have a climate of expectation in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement." (Edmonds, 1979)

A second line of research was conducted in 1964 by Robert Rosenthal, a psychologist, and Lenore Jacobson, an elementary school principal, to underscore this conclusion. The team began an experiment to determine whether the generally poor academic performance of disadvantaged children is due in part to the low expectations of teachers -- expectations that tend to produce self-fulfilling prophecies. Teachers in Jacobson's school were asked to administer to their students the so-called Harvard Test of Inflected Intelligence. They were told that the test was part of a study by researchers at Harvard. The following Fall, the teachers were informed that the test had identified some children who were "potential academic spurters," likely to do well in school; in reality, these children had been selected at random. During the school year, teachers administered the test in the middle of the year and again at the end. The year-end administration produced score patterns that Rosenthal and Jacobson regarded as strong evidence of an expectancy effect on students' intellectual development. The scores of the first- and second-grader "spurters" were much higher than those of the control group, although there was no clear evidence pattern for the third through sixth graders. The teachers were asked at the end of the school year to describe how their pupils had conducted themselves
in class. In the words of the researchers, “The children from who intellectual growth had been expected were described as having a better chance of being successful in later life and as being happier, more curious and more interesting than the other children. There was also a tendency for the designated children to be seen as more appealing, better-adjusted and more affectionate, and as less in need of social approval (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). As indicated by Wineburg (1987), the study was subjected to extensive scrutiny by the education research community, due to concerns about its methodology and to the failure of replications to produce similar results. Nevertheless, it stimulated numerous studies designed to shed light on (a) the nature and variety of teachers’ expectations for their students; (b) the basis on which their expectations are initially formed; (c) the extent to which variations in teachers’ expectations are associated with variations in how they treat students; (d) students’ perceptions of teachers’ expectations of them and other students; (e) the impact of teachers’ expectations on students’ academic performance and classroom conduct; and (f) the factors that seem to influence whether teachers’ expectations vary among students from different groups (i.e., males and females, members of different ethnic groups, or members of different social classes).

In a review of these studies by Good (1981), while he agreed that they have generated a variety of conflicting results, he highlights a number of reliable findings emerged from the studies. First, he believes that teachers do typically form perceptions and beliefs about the academic ability, prospects, and other school-relevant attributes of each of their students. Importantly, they regard some students as having more academic ability than others and as likely to perform better academically in the future.
Second, according to Good (1981), research suggests that teachers tend to rely primarily on school records (test scores, grades), conversations with other teachers, and their classroom experiences with their students to develop their initial impressions of the academic prospects and needs of each pupil. Teachers also tend to have accurate perceptions of school records for each student and to make accurate assessments of each student’s academic prospects on the basis of information available to them. And most teachers are willing to modify their expectations in response to new information and experiences, but usually not to a single new piece of information, such as a standardized test score recommended by Brophy (1983).

Third, teachers do treat students differently because of differences in their expectations, and these differences can add up to fewer opportunities to learn for low-expectation students than for high-expectation students. Good (1981) believes that the ways in which teachers have been found to treat low-expectation students differently include (a) calling on them less often to answer questions; (b) giving them the answers to questions when they are called on; (c) giving them the answers to questions more frequently rather than spending time helping them to improve their responses; (d) criticizing them more often when they fail at a task; (e) praising them less frequently when they do succeed; (f) placing fewer academic demands on them; (g) paying less overall attention to them; (h) exercising greater supervision and control over them; (i) interacting with them in private more than publicly, (j) giving them less benefit of the doubt when grading tests and assignments; (k) generally giving them less information when providing feedback to their questions; (l) interacting with them less warmly (for
example, smiling less often); (m) providing them with less opportunity to work independently; and (n) using fewer time-intensive instructional strategies with them.

Fourth, students do become aware of their teachers’ expectations for them and other students as well as of variations in teacher-student interactions based on those expectations. Both first graders and fifth graders are aware of differences in how teachers treat high-and low-achievers; however, younger students are less likely to feel that they have received negative treatment from their teachers, to regard how they are treated as related to their teachers’ expectations, or to assess accurately their teachers’ expectations for them personally. Older elementary school students tend to have expectations for themselves that are very similar to those held of them by their teachers (Weinstein, Hermione, Sharp, & Bodkin, 1987).

Finally, teachers’ expectations do appear to influence their students’ academic performance. According to Good (1981), research indicates that low teacher expectations tend to lower students’ academic performance and high expectations in students’ performance tends to produce small to moderate change, suggesting that changes in expectations alone are unlikely to lead to large changes in academic achievement patterns. For example, Brophy (1983) has concluded from his research and his synthesis of the findings of others that, on average, a student’s academic performance is lowered or raised only between 5-10 percent as a result of the teacher’s expectations.

According to Miller (1995), an analysis of Brophy’s work indicates that the most common cases of self-fulfilling prophesies based on teacher expectations are those in which inappropriately low (rather than high) expectations lead to reductions in students’
academic achievement. The largest expectancy effects identified through research seem to have been produced by the few teachers classified as overactive, high bias, or dogmatic -- those who are inclined to form pronounced and inflexible stereotypes of their students. Low expectations formed by these teachers can have a negative impact on the academic achievement of students. Brophy and Good (1991) found that most teachers tend to be reactive -- open to adjusting their expectations to new information received from others or through their ongoing experiences with their students. They suggested that there is a third type of teacher, whom they describe as proactive. Such teachers tend to shape their expectations on the basis of what they want their students to achieve academically much more than on their students’ actual performance. This group is the most likely to produce positive academic outcomes for students, including low academic performers (Brophy, 1984). Although according to Brophy, the average effect of teacher expectancy is small in absolute terms, it can loom large for the academic fortunes of many students. For instance, a 5% decrease in a student’s score on a major test in a subject could be the difference between making an A or a B or between being regarded as a student with above average versus average potential (Rosenthal, 1987).

A related finding by researcher Smith (1980) is that variations in teachers’ expectations about their pupils do not seem to have the same impact in all academic areas. Smith concluded, “reading and other achievement (e.g., language arts, social studies, number of concepts learned in a lesson) were influenced more than math achievement grades. Pupil participation and social competence were affected by teacher expectations but not other affective variables.” Smith also found that variations in teacher
expectations usually had relatively little impact on variations in students’ scores on IQ tests, and others have reached generally similar conclusions (Smith, 1980).

Much of the research on teacher expectancy has focused on variations in teacher expectations and treatment of students from different racial/ethnic groups. In a review of these studies, Irvine (1990) concluded that “teachers, particularly White teachers, have more negative expectations for Black students than for White students” and that teachers have more negative opinions of Black students with regard to “personality traits and characteristics, ability, language, behavior, and potential. Studies by Dusek and Joseph (1986) also revealed somewhat similar findings. They found that “African-American and Mexican students are expected to perform less well than White students.” However, the differences in expectations were fairly small. Aggregating data from twenty studies, they calculated that “approximately 54% of the White students were expected to outperform the average African-American student.

The evidence is less clear whether teachers treat minority students differently as a result of their different expectations. Irvine (1990) found that most studies concerned with the interactions between teachers and African-American and White students have produced evidence that African-American students receive less positive feedback and more negative feedback from their teachers than their White classmates. Yet some studies have found no differences in feedback patterns on the basis of race. In her own classroom-based study, Irvine did not find large differences in teachers’ responses to African-American and White students (Irvine, 1990).
Teacher Expectations, Curriculum Content and Tracking Patterns

Variations in teachers' expectations may contribute to decisions that produce differences in the curricula and in the instructional strategies and materials provided to pupils from diverse groups. Differences in the content of the education provided to Whites and to minorities have historically been among the most important sources of variations in academic achievement (Miller, 1995). For example, many Whites long believed that schooling for Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans should be limited primarily to vocational education (especially the manual arts and industrial education versions, which stressed preparation for very low-skill, physical-labor-intensive work). Rigorous academic programs were regarded as inappropriate for minorities (Anderson, 1988). This tendency to offer a substantially different educational program to Whites than to some minority groups has been part of a general pattern of grouping children (including Whites) on the basis of their perceived academic ability at the elementary school level and subsequently tracking them into varying curricula at the secondary school level. Young children are commonly assigned to high, medium, and low groups on the basis of assessments of their school readiness or early school performance. At the secondary level, it has been standard practice to steer students thought to have the most academic potential into the academic/college preparatory track and to guide those regarded as having less potential into the vocational or so-called general tracks (On grouping in the elementary schools (Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1987).

Although grouping and tracking have been firm institutional features of the American educational landscape, their merits have often been debated. Many believe that
most children are capable of mastering a demanding school curriculum. Others embrace the traditional view that democracy cannot function effectively unless all citizens are educated well. Along with the economy’s increasing educational requirements, the growing strength of these two perspectives may have influenced the nation’s efforts after the second World War to make secondary education universal and expand substantially the proportion of high school graduates who go on to college (According to the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators Report: *Education for All American Youth*, 1944 and the Commission on Higher Education Report: *Higher Education for American Democracy*, 1948). By the 1980’s, increasing international economic competition, the findings of educational research, and the changing racial and ethnic background demographics of the United States all contributed to a re-emergence of concern about grouping and tracking practices.

The 1983 *Nation at Risk* study highlighted the authors’ concern that America’s technological and economic leadership position in the world was eroding rapidly, in part because some other nations had begun to surpass the United States educationally. Although they did not call for an end to all grouping and tracking, the authors did strongly urge that academic standards be raised for all students and that all high school students take a demanding set of academic courses. Specifically, they proposed that all high school graduates have a total of 13.5 years of study in the “new basics” -- four years of English, three years of math, three hears of science, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science. They also recommended that all college-bound high school
graduates take two years of foreign language in addition, for a minimum of 15.5 years of
academic course work (A Nation at Risk, 1983).

One of the most influential sources of empirical information on grouping and
tracking practices and outcomes used by school reformers and policymakers has been *A
Study of Schooling* conducted by Goodlad (1984). His study examined conditions in more
than one thousand classrooms and thirty-eight elementary and secondary schools across
the country. The study produced a large body of information on the nature and extent of
grouping and tracking (which students tend to be assigned to which groups and tracks). It
found that grouping and tracking typically led to much heavier academic demands being
placed on high-achieving than on low-achieving students. And it showed that poor and
minority students continued to be heavily over-represented in groups and tracks for low
achievers. Goodlad’s book *A Place Called School* (1984), discussed the overall results of
the study. Similar results were also discussed in a study of how secondary schools
structure inequality by Oakes (1985).

The works of Goodlad (1984) and Oakes (1985) heightened awareness of the
serious inequalities in access to knowledge that continue to exist in the nation’s schools
among students from different social classes and racial/ethnic groups. It did so at a time
when the rapidly changing demographics of the student-age population was increasing
interest in finding ways to improve the academic achievement of minority groups.

The literature lacks long-term trend data on national grouping and tracking
patterns at the elementary school level. However, information from a number of sources
can shed light on the extent to which students from different racial/ethnic groups have
experienced tracking at the secondary level over the past two decades. For example, the
High School and Beyond Study (1980) a longitudinal study of a national sample of high
school seniors and sophomores offers a general picture of secondary school tracking
patterns just prior to the beginning of the current period of educational reform. Among
the students in the sample who were sophomores in 1980, only 29%, 23%, and 23%,
respectively, of the Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians were in the college
preparatory track, compared to 47% of the Asians and 37% of the Whites.

Research indicates that teacher expectations and grouping/tracking practices
continue to contribute to differences in academic achievement among students from
different racial/ethnic groups. However, it is difficult to estimate from available data how
much of these differences are due to these factors. It is even more difficult to assess
trends in this area or to estimate the degree to which racial/ethnic prejudice influences
either teacher expectations or grouping/tracking practices (Miller, 1995). Nonetheless, it
is possible to offer some plausible conclusions. Miller (1995) also indicates that it is
likely that prejudice is playing a less substantial role in shaping teacher expectations and
grouping/tracking practices than was the case several decades ago. The proportion of
White Americans who believe in the inferiority of minorities has become considerably
smaller over the past half-century. There may have been a corresponding drop in the
proportion of White teachers who regard minorities as inferior, which in turn may have
led to a significant reduction in the role racial/ethnic prejudice plays in shaping teacher
expectations and grouping/tracking patterns. However, if teachers tend to have the same
pattern of views on race/ethnicity as the population as a whole, about one in five White teachers may still believe that Blacks are innately somewhat less intelligent than Whites, and about half may hold some negative cultural views of African-Americans and other minorities, including Latinos (Miller, 1995).

The research also points to another important reason that racial/ethnic prejudice may be playing a smaller role today than previously in that achieving equality of educational results for all children has emerged over the past twenty-five years as a major objective in schooling. The Coleman Report (1966) was interpreted by some to mean that schools could not make a difference in the education of poor and minority students even though this is not what Coleman had said. The meaning of the term equal education opportunity was undergoing a change during that period. Increasingly, the focus was on achieving similar educational results for children, not simply providing them with equal school inputs. Given the tension between the schools-can’t-make-a difference interpretation of the Coleman Report and the emerging view of equal opportunity, it is not surprising that some educators responded to The Coleman Report as if it were a challenge to find instructionally effective schools -- schools that did close a meaningful part of the academic achievement gap between poor and middle-class students as well as between Whites and minorities, by strategies that other schools could learn to use.

Research highlights the commitment of many to improve the educational performance of all students, and in the process, closing the academic achievement gap between majority and minority students as a distinguishing feature of the current period of educational reform, which began in the early 1980’s. In addition, several school reform
initiatives launched over the past two decades have emphasized improving the schooling of minority and poor children. For example, The Coalition of Essential Schools, a consortium of high schools dedicated to implementing school reform principles developed by Theodore Sizer of Brown University, has among its members a large number of urban high schools attended primarily by minority students (Sizer, 1992).

Levin (1992) launched An Accelerated Schools Project as a means of helping elementary schools learn to serve disadvantaged children in ways that will enable all such youngsters to emerge from elementary school academically well prepared for secondary education. Comer of Yale University, in his survey of Educating Poor Minority (1988), has focused primarily on disadvantaged and/or minority elementary school children through the School Development Program. For more that a quarter century, the program has been developing an approach to elementary school improvement and stresses working effectively with students and their parents.

As indicated by Miller (1995), educational researchers also seem to have increased their efforts to clarify the impact of grouping and tracking on students as well as the circumstances under which grouping or tracking may be appropriate or inappropriate. Attention is being paid to the grouping and tracking practices of other industrialized nations. Efforts are being made to synthesize and disseminate information on the most effective instructional practices for disadvantaged and minority students.

Entwisle and Alexander (1992) of Johns Hopkins University conducted a study in the Baltimore public schools that reached a mixed conclusion regarding how teachers
assessed the potential of Black children. Many teachers had high expectations for all students, but a significant number tended to view African-American children as less mature than White children in ways that are relevant to becoming a good student and less likely to do well academically. The primary predictor of whether a teacher held positive or negative views of African-American students was the teacher’s own social class background. Those who grew up in lower-middle class homes were most likely to hold negative views; those who grew up in working-class to poor circumstances were most likely to hold positive views of these youngsters. This pattern held for both Black and White teachers. In fact, in some respects African-American teachers with middle-class origins were less likely to see Black students in a positive light than were White teachers with middle-class origins. The White teachers’ low expectations were related primarily to Black students’ conduct, while the African-American teachers’ were broader-based, extending to academic achievement. Black students’ academic achievement did appear to suffer somewhat in the classrooms of teachers with middle-class origins, but not in those of teachers with lower-class origins. And this pattern of low expectations and low performance seems to apply to African-American students regardless of their own social class as measured by the educational level of their parents. Thus, this was not simply a problem of high-socioeconomic status teachers doing less well with low-socioeconomic status students, some of whom were Black (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987).

The literature provides ample evidence about a number of ways in which racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination may be undermining the education progress of minorities. According to the literature reviewed by Miller (1995), some African-
American educators believe that widespread doubt among Black students about their ability to do high-quality academic work leads many of them to avoid academic competition. This self-doubt is considered to be a response to the long-standing belief among many Whites that Blacks are intellectually inferior.

Miller (1995) further highlights the literature findings in conjunction with the interconnections among racial/ethnic discrimination, the quality of the economic opportunity structure, and students’ motivation to do well academically, as factors that undermine the educational progress of African-American students. This line of analysis posits that America’s historical race-based caste system produced a truncated opportunity structure for African-Americans and some other minority groups and that over time it tended to undermine their motivation to do well in school. Although the caste system has been largely eliminated, minorities still continue to face an unfavorable economic opportunity structure, especially in cities with large concentrations of African-Americans and Latinos who have little job skills. According to Miller (1995), the literature reveals that in very extreme cases, some minority youngsters are inclined to reject high academic achievement as a supposed White attribute. Although this problem has it origins in historical racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination, contemporary prejudice may be contributing to its perpetuation. Many Whites continue to hold negative views of African-Americans and some other minority groups. These views -- which include notions of the innate intellectual inferiority and the cultural inferiority of African-Americans and Latinos -- seem to be associated with a lack of interest in or opposition to the addressing of critical economic, health, and educational needs of urban minorities.
Educational Consequences of Public Schools Desegregation

Has the desegregation of public schools helped to narrow the academic achievement gap between children? Since the mid-1950s, federal courts in the United States have mandated the racial desegregation of public schools, all in an effort to achieve some sort of equity of educational opportunity and successful academic achievement for all children. Desegregation is a concept used largely in the context of racial issues, as opposed to the issues of gender or religion, although it is often used in those contexts as well. It is important to view the issue of racial desegregation of America’s public schools, in general, and how the issue has transpired and deepen in our public schools. Today, desegregation has become a significant issue for public education. It is widely discussed, analyzed and debated by politicians, civil rights advocates, educators and other members of society as a whole. The historical context of racial desegregation profoundly impacts educational segregation in our public schools.

In a recent analysis of the desegregation in the nation’s public schools, Sinclair & Tharp (1998) state: “Desegregation has always been a part of the larger picture of the civil rights movement, and has always been about race vis-à-vis anti-discrimination, equity, freedom and justice.” However, the meaning of desegregation, along with its value as a prerequisite for equal educational opportunity for students of all races, has been in flux for almost half a century. In the 1950s, desegregation meant calling out federal troops to ensure that a few Black students could safely enter White schools. In the 1960s, desegregation meant giving civil rights organizations the authority to sue school districts
for noncompliance with federal court orders to desegregate. In the 1970s, desegregation meant busing -- usually African-American students -- to school located in suburban schools. In the 1950s, desegregation brought about the transformation of the South from an extremely segregated region of the country into the most integrated region of the country. In the 1990s, desegregation has come to mean the end of de jure desegregation and the beginning of de facto resegregation, as federal courts have renounced busing and their own involvement in desegregation in favor of the idea of neighborhood schools and the rights of local school districts to manage their student populations without forced busing or court intervention. As we have now reached the twenty-first century, desegregation it has come to mean the all but complete failure of the idea of “separate is inherently equal,” that was validated in the United States Supreme Court decision of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954).

If the meaning of school desegregation is changing, so is the value placed upon it, namely by our Supreme Court, the very institution that mandated it (Sinclair & Tharp 1998). As an example of change, Clarence Thomas replaced African-American Thurgood Marshall on the United States Supreme Court. Marshall was the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund lawyer who represented the plaintiffs in the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954. Justice Thomas, himself an African-American, is nonetheless an outspoken critic of affirmative action. He attacked the idea that segregation harms children’s mental and educational development. In his 1995 Missouri v. Jenkins opinion, he stated that Black schools can function as the center and symbol of Black communities, and provide examples of independent Black leadership,
success, and achievement. According to his view, separate can be equal. Justice Thomas’s view apparently excludes the factor of poverty and economics, which unfortunately are directly linked to racial segregation.

The 1960s Back/White racial makeup of America’s largest cities gave way in the 1970s to a predominantly Black census. White became the predominant color of the suburbs, as Whites fled the cities with its forced busing and deteriorating public school facilities. White America now lives largely in the suburbs and does not send its children to inner city schools (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle, 1997). America’s largest city school systems are predominantly non-White and poor. Blacks in large cities attended schools that have an average of only 17% White students, and more than 80% of segregated Black and Latino schools have conditions of concentrated poverty among their students as opposed to 5% of the nation’s segregated White schools (Orfield et al., 1997).

The influx of millions of immigrant students absorbed by America’s schools in the last decade has created a transition from biracial institutions to multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual settings. Today, one-third of America’s public school children are non-White (Orfield et al., 1997). Demographic statistics of 1994 show that America’s public schools enrolled 43 million students, of whom 66% were White, 17% African-American, 13% Latino, 4% Asian, and 1% Indian and Alaskan. From 1968 to 1994, public school enrollment showed dramatic changes: Blacks showed a 14% increase in the total public school enrollment. Latino student enrollment showed a phenomenal 178% increase, from two million students to 5.57 million in 1994. The enrollment of Whites, however, showed an 18% decrease. In 1968, White enrollment was 34.7 million;
in 1994, White enrollment had gone down to 28.46 million. In the Northeast, the West, and the South, more than three-fourths of all Latino students are in predominantly non-White schools. In 1968, on 23.1% of Latino students were in non-White majority schools. In 1994, that figure had risen to 34.8%. The level of intense segregation for Latinos is now slightly higher than the level for Black student. As of 1997, there were five states that already had a non-White student majority statewide. California and Texas comprise two of these; combined, these two states enroll 8.8 million students (Orfield et al.).

Debating the reasons for desegregating public schools assumes that one has forgotten the reasons why desegregation was mandated by the Supreme Court in 1954. Perhaps it is possible that many Americans have forgotten why and how this all started, that we are witnessing the demise of desegregation today. Nevertheless, desegregation began in 1954 because the Supreme Court unanimously decided that separate is inherently unequal. The opinion of the Court was that segregated Black students would not receive the same opportunities as Whites if they were not allowed access to White schools. Keeping Blacks away from Whites implied that Blacks were inferior, and this court-sanctioned feeling of inferiority would hinder the learning of Black children.

Much of the issue today surrounds the concept of neighborhood schools. In fact, it appears to be part and parcel of the phenomenon of resegregation. A 1997 Boston Globe poll indicates that a majority of African-Americans (and Whites) still favor integrated public education; there are a number of voices in the Black community who favor all-Black-neighborhood schools. The neighborhood schools view is that sending your children to school in the neighborhood where they live is fine even if the neighborhood
“happens” to be all-White, or all-Black, or all-Hispanic, and so forth. This approach is preferred by many, rather than the approach of busing children a number of miles from their homes to a school in another neighborhood, all for the sake of appeasing court-mandated desegregation initiatives (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998).

Even before Brown v. Board of Education, African-Americans were aware of the consequences of giving up their all-Black schools by forcing open the doors of all-White schools: lost jobs, closed schools, loss of sense of community, and loss of cultural identity (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998). Caroline Hendrie, in her 1997 article entitled NAACP Wrestles With Evolving Views on Desegregation, says:

Many complain that the burden of busing has fallen disproportionately on African-American and that Black parents are less able to become involved when their children attend schools far from home, as a result, Black leaders across the political spectrum -- from conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas to militant Afrocentrists -- have questioned the bedrock assumption of such lawsuits: that Black children are best served when educated with Whites. (p. 9)

According to Yemma (1997), Angela Paige Cook, founder of the privately-run, mostly Black Paige Academy in Roxbury, Massachusetts, commented that “When schools were segregated, they were rich in other ways... There were more positive role models for the kids, for instance. When you destroy a community, you don’t have those role models.” Yemma also believes that segregation results in lack of role models.
Even within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, the organization that along with its Legal Defense Fund counterpart) won the fight to desegregate schools in 1954, there are those who speak out for the idea of neighborhood schools, or rather, all-Black schools (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998). In 1995, NAACP leaders ousted local-branch presidents in Yonkers, New York and in Bergen County, New Jersey, who had argued that upgrading the majority-Black schools in their communities was of greater urgency than pushing for integration in the face of White resistance. According to Yemma (1997), Henderson, president of the Tulsa, Oklahoma branch of the NAACP made the following comment: “I think a good number of people -- White and Black -- want busing to stop, but they are afraid to speak out about it.” (p. 25)

As indicated by Kunen (1996), Shaw, a lawyer for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, is made the following comment: “My sense is a lot of people are saying, we are tired of chasing White folks. It is not worth the price we have to pay.” (p. 9)

At a national invitational conference on "Making a Difference for Students at Risk", Wang and Reynolds (1995) addressed the ways to reform current practices to ensure that the educational experiences in elementary and secondary schools are appropriate, meaningful, and the main source for positive development and education for all students. They indicated that there is a substantial knowledge base that should be used to improve the current disjointed and unresponsive approach to caring for the many children and youth who are not adequately served by the current system. The following guidelines are some highlights of the recommendations that evolved through the discussion sessions took place at the conference.
1. Make public schools inclusive and integrated. A "sunset" date is suggested for all legislation affecting categorical programs, as is a date for organizing efforts to develop coherent, broadly framed revisions of federal policies and programs in all domains. It is suggested that these programs should: (a) reduce all forms of "set-asides" or segregation of students; (b) decrease suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts; and (c) place burden-of-proof obligations on those who propose separating a student from mainstream program.

2. Organize public schools into smaller units. -- mini-schools, charters, or houses -- in which groups of students remain together for several years of study. This would allow increased use of site-based management; curricular options and choice by students and teachers; and heterogenous and cross-age grouping. It also would facilitate the design and implementation of major curriculum and instruction innovations.

3. Step up research on the learning characteristics and needs of students, with particular attention to students with special needs, to provide a growing knowledge base and credible evaluation system. Research should address strengths, resilience, and other positive factors as well as limitations and deficiencies for all children. A case can be made for research data for subgroups such as race and gender. This does not imply physical separation of students within the school; it does, however, show how various racial, ethnic, and gender groups are advancing in their learning under various conditions.

4. Implement new approaches based on what is known about teaching in schools with a high concentration of students with special needs. Here the emphasis is on aggressive teaching, with high learning expectations for all students.
5. Shift the use of labels from students to programs. Children will be better served if educators use diagnostic procedures emphasizing variables that can be manipulated to improve learning. As an initial step, educators should identify students who need additional help. Most students who are served by the various categorical programs that label them, need individualized education rather than a different kind of education.

6. Expand programs for the most able students. Programs to nurture the potentials of the most able students are one of the most neglected areas in urban schools. To make advances in learning, these students require expert instruction, which is typically only present in areas such as athletics and music. Equally important is to make strenuous efforts to give students from disadvantaged backgrounds opportunities to show their potential for accelerated learning. Once they do, challenging programs should be made available to them with continuing support.

7. Apply concepts of inclusion and integration to the bureaucratic structure of government, professional organizations, and advocacy groups. If educational programs are to become more coherent and integrated, the public and professional structures that uphold them must pull together. Federal and state agencies need to become integrated, and funding across all categorical programs, as well as monitoring systems, must be revised to emphasize teamwork and coordination.

8. Integrate the most current findings in general, remedial, and special education, as well as special language learning areas, into professional development programs for all educational professionals. Regular teachers and specialist professionals must be equipped
with expertise to take on new or altered roles for inclusive forms of education to work.
Newly emerging practices that aim to more effectively respond to student diversity must
be incorporated in continuing professional development of the school staff.

9. Create broad cross-agency collaboration for delivering coordinated, comprehensive
child and family services. Various levels and divisions of government agencies often
undertake separate, uncoordinated programs aimed to support healthy development and
learning of children and families in a variety of disadvantaged circumstances.
Implementation of community rebuilding efforts, such as the Empowerment Zones or
Enterprise Communities, for example, are rarely linked with "education empowering"
efforts. Education must be a key connection to enable children and families to take stock
of the benefits of a broad-based community rebuilding effort.

A transcending principle that emerged from these recommendations is that public
schools should be inclusive and integrated, and separation by gender, race, ethnic
background, native language, ability, or any other characteristic should be minimal and
should require a compelling rationale.

**The Impact of Poverty on Opportunity and Desegregation**

What is so unequal about having a neighborhood school that is all Black because
the neighborhood children who live there are all Black? How would Black students be
deprived if this were the condition? Elaine R. Jones, Director Counsel for the NAACP
Legal Defense and Educational Fund, in her foreword to Gary Orfield’s book
*Dismantling Desegregation* (1996) answers that all-Black institutions are inherently
inferior because of continuing structural inequities directly attributable to race (Jones, 1996). Gary Orfield, professor of education and social policy at Harvard University, answers in the following way:

The policy [of desegregation] works not when paternalistic Whites ‘help’ minorities but when it provides avenues toward opportunity. The currently stratified opportunity structure denies economically disadvantaged minorities access to middle-class schools and to the world beyond them. (p. xv)

The structures to which Jones and Orfield allude partially involve the inequities of poverty and residential housing. Unfortunately, there is a strong relationship between segregation by race and segregation along poverty and housing lines. Along with the rich opportunities for learning that diversity brings comes challenges and risks associated with poverty, which is more concentrated among minority than non-minority students (NCES, 1996). In 1997, seventy-two percent of Black and Latino public school students received free lunches (Orfield et al., 1997). This means that racially segregated schools are poverty-segregated schools. State, national, and international research indicates that high poverty schools usually have much lower levels of educational performance on virtually all outcomes (Orfield et al.). Such schools are viewed much more negatively in the community and by the schools and colleges at the next level of education as well as by potential employers (Orfield et al.). Segregated urban school systems are built on a base of housing segregation.” (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Residential housing patterns play a part in the story of resegregation (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998).

By 1950, after the NAACP had won its landmark constitutional ruling against racially restrictive housing covenants, it was apparent to the national staff that
residential segregation practices were continuing and were abetted by federal housing programs. Many local housing authorities made use of federal slum-clearance programs to destroy African-American communities and relocate them outside traditional White school districts. (p. 294)

Even though the 1974 *Milliken* decision was a step backward for desegregation, there were those on the Supreme Court who acknowledged the *denied opportunity structure*, that is, lack of fair housing practices for African-Americans. When an earlier Supreme Court decided that busing was needed to desegregate cities, it recognized that discrimination was deeply rooted not only in schools but also in housing (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998). The following is taken from the 1974 *Milliken* ruling:

> The affirmative obligation of the defendant Board has been and is to adopt and implement pupil assignment practices and policies that compensate for and avoid incorporation into the school system the effects of residential segregation. Restrictive covenants maintained by state action or inaction build Black ghettos. It is state action when public funds are dispensed by housing agencies to build racial ghettos. (p. 5)

In a differing view, in 1995, Justice O’Connor of the Supreme Court of the United States described residential change as the result of White flight and “natural, if unfortunate, demographic forces.” (*Missouri v. Jenkins*, 1995). Further expounding on the idea of missing opportunity structures and a negative view of neighborhood schools, is stated by Orfield (1996) as follows:
Brown's judgment that segregated schools are inherently unequal remains correct, not because something magic happens to minority students when they sit next to Whites but because segregation cuts students off from critical paths to success in American society. Restoring neighborhood schools forces more African-American and Latino children into isolated high-poverty schools that almost always have low levels of academic competition, performance, and preparation for college. Almost no Whites end up in such schools. (p. 331)

Research indicates that strong teachers and a demanding pre-collegiate curriculum are seldom found in high-poverty segregated schools. This issue has been argued by Orfield and Eaton (1996) as follows:

Research shows that desegregation opens richer opportunity networks for minority children, but without any loss for Whites. Part of the benefit for minority students comes from learning how to function in White middle-class settings, since most of the society's best opportunities are in these settings. In contrast to the critics' assumptions, the theory is not one of White racial superiority but of theory about the opportunity networks that historic discrimination has attached to White middle-class schools and about the advantages that come from breaking into those mobility networks. (p. 344)

Sinclair and Tharp (1998) believe that keeping students segregated means that the perpetuation of the haves and the have nots will continue to be deprived from the opportunities that would lead to the end of poverty and lack of educational opportunity.
Historical Perspective of Desegregation

It has been almost five decades since the infamous *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* (1954) mandating the integration of the public schools. That decision forever changed the educational landscape. By striking down the “separate but equal” doctrine the Supreme Court created an opportunity for access for Blacks to the mainstream of American educational institutions. The Supreme Court’s unanimous decision was held as a victory for the civil rights of all Americans and echoed the voice of Dr. Dubois sixty years before. The history of the American Negro is the history of strife. Dr. Dubois simply wishes to make it possible for man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity close roughly in his face (Dubois, 1953).

The *Brown* decision was meant to have a positive effect on the education of Black because it ended legal or “dejure” segregation in our nation’s schools. What was not clear to those fighting for this cause was the inevitable comparisons of Black and White students along academic performance lines. Since the end of segregation, Black and White students have attended public schools together, and the academic performance of Black students has been directly compared to their White counterparts.

It was hoped that the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) would eliminate the disparity in educational opportunities available to Black students. Researcher Shirley Biggs (1992) argues that the perpetuation of separation has caused African-Americans to suffer tremendous damage. Skepticism surrounding the benefits of
the Brown decision as an avenue to improve educational opportunity for African-Americans rests on solid ground. Kunjufu (1993) discovered that 42% of African-Americans over the age of 17 can’t read beyond a sixth grade level. Forty-one percent of youth place in special education are African-American, while only 8% are admitted to gifted and talented programs (Kunjufu, 1993).

African-American male students constitute only 8 percent of all public school students, but are 37 percent of students suspended (Kunjufu, 1993). Often times they commit the same infractions as White males, but the latter group receives less enforcement. In most urban areas, where 85 percent of the African-American community resides, the dropout rate hovers near 50 percent (Kunjufu, 1993).

The logic of the Brown decision was that separate schools were inherently unequal. Kozol (1991) points out in Savage Inequalities: "More than forty years since Brown, schools are still separate and unequal." (p. 25). Kozol believes that schools that look integrated on the outside are highly segregated on the inside. This is clearly evident with tracking and magnet schools. Tracking allows children to be divided based on IQ and their performance in standardized tests. Both methods of categorizing students are repeatedly proven to be culturally biased.

In his history of eighteenth century colonial education, Lawrence Cremin (1970) comments on education of minority students in the United States:

For all of its openness, provincial America, like all societies, distributed its educational resources unevenly, and to some groups, particularly those Indians
and Afro-Americans who were enslaved and even those who were not, it was for all intents and purposes closed . . . For the slaves, there were few books, few libraries, [and] few schools... the doors of wisdom were not only not open, they were shut tight and designed to remain that way. . . [By] the end of the colonial period, there was a well-developed ideology of race inferiority to justify that situation and ensure that it would stand firm against all the heady rhetoric of the Revolution. (p. 41)

Ideologies such as those Cremin describes, developed to justify slavery and honed in the eugenics movement at the turn of the century, have festered for decades (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Recently, this ideology of White supremacy has erupted anew in a contemporary representation of pseudoscience represented by The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). This resurgence of racialist thinking has been received with a remarkable presumption of credibility (Darling-Hammond, 2001). A major failing of The Bell Curve (1994) is based on analysis of the evidence it uses -- and that which it ignores -- regarding distribution of cognitive abilities across racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Quite simply Herrnstein and Murray (1994) rely on tests that are not good measures of intelligence. Moreover, they seem almost wholly ignorant of the last three decades of research on cognition, intelligence, and performances, the effects of education on performance, and on the inequalities in educational opportunities that exist and affect academic performance of students (Orfield & Eaton, 1996).
Hornbeck (1995) expresses his concern about the quality of education for minorities by indicating that our nation’s public schools have a miserable performance record of educating low-income and racial and language- minority students. African-American males are, categorically, one of the most affected groups of students exhibiting poor academic performance on academic achievement tests.

Nearly two decades have passed since the 1983 report: *A Nation At Risk* was published detailing very troubling facts focused on the perceived inadequate performance of American students in general; the specific educational problems facing many minority children were not discussed. Other reports soon followed, however that did raise minority issues directly. In June 1983, The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth released *Action for Excellence*, which, in addition to stressing the importance of improving education for all students, called attention to the need to improve urban schools because of the high concentration of minority students. By the mid-1980s a number of reform reports had begun to address the persistent gaps in academic achievement between majority students and those from several minority groups -- especially African-Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. Eventually, several major reports focused exclusively on issues related to minority education. For example, in May 1988, the commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life released *One-Third of a Nation*, which opened with this provocative statement:

> America is moving backward -- not forward in its efforts to achieve the full participation of minority citizens in the life and prosperity of the nation. In education, employment, income, health longevity and other basic measures of
individual and social well-being, gaps persist -- and in some cases are widening -- between members of minority groups and the majority population. If these disparities are allowed to continue the United States inevitably will suffer a compromised quality of life and a lowered standard of living. Social conflict will intensify. Our ability to compete in world markets will decline, our domestic economy will falter, and our national security will be endangered. In brief, we will find ourselves unable to fulfill the promise of the American dream (Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, *One-Third of a Nation*, 1988).

These problems manifest themselves as early as the third grade and are evident from elementary levels through graduate school. For example, a 1988 survey conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicated results in reading, writing and mathematics that Black students showed improvement but clearly lagged behind scores as compared to other groups (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis (1988). This trend continues to persist. Individual school districts across the country -- especially those serving urban areas report poor classroom performance and little interest in academic achievement among the majority of young Black males (Biggs, Roeber, Fan, Johnson-Lewis, Means, & Taylor, 1990).

With reference to the 1990 U.S. Bureau of Census, Biggs (1992) indicates that while Census data reveal improved high school graduation rates, the rates for Black males still lag behind those of other groups. In addition, college enrollment data show fewer Black males than in the recent past and in comparison to other groups (Biggs, 1992).
Further, those who do attend college often are not retained through graduation and are not eligible to go on to advanced or graduate study (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990).

Today, years after these alarming reports were first published, minority students continue to remain at the bottom rung of the academic achievement ladder. African-American males -- continue to be one of the most over-represented populations at the lower level of academic achievement, making them one of the primary groups of educational, economic and social oppression.

In 1951, the busing of Linda Brown, a young African-American girl, past a segregated all White public school, was the catalyst for the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) lawsuit filed on her behalf by her father Oliver Brown. With the aid of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, their lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, argued the case before the United States Supreme Court. Marshall attacked the separate but equal rule by arguing that segregation hurts minority students by making them feel inferior, which causes decreased student achievement. In a unanimous decision, the court accepted Marshall's argument and declared that separate educational facilities could never be equal. Thus segregated schools were declared to be in violation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which requires that all citizens be treated equally (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998). On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States, ruled in a unanimous decision that the separate but equal clause contained in the 1896 ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was unconstitutional because it violated the 14th Amendment rights of equal protection under the laws. In the celebrated landmark decision, the
Supreme Court of the United States ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) that intentionally segregated schools were inherently unequal and unconstitutional. Chief Justice Warren, in his Opinion of the Court stated:

> Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society... It is the very foundation of good citizenship...

> We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other tangible factors may be equal, deprived the children of the minority group of educational opportunities? We believe that it does... To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. (p. 12)

> With this ruling, the movement to rid America’s public schools of the evils of segregation began. In fact, with this ruling, the United States Supreme Court gave life to the issue of desegregation.

**Prominent Court Decisions and Civil Rights Acts**

Chuck Sinclair, Principal Fellow, and John Tharp, a James Madison Fellow at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, attempt to shed light on the issue of the racial desegregation of America’s public schools through their analysis of significant
historical court cases that have greatly impacted the this nation’s desegregation efforts. For the most part, the entire history of desegregation as an issue has been and is continuing to be played out in our court system. Inasmuch as this is the case, as it were, and in order to relate this history, summaries of a number of important Supreme Court and federal district court decisions, along with strategic Congressional legislation that involved rights/equity issues pertaining to desegregation shall be provided. There are a number of Supreme Court decisions, federal district court decisions, and legislative initiatives that spurred the process of desegregation forward and a number in later years since Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka that began to reverse the process. The following are some of the most significant pieces of the story (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998).

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka II (1955)

This was the second ruling regarding relief from segregation that took place a year after the first Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. In this second decision, it was determined that desegregation was not taking place fast enough. The ruling gave authority to federal district courts over local school boards to insure that desegregation was taking place with all deliberate speed. No real standards or deadlines were set for the process of desegregation, however, the desegregation was delayed in many Southern school districts.

The Civil Rights Act of 1957

This was the first federal civil rights law since Reconstruction. This act set up the Commission on Civil Rights to investigate charges of denial of civil rights. It also created the Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice to enforce federal civil rights laws.
The Civil Rights Act of 1964

This federal law, first proposed in 1963 by President Kennedy and later supported by President Johnson, was passed primarily to protect the rights of Blacks and other minorities. Besides insuring the rights of minorities to seek employment, vote, and use public places, and setting up the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), this law empowered the Office of Education (which is now the Department of Education) to sue any school system that refuses to desegregate, or to sue any system whose desegregation program it considers to be inadequate. Under President Johnson, with this law in place, the federal government vigorously enforced desegregation with sanctions and cutoffs of federal aid to school districts that were deemed noncompliant. Resistance was met with swift litigation. By 1970, the schools in the South, which had been almost totally segregated in the early 1960s, were far more desegregated than schools in any other region of the United States.

Green v. County School Board of New Kent County (1968)

This case outlawed freedom of choice plans that had been implemented by Southern school districts. These plans gave students the option of transfer from a Black to a White school, placing the burden of integration on Blacks, who were reluctant to transfer in the face of intimidation. In the Green case, the Supreme Court ruled that dual or segregated systems must be dismantled root and branch and that desegregation must be achieved with respect to facilities, staff, faculty, extracurricular activities, and transportation. District courts subsequently used these the Green case factors as guides in
developing desegregation plans. However, these same factors were used afterwards as a standard by which to determine whether school districts had achieved unitary status, or fully integrated schools.

**Alexander v. Holmes Counl (Mississippi) Board of Education (1969)**

The Supreme Court grew tired of the South’s evasion of its obligation under the 1954 *Brown v. Board of education* ruling. This ruling unanimously declared that desegregated school systems be achieved, not with all deliberate speed but at once and for school systems to operate now and hereafter only unitary schools.

**Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education (1971)**

This was the decision that started busing as a major means of desegregation. This ruling struck down racially neutral student assignment plans that resulted in segregation by relying on existing residential patterns in the South. The Court ruled that desegregation must be achieved in each of a district’s schools to the greatest possible extent. Forced busing was the specified means. And forced busing led to initial riots and school violence in the South and North. However, after the number of start-up disturbances dwindled and the dust settled, it was evident that busing had resulted in immediate integration in many cities and rural areas as well. Busing literally changed the face of education.

**Keyes v. Denver School District No 1 (1973)**

This was the first ruling on segregation in the North and West, where there were no well-defined statutes requiring segregation. Under the *Keyes* case, school districts were to be held responsible for their policies that resulted in racial segregation in the
school system, such as, constructing schools in racially isolated neighborhoods and
gerrymandering attendance zones. If the board could be found to be guilty of intentional
segregation in part, the whole district would be presumed to be illegally segregated. *Keyes*
also recognized Latinos’ right to desegregation, as well as that of Black students.


This was a major step backward for desegregation. This decision blocked the
efforts of city districts and suburban districts to bus students from the suburbs to remedy
city desegregation problems, with the exception that it could be allowed if it could be
demonstrated that the suburbs or the state took actions that contributed to segregation in
the city. Because proving such action would be extremely difficult, the *Milliken* case
effectively shut off the option of drawing from heavily White suburbs in order to integrate
city districts with very large minority populations. Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP
lawyer who argued for the plaintiffs in the first *Brown* decision, was a Supreme Court
justice during the *Milliken* ruling. In dissent with his colleagues decision he stated:

> Our nation, I fear, will be ill-served by the Court’s refusal to remedy separate
> and unequal education... Desegregation is not and was never expected to be
> an easy task. In the short run, it may seem to be the easier course to allow our
> great metropolitan areas to be divided up each into two cities -- one White, the
> other Black -- but it is a course, I predict, our people will ultimately regret.

**Riddick v. School Board of the City of Norfolk Virginia (1986)**

This was a federal district court decision, in fact, the first federal court case that
permitted a school district, once declared unitary, to dismantle its desegregation plan and
return to local government control. Achieving unitary status meant that a court declared a
local school district was one system with respect to facilities, staff, faculty, extracurricular activities, and transportation. Having this status meant that the court would assume a *laissez-faire* attitude and allow the local school board to do away with its former desegregation plan and do as they wished. In the case of Norfolk, the local school board opted for neighborhood schools or, rather, *de facto* segregation as housing patterns dictated it as such. Here again, the court also mandated that extra funds be given to the poorer Black schools to allow them to improve their deteriorating facilities, as compared with suburban schools.

*Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell (1991)*

In this case, the Oklahoma City school district had been declared by a federal court to have “unitary status”. The school board subsequently voted to return to segregated neighborhood schools. The Supreme Court upheld the lower court’s decision, by indicating that “unitary status” released school districts from their prior obligation to maintain in desegregation status.

*Freeman v. Pitts (1992)*

This ruling permitted school districts to be partially released from their desegregation responsibilities even if integration had not been achieved in all the specific areas outlined in the 1968 case of *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*.

*Missouri v. Jenkins (1995)*

This decision stipulated that monies ordered by lower courts from states to pay for equalization remedies (i.e., fixing up segregated, inner-city Black schools in lieu of
integration) would be limited in time and extent, and that school districts need not show any actual correction of the education harms of segregation. The Court defined its main mission vis-à-vis desegregation as the rapid restoration of control to local school boards and not that of mandating desegregation for local school districts by courts themselves.

Supreme Court decisions since 1974, due to the conservative appointments of justices by presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, have begun the descent back to segregated schools. Since 1973, Black and Hispanic students together make up over 50% of students in central city public schools (NCES, 1996). The ten largest inner-city school districts in the country are predominantly Black and Hispanic (Orfield et al., 1997).

Today, America’s urban schools are largely non-White and poor. White flight from the cities to the suburbs in the 1970s and 1980s left non-Whites as the majority in our nation’s largest city school systems. Often, school systems that use a choice desegregation plan (e.g. a magnet school approach: students enroll via application for special schools offering accelerated academics, emphasis on arts, and/or technology to entice Whites back into the city schools) penalize Black and Hispanic students by giving preferential enrollment to Whites over non-Whites (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998).

Sinclair and Tharp (1998), assert that starting with the Supreme Court decisions from 1974 onward, courts have been trying to get out of the business of desegregation by handing over the reins to local school boards. The process is to get the courts to declare that a school district has unitary status. Upon receiving unitary status, control is handed back to local boards. Once this happens, the doors are open for schools to revert to a neighborhood schools approach. Neighborhood schools today means segregated schools.
This segregation is created by residential housing patterns. When school lines are drawn using housing patterns, all too often it becomes not only boundary lines for school populations but also lines for poverty. It is unfortunate but true that poverty is still tied to race in America. The doors of opportunity that are inherently tied to the middle-class America today will not open for students in a poverty stricken neighborhood. And these doors may never open again until the courts, once again, force integration from White suburban neighborhoods into Black and Hispanic urban neighborhoods. We are heading back into the days of *Plessy v. Ferguson* where separate was considered equal, and where a poor Black child never had a chance.” (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998)

As the history of desegregation unwinds, it is obvious that decisions made by the United States Supreme Court have a powerful impact on the issue of desegregation of our nation’s public schools. The Supreme Court mandated desegregation in 1954. However, beginning in 1974, the Supreme Court began to reverse its opinion. The Courts decisions shaped and continue to shape desegregation. It is clear that after looking at the Supreme Court decisions and the trend after these decisions in recent years for schools to become resegregated that we are on course for a reversal of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Orfield, who is a renowned expert in school desegregation cases, is often cited in many reports and journals involving the issue if school desegregation. He along with a number of graduate students from Harvard University and Indiana State University conducted the *Harvard Research Project on School Desegregation* that developed a report called “Deepening Segregation in American Public Schools: A Special Report from the Harvard Project on School Desegregation.” (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle, 1997).
The report analyzes the status of desegregation efforts in a handful of major school districts across the country. The resulting analyses indicates that: “There are clear signs that the progress (desegregation of public schools) is becoming undone and that the nation is headed backwards toward greater segregation of African-American students, particularly in the states with a history of de jure segregation.”

The trends reported are the first since the Supreme Court approved a return to segregated neighborhood schools under some conditions. A number of major cities have recently received court approval for such changes and others are in court. The segregation changes are most striking in the Southern and Border States but segregation is spreading across the nation, particularly affecting our rapidly growing Latino communities in the West. The racial and ethnic segregation of African-American and Latino students has produced a deepening isolation from middle class students and from successful schools.

The Deepening Segregation in Public Schools (1997) report points out a little noticed but extremely important expansion of segregation to the suburbs, particularly in larger metropolitan areas. “Expanding segregation is a mark of a polarizing society that lacks effective policies for building multiracial institutions.” (Orfield et al., 1997)

The Deepening Segregation in American Schools (1997) report indicates the Supreme Court granted Latino students, who will soon be the largest minority group in American public schools, the right to desegregated education in 1973, but new data show they now are significantly more segregated than Black students, with clear evidence of increasing isolation across the nation. In contrast to the varied regional trends and
changes in direction over time for African-Americans, Latino students are becoming more isolated almost everywhere. Part of this trend is caused by the very rapid growth in the number of Latino students in several major states. Regardless of the reasons, Latino students now experience more isolation from Whites and more concentration in high poverty schools than any other group of students. This was long true in the centers of Puerto Rican settlement in the Northeast but it is rapidly increasing now for students in areas where the Latino communities are overwhelmingly of Mexican background.

The segregation is not simply racial separation, it is segregation by class and family and community educational background as well. Segregated Black and Latino schools are fundamentally different from segregated White schools in terms of the background of the children and many things that relate to educational quality. Only one twentieth of the nation’s segregated White schools face conditions of concentrated poverty among their children, but more than 80% of segregated Black and Latino schools do. Desegregation is not only sitting next to someone of the other race. A child moving from a segregated African-American or Latino school to a White school will very likely exchange conditions of concentrated poverty for a middle class school. Exactly the opposite is true when a child is sent from an interracial school to a segregated neighborhood schools as is happening under a number of recent court orders which ended busing or desegregation choice plans (Orfield et al., 1997).

Much of the literature relative to the debate surrounding the impact of desegregation efforts, equal educational opportunity, and increased educational gains for minority students highlights a backward trend to segregated schools and a polarized
society. Desegregation since the Brown ruling has not created effective educational institutions for African-Americans, and it is likely that the status quo will be maintained in the future. Well-intentioned school administrators and teachers do not realize the subversive activities many people use to undermine integration efforts. Since the struggle to end racism has been so difficult, most people who harbored any reservations about integration strategies remain silent. The absence of positive criticism has taken its toll in several areas of civil right activity, but nowhere has the damage been more apparent than in school desegregation. Desegregation has failed and most African-American children are still in separate and unequal schools (Bell, 1980).

Racism will continue to be the reason African-American students do not receive effective education. Racism is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities, and racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. Racist beliefs often lead to unfair actions that, among other things, deny African-American youth with effective education. An effective school as defined by Roberta Woolever, includes a positive climate, high expectations for all students and an emphasis on basic academic skills (Woolever, 1995). Woolever indicates that: “A positive school climate, in which pupils are expected to perform capably, contributes to higher levels of achievement. Teacher enthusiasm and warmth motivate pupil learning. When teachers encourage their pupils and expect high performance, achievement becomes self-fulfilling prophecy.” (Woolever, 1995). Unless American society, including and especially public school educators, can own up to the parasite of racism that has attached itself to the hearts and minds of many, and cut out this disease before it continues to nullify the victories that
Brown v. Board of Education gave us, our public schools will be doomed to revert to the evils of segregation (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998).

**Federal and State Policy on Desegregation**

The Clinton Administration (1992 - 2001) developed no stated policy on the movement back toward desegregation and failed to give priority to supporting successful desegregation. Although it presided over the period of the most rapid resegregation of the South since the Brown decision, it failed to propose any initiative, though the hostility of the previous twelve years had ended and positions have been changed on some important cases. The Administration failed to develop a proposal to restore the federal desegregation aid program that reached its peak under President Carter and whose funding was eliminated under President Reagan. Although it asked for large increases in compensatory education, to a total of $7 billion for children in high-poverty, low performance schools, it failed to drive an initiative to move children out of such failing schools or even to slow the termination of desegregation plans in communities where equal education for minority students has never been achieved (Orfield, et al., 1997).

School desegregation has not been chosen as a priority issue by the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights or the Justice Department’s Civil Right Division, and no major research on the consequences of segregation or the best methods for improving the successful operation of multiracial schools and classrooms have been commissioned. The leader of both the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights stated that neither department has issued
any statement of its policy on school desegregation during the Clinton Administration and
that each is responding on a case-by-case basis (Orfield et al., 1997).

The Deepening Segregation in the Public Schools report indicates that during the
middle 1990s, there were very few active state government efforts to enforce school
desegregation. Some that once had rules or state legal requirements have suspended them
or have terminated the offices that administered them. In California, for example, where
segregation was increasing rapidly for both Blacks and Latinos, and for some groups of
Asian students, the State Department of Education’s Intergroup Relations Office was
abolished, though the state provides funds for court ordered remedies. In Illinois, the
State Supreme Court took away the State Board of Education’s right to enforce
desegregation efforts (Orfield et al., 1997). Many states have adopted polices to publicize
achievement results by district and school and they repeatedly publish lists that show
urban minority schools with very high levels of concentrated poverty at the bottom in
academic achievement without ever discussing the very frequent relationship between
segregated education and low academic achievement. If standards are to be raised with
high stakes for students, states must be concerned about the structural fairness of their
system to minority students (Orfield et al., 1997).

Franklin (1993) describes the “color line” as the greatest problem the United
States faces as it enters the twenty-first century. The failure of desegregation in the public
schools ensures the perpetuation of this dilemma. Researcher Orfield shares a common
opinion that “In American race relations, the bridge from the twentieth century may be
leading back into the nineteenth century.” We may be deciding to bet the future of the
country once more on separate but equal. There is no evidence that separate but equal today works any more than it did a century ago.

Law professor Derrick Bell found that in predominately Black schools, in larger school districts, there is little evidence of overall educational improvement for Black desegregated schools (Bell, 1992). In fact, even schools that claim to be integrated tend to exist as schools within schools, usually a vocational tracking system for the underprivileged students, like washing cars and a college preparatory track for privileged students (Bell, 1980). According to Bell:

Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those Herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary “peaks of progress,” short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain White dominance. This is a hard-to accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it, not as a sign of submission, but as an act of ultimate defiance. (p. 12)

Bell believes Blacks need to forget about the “comforting belief that time and generosity of America” will solve its racial problems (Bell, 1992, p. 13). Leaders must adhere to a practical goal, like implementing a strong African-American education school system (Sinclair & Tharp, 1998).

There is an abundance of literature that clearly highlights the resegregation of the nation’s public schools since the Brown v. Board of Education at Topeka (1954), whereby the United States Supreme Court declared that intentionally segregated schools were inherently unequal and unconstitutional. Consequently the desegregation of public schools was mandated by the Supreme Court.
The academic failure of so many African-American children, particularly males, is often attributed to the many social ills found in the Black community, rather than the direct correlation between poverty and low academic performance. Harvard professor Gary Orfield co-author of the 1999 study, *Our Resegreated Schools*, and the 1996 book *Dismantling Desegregation*, points to the fact that concentrated poverty is strongly linked to many forms of educational inequality. Most Black and Hispanic students attend schools with more than twice as many poor classmates as White students. In 1996, forty-seven percent of the United States schools still had 10% or less Black and Hispanic students, and only one in 14 schools had half or more of their children living in poverty. At the other extreme, nine out of ten schools with between 90% and 100% Black and Hispanic students also faced concentrated poverty. A great many of the educational characteristics of schools attributed to race are actually related to poverty, but the impacts are easily confused since there are few if any concentrated-poverty White schools in most metropolitan areas (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

The 1996 data show that 55% of Blacks and 67% of Hispanic students lived in large metropolitan areas, and that many attended the most segregated schools. Those who lived in rural areas, towns and small cities were by far the most integrated. In a society, which is now dominated by the suburbs, it is interesting to note that 30% of Hispanics and 20% of Blacks are now enrolled in the suburban schools of large metropolitan areas. According to Orfield and Yun (1999), as the population growth of minority students becomes increasingly suburbanized, it will impact a great many schools with little or no experience in managing diversity.
Diversity and Education

Research shows that schools that resegregate, either through ending a desegregation plan or passing through a racial transition, become systemically unequal in many respects. Since the President Reagan Administration succeeded in eliminating the federal desegregation assistance program, most schools dealing with diversity have had little or no resources directed at this important issue and there has been very little new research or experimentation. Most educational policy makers have taken a head-in-the-sand stance on this issue (Orfield & Yun 1999).

According to Orfield and Yun (1999), this leaves elementary school principals and teachers -- the front-line leaders who will first experience these large changes -- left to their own devices without resources, often without training, and with little if any diversity among faculty and staff. The normal response at the school is to simply continue as before, in effect denying that any changes are necessary. This can often lead to major problems and to the failure of the school to serve as a positive stabilizing institution in a community facing rapid change. If the community resegregates residentially, it often leaves a principal and staff trying to operate in a school where the community is from a different background and responds negatively to real or perceived insensitivity or discrimination by school staff (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

The Resegregated in American Schools study (Orfield & Yun, 1999) indicates that whether the rapid suburbanization of the African-Americans and Hispanic middle-class will produce lasting integration or merely a vast spread of suburban segregation is one of
the great questions of this period. Unfortunately, there is no policy and an almost total absence of discussion among racially changing school districts about changes that will require regional responses if we are to avoid the sorry experiences of the central cities. An abundance of the literature indicates a reversing trend to segregated public schools as was the case before the 1954 Brown ruling. Segregation has never in the nation’s history produced equal and successful schools. The stakes are much higher today because of the growth of minority enrollment. While there is no good evidence that segregation will work, there is good evidence that successful integration produces benefits not only for both minority and White students, but for the community (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

Kunjufu (1989) cautions African-American to be aware of the “new kind of racism” that exists in America that’s less overt but equally dangerous. Before 1954, African-American children attended school in inferior facilities with secondhand books and equipment. The only compensation for this inequitable situation was they had the best teachers in our history, ironically because of institutional racism. Our best Black minds had limited career options and many had to teach. These teachers and their high expectations were able in most cases to offset the lack of proper resources.

The new racism allows children to attend integrated schools in better facilities, but expectations have declined. Besides the fact that many African-American children still attend racially segregated schools because of housing patterns, many schools simply use tracking and special education placements to segregate schools on the inside. Consequently, African-American and other minority students fail to receive equitable learning opportunities afforded to the White majority.
Policies and Practices to Bridge the Achievement Gap

In a recent study by Schwartz (2001), she briefly reviews the educational policies and practices designed to bridge the achievement gap between the diverse population of students across the nation. The review also provides a list of resources offering detailed information about them. The review is organized into eight areas of concern on the basis of effective closing achievement gap policies and practices. The following provides a highlight of the guidelines recommended by Schwartz for establishing educational policies and enforcing practices to bridge the existing academic achievement gap between the diverse population of students.

State and District Role

- Development and implementation of education goals which reflect the desires, needs, and values of the public, schools, and parents, and which will generate a shared commitment to education excellence.

- Development and implementation of rigorous standards that form the basis of curriculum development and instructional practice, specify students' competencies by subject and grade, and define the performance and responsibilities of school administrators and teachers.

- Development and implementation of accountability standards to ensure the high quality and good performance of all administrators and educators.

- Provision of human and material resources necessary for successful student learning and academic achievement.
• Dissemination of existing researched-based instructional programs with demonstrated success to individual schools for adaption, as appropriate, and dissemination of information about effective instructional strategies and exemplary practices that are especially effective in diverse classrooms.

• Provision of opportunities for sharing information, experiences, and problem solving across schools and levels.

**Early Childhood Development Initiatives**

• Provision of family literacy programs to prepare parents for educating their children.

• Provision of high quality preschool programs that foster young children’s development of social and school readiness skills, develop their interest in learning, and orient them toward academic achievement; and active recruitment of families to a local program.

• Provision of parent education programs, social service resources, and, possibly, financial support to help families learn how to make a concrete commitment to their children’s academic success while they are still very young, to teach families to promote children’s cognitive and social development and improve their homes as a learning environment, and to encourage families to take advantage of school and community resources that support achievement.

**School Climate**

• Active promotion of the expectation that all students can succeed, the demand that they do so, and encouragement to prepare for higher education.
• Maintenance of a school climate conducive to academic productivity by orienting students’ attitudes and behavior to excellence and giving them a sense of efficacy and power, and by directing their time to productive academic exercises, such as inquiry, seeking and using help, and learning.

• Identification and development of every student’s educational and personal potentials through individualized assessments, appropriate placements, and ongoing encouragement from school staff.

• Recognition of diverse cultures as components of the mainstream and establishment of a balance between students’ native ways of communicating, learning, and behaving and the need for them to be educated, contribute positively to the school environment, and develop the skills for professional and social success in adulthood.

• Maintenance of a safe and orderly school where staff and students demonstrate respect for each other and are free of fear; and where the code of conduct is well-publicized, fair, and uniformly enforced.

**School Organization**

• Full desegregation of all school classes, programs, and extracurricular activities.

• Smaller classes, preferably with 18 or fewer students, especially in the earlier grades.

• Equitable grouping of students that places students of color, in proportion to their numbers, in high ability classes in the early grades and in higher tracks and college preparatory classes in high school.
Teaching and Learning

- Use of challenging curricula and instructional strategies that engage students’ interest, promote inquiry and discovery, and provide students with a sense of satisfaction from their own efforts.

- Provision of learning resources, such as reading specialists; computer technology and staff trained in its use; and books for a student library, advanced textbooks, consumable workbooks, and other high quality print materials.

- Operation of magnet high schools and special subject-specific programs to promote learning by tapping into students' particular interests.

- Provision of supplemental individualized education supports, including tutoring by professionals or trained adult volunteers and peers; after-school, weekend, and summer programs; and intensive in-school aid for retained.

- Provision of access to college-based programs and professionals who can serve as role models and mentors.

- Application of in-depth, appropriate, and ongoing assessments of the performance and progress of each student-including grades, test scores, classroom behavior, extracurricular activities, and conduct-to determine class and program placement and the types of individual supports should be given.

- Provision of increased instructional time in a number of important subject matters including reading, math, and other basic skills.
School Management

- Recruitment and retention of experienced, well-qualified teachers for students at all ability levels, who have excellent teaching skills and a good command of their subject specialties and are held accountable for students' performance.

- Recruitment and retention of high-performing administrators who provide pedagogical leadership, require the preparedness and efficacy of the teachers, and are held accountable for all their responsibilities.

- Provision of required ongoing professional development to help teachers master new curricula and teaching strategies, especially those effective in diverse classrooms; improve students' ability to meet standards; treat and challenge all students equally; internalize and convey the fact that race and ethnicity do not affect achievement; and share and solve problems.

- Application of state-, district-, and school-developed standards to curriculum and instruction design, student assessment, and teacher evaluation.

- Decision making based on data collection and analysis, including review of school-wide data, current and past test scores, course enrollment patterns, and disciplinary actions-and a comparison of the data with those of other students, schools, and areas to help determine what overall school changes are likely to improve student performance.

Family Supports

- Provision of education, health, and social services to students and their parents, preferably in a central location, via a case management approach.
• Active encouragement of parents’ high expectations for their children’s achievement, involvement in their children's schooling, development of a home atmosphere conducive to learning, participation in homework completion, and commitment to help them meet performance standards, through social functions, meetings, and workshops where the family role in educational success is described.

• Encouragement of parents’ participation in school events through a decrease in barriers by provision of babysitting, a meal, transportation aid, etc.

Community Involvement

• Maintenance of a culture where learning and achievement are valued that is sustained and supported by religious and social organizations and the media.

• Provision of learning opportunities for children at local libraries and museums.

• Maintenance of active school partnerships that include helping schools link families with local social services; providing students with mentors, tutors, and role models; providing parents with adult basic skills education, job training, and parenting classes; and fund raising to increase the resources available to local schools.

• Organization of leisure activities with an academic focus to prepare students with alternative teaching-learning strategies.

• Provision of coordinated services designed to support students’ educational achievement and their parents’ ability to foster their children’s learning, such as physical and mental health care, adult education, and financial assistance.
Summary

This chapter reviewed a vast variety of the research studies, position papers, databases, and other documentaries pertinent to the academic achievement gap between African-American and White children. The literature consistently supports the significant role of socioeconomic factors in the academic performance of African-American children. The following provides highlights of the literature findings as related to the topic proposed for this study:

1. The research reports indicate that large achievement gaps among students from different social classes (and racial/ethnic groups) tend to emerge in the early elementary school year and are sustained through the high school years.

2. The literature suggest that if the nation wishes to use schools to reduce achievement differences among groups, it must maximize its efforts in the early years because by third grade, the problem appears to be less a matter of preventing large achievement gaps from developing than of finding ways to cover its lost ground.

3. Much of the research relative to socioeconomic status and the Black-White achievement gap suggests that a substantial portion of the racial gap achievement is accounted for by: (a) family’s low socioeconomic situation, (b) classroom and school characteristics, and (c) community and geographical location.

4. In light of the widespread belief that African-Americans are unlikely to be stellar academic performers, they enter the test-taking situation with a disadvantage compared to those who do not have this fear.
5. A group of researchers have concluded that the causes of the underachievement gap cannot simply be swept away by legislative or administrative action, by exhortations, or by identifying people with racial prejudice and weeding them out of public life.

6. Much of the literature indicates that Whites’ perception of the intellectual inferiority of Blacks is weighted quite heavily as a reason for the academic gap between these two groups; and therefore, an assessment of the current impact of White racism on the academic performance and educational prospects of minorities warrants a review.

7. Many researchers and educators readily point to socioeconomic factors related to home environment, student’s innate ability, lack of parental involvement, students’ lack of motivation and lack of effort, and racism in education as primary factors contributing to the academic achievement gap.

8. Teacher expectations are consistently identified throughout the literature as the most influential factor impacting the existing academic achievement gap between the academic achievement of African-American and White students.

9. The literature suggests that differences in the content of the education provided to Whites and to minorities have historically been among the most important sources of variations in academic achievement.

10. The literature highlights a number of ways in which racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination may be undermining the education progress of minorities suggesting that widespread doubt among African-American students about their ability to do high-quality academic work leads many of them to avoid academic competition.
11. A number of research studies have, generally, proven positive effects of parental involvement in their children’s academic achievement. A number of other studies have also shown negative effects African-American parents’ socioeconomic status on their children’s academic achievement.

12. The literature has provided a list of effective educational policies, procedures, and practices designed to bridge the achievement gap in the diverse populations of students across the nation. The methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data for the study are presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used in the study. A restatement of the study's goals, research questions, and research hypotheses is included to help a better understanding of the research methodology. The methodology includes research outline, research design, the subjects for the study, development of the survey instruments, data collection procedures, description of the dependent and independent variables involved in the study, and procedures for treatment of the data. A summary of the methods and procedures is also presented at the end of the chapter.

Study's Goals, Questions, and Hypotheses

This study was conducted: (a) to analyze the perceptions of African-American male students and their parents regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American male students and their White counterparts; and (b) to determine the extent to which socioeconomic factors correlate with perceptions of the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. The first goal was achieved by examining the following six research questions:

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions of parents of African-American male students regarding the causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students?
Research Question 2. Is there a relationship between the socioeconomic status of the participating parents as defined in terms of occupation, family income, level of education, family structure, the sex and age of siblings living in the household, and receiving Title I support services and their perceptions regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students?

Research Question 3. What are the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences while in school?

Research Question 4. What are the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement?

Research Question 5. What are the parents’ perceptions of their relationship with their children’s school?

Research Question 6. How do the students perceive their academic achievements in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters?

The second goal was achieved by testing the following six research hypotheses:

Research Hypothesis 1. Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences.

Research Hypothesis 2. Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement.
**Research Hypothesis 3.** Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents' perceptions of the relationship with school concerning their children's academic achievement.

**Research Hypothesis 4.** There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters.

**Research Hypothesis 5.** There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

**Research Hypothesis 6.** There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in school.

**Research Outline**

The following outline briefly describes a summary of the methods and procedures used in this study to collect and analyze the data, to present the findings, to draw conclusions, and to make recommendations:

1. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principals of the participating elementary schools in a city in Massachusetts.

2. A review of the literature pertinent to the research topic was conducted using library resources as well as the most recent computer databases available through the internet and telecommunication facilities.
3. The subjects for the study included third grade and fifth grade African-American students from six elementary schools as well as their parents.

4. Two survey instruments were developed by the researcher to survey the perceptions of the participating students and their parents regarding the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White male students.

5. Each survey instrument was subject for a pilot study to help secure its content and concurrent validity and reliability.

6. The data collection was conducted in a cooperative effort between the researcher and the principals of the participating schools.

7. The data collected for the study were analyzed using the most recent version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2001).

8. The research questions and the research hypotheses were examined through the use of qualitative and quantitative procedures.

9. A discussion section was included to interpret the findings and compare them to those presented in the literature review.

10. General conclusions were drawn from analyses and interpretation of the significant findings of the study.

11. In accordance with the findings of the study, a number of recommendations were made to public school systems to help improve academic achievement of African-American students at the elementary school level.
12. Several suggestions for further research were addressed to future researchers who may be interested in conducting studies related to the issue of academic achievement of African-American students from different point of views.

Research Design

Descriptive studies are generally designed to collect data for examining research questions and, where applicable, testing research hypotheses concerning the perceptions, attitudes, opinions, and conditions of the subjects of the study (Crowl, 1993). This study is descriptive because it is primarily designed to collect data for examining a number of research questions and hypotheses as they relate to the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students at the elementary school level. The study utilizes a cross-sectional survey strategy for the purpose of procuring a relatively quick and also accurate collection and analysis of data. As indicated by Thomas (1996), cross-sectional survey methods are typically used to collect information from a sample drawn from a predetermined population. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to analyze the data collected for the study because the survey instruments used in the study include both measurable and open-ended items. The following sections explain the methods and procedures used to analyze the data for this study through the use of quantitative and qualitative designs:

Qualitative Design

A qualitative design is used to analyze the responses to the open-ended items of the questionnaire aimed at identifying the perceptions of the existing academic
achievement gap between African-American and White male students. The responses of the participating parents to the open-ended item of the questionnaire were categorized by the researcher and then used to analyze their overall perceptions of the existing academic achievement gap between the two groups. Coding strategies were used to categorize the responses from the perspective of the participant. The coding strategies were also helpful in suggesting possible links between personal and demographic characteristics of the participating parents and their responses to the open-ended item of the questionnaire.

According to Crowl (1993), the qualitative approach is typically used to provide a narrative description of particular phenomena by researchers. As indicated by Patton (1990), contrary to quantitative methods, qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of cases. This provides a better understanding of the cases and situations studied, but typically threatens the ability to generalize (Patton, 1990). Several major properties of qualitative research, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), are summarized as follows: (a) the natural setting is the data source and the researcher is the key data-collection instrument; (b) it attempts primarily to describe, and secondarily to analyze; (c) the concern is with process (that is, with what has transpired) as much as with outcome; (d) its data are analyzed inductively; and (e) it is essentially concerned with what things mean. Similar properties of qualitative research are stated by Maxwell (1996) focusing on interactive approaches for data collection.

**Quantitative Design**

A quantitative design is used: (a) to determine a profile of the participants based on personal and demographic factors; and (b) to analyze the responses of the participant
to the quantitative items of the questionnaires. In supporting the quantitative approach, Crowl (1993) indicates that it is basically used to provide a numerical and statistical description of population variables. As indicated by Slavin (1992), this approach essentially involves descriptive analysis, inferential analysis, or a combination of both analyses depending upon the nature of the study. Descriptive analysis is basically used by researchers to meaningfully describe many parametric values with a small number of numerical indices (Slavin, 1992), whereas inferential analysis is typically used to estimate how likely it is that the findings derived from a sample are the same as those that would have been derived from the entire population (Slavin, 1992). According to Patton (1990), the most important advantage of a quantitative approach is that it makes it possible to measure the reactions of a great many subjects to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. Another important advantage of the quantitative method is that it provides a broad and generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously.

**Subjects for the Study**

**Students**

The subjects for the study consisted of third grade and fifth grade African-American males attending six different elementary schools in a city in Massachusetts. There were approximately 100 students in the participating schools; of whom 93 participated in the study. The target schools were selected because of the large number of African-American students attending each school.
Through verbal and written communication with school personnel, students, and parents, assurances were given that the researcher would protect the identity of individual students and parents. After receiving parental consent to administer the survey, the researcher personally contacted each student to arrange an interview session to explain the purpose and process of participating in the study. The interview schedule was at the convenience of students and school personnel, and extreme care was made not to interfere with the academic preparation time of the students. Personal contacts with the principals of the elementary schools helped the researcher to get a more attentive and serious response from students at the start of the school day when students are more vibrant and well focused on the task of thoughtfully completing the survey.

Table 1 presents a distribution of the participating students by age. As shown in this table, of the 93 students who participated in the study, 11 students (or 11.8%) reported to be eight years old, 29 students (or 31.2%) were nine years old, 13 students (or 14.0%) were ten years old, 34 students (or 36.6%) were eleven years old, and the remaining 6 students (or 6.6%) reported to be twelve years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 presents a distribution of the third grade and fifth grade students who participated in the study from each school. Representation of students from each school by the grade level is presented as follows: 33 students from School A (15 third graders and 18 fifth graders); 15 students from School B (9 third graders and 6 fifth graders); 14 students from School C (6 third graders and 8 fifth graders); 13 students from School D (7 third graders and 6 fifth graders); 10 students from School E (3 third graders and 7 fifth graders); and 8 students from School F (2 third graders and 6 fifth graders).

Table 2 presents a distribution of the third grade and fifth grade students who participated in the study from each school. Representation of students from each school by the grade level is presented as follows: 33 students from School A (15 third graders and 18 fifth graders); 15 students from School B (9 third graders and 6 fifth graders); 14 students from School C (6 third graders and 8 fifth graders); 13 students from School D (7 third graders and 6 fifth graders); 10 students from School E (3 third graders and 7 fifth graders); and 8 students from School F (2 third graders and 6 fifth graders).

Table 2. Number and percentage of the participating students by school and grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Third Grade Students</th>
<th>Fifth Grade Students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents

As a part of the study, involvement of the parents was important in order to explore their perceptions concerning: (a) the academic achievement gap between their children and the White majority students; (b) their perceptions of causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students; and (c) their
perceptions of the extent to which certain socioeconomic factors might have negative impact on the academic achievement of their children. However, after several attempts by the researcher, only 35 parents decided to participate in the study. As shown in Table 3, the participating parents included a majority of 85.7% females and only 14.3% males.

Table 3. Number and percentage of the participating parents by sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 presents a distribution of the participating parents by age. As may be seen in this table, a majority of these participants (80%) reported to be 30 years or older; whereas only 20% were less than 30 years of age.

Table 4. Number and percentage of the participating parents by age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+ years</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Development of the Survey Instruments**

After a review of literature, the researcher developed two survey instruments in order to collect data from students and their parents who participated in the study. The
literature reviewed helped in developing items necessary for examining the research questions and testing the research hypotheses. The following sections describe the process of developing and securing the content validity and reliability of each survey instrument:

**Student Survey**

A pilot study was conducted to assess the amount of time required to complete each survey instrument, clarity of the wording of the questionnaire and feasibility of the data gathering procedure. The survey questionnaire was tested with a number of Black elementary school students in the city’s public school system who were not included in the final study. Care was taken to use the input of these students to avoid ambiguous words or questions for the survey. The pilot testing was continued until it was determined that the questions were clear enough for students to secure adequate responses by the participant. As a result, the final revised version of the questionnaire was developed by the researcher to assess students’ perceptions of themselves and their learning experiences. The final revised version of the student survey questionnaire (See Appendix A) included three major parts as follows:

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to gather information from the participating students including age and grade.

The second part of the questionnaire included four questions to determine the respondents’ perceptions of their interest in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters. The four questions were as follows: What do you do best? What do you like to do best? What does your teacher tell you that you do best? and What do others tell
you that you do best? The third part of the questionnaire was designed to determine the respondents’ perceptions regarding: (a) their academic experiences in school, and (b) the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

This final part of the questionnaire included 26 Likert type items based on a scale of 1 from “Strongly Disagree”, 2 for “Disagree”, 3 for “Somewhat Agree”, 4 for “Agree”, and 5 for “Strongly Agree”. The first seventeen items included in this part were designed to determine the perceptions of the participating students regarding their academic achievement. The remaining nine items were designed to determine their perception about academic achievement differences between African-American and White students.

**Parent Survey**

This survey instrument was developed to examine the perceptions of the participating parents regarding the academic achievement gap between their children and the White majority students. After several revisions, the final version of the questionnaire (See Appendix B) included three major parts as follows:

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect certain demographic and socioeconomic information about the participant in order to find possible links between their perceptions and their socioeconomic status. This part included nine items seeking a personal and socioeconomic profile of the participant on the basis of race, age, sex, occupation, family structure, sex and age of siblings living in the household, educational background, family income, and whether or not their children are currently receiving Title I support services in reading and/or math.
The second part of the questionnaire was designed to determine the respondents’ perceptions regarding: (a) their own academic experiences while they were attending school; (b) their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in their homes; and (c) their relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement. This part included 18 Likert type items based on a scale of 1 from “Strongly Disagree”, 2 for “Disagree”, 3 for “Somewhat Agree”, 4 for “Agree”, and 5 for “Strongly Agree”. The first four items were designed to determine the respondents’ perceptions regarding their own academic experiences while they were attending school. The next seven items were designed to determine the extent to which parents care about their children’s academic achievement in their homes. The remaining seven items were designed to determine the extent to which parents care about their children’s academic achievement in school.

The final part of the questionnaire included a single open-ended item which was designed to seek perceptions of the participating parents about the major causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

**Data Collection Procedures**

To enhance students’ participation, this study was conducted in conjunction with the principals of the participating schools. The researcher sought the assistance of the participating principals as the on site data collector of the consent forms, to be held for the researcher’s retrieval (See Appendix C). As reflected in the letter, the researcher encouraged the return of the distributed permission form and the importance of securing parental consent to participate in the study. The researcher also sought verbal permission
from the site administrators to personally explain the significance of the study to the intended population. The selected population was based on the number of verified consent forms received. All third grade and fifth grade African-American male students and their families received an introductory letter that addressed the purpose of the research, where and how it would be conducted, confidentiality of the responses, and the significance of their participation (See Appendix D). Students and parents were asked to return their consent forms within one week of receiving them.

A week after distribution of the introductory letter with consent forms to the participating schools and after one site visit per school, the researcher contacted the site administrator to collect the returned documents. Once the necessary permissions were received, the researcher made arrangements with the participating principals to schedule a time to administer the survey to student participants. In order to maintain confidentiality, each participating student’s name was placed on a roster and assigned an identifying code to match the name listed on the student questionnaire.

Since a sufficient number on consent forms were not received by the due date, a follow-up letter was sent to the non-respondents encouraging them to return the completed form directly to the researcher. A self-addressed and stamped envelope was also included for their convenience. Once a sufficient number of consent forms authorizing students’ participation in the research project was secured, the final survey instrument was administered to 93 students who had parental consent. However, only 35 parents agreed to participate in the study. These parents were also asked to complete a survey questionnaire independently and forward it to their child’s school.
Description of the Variables

The variables involved in the study’s research hypotheses are identified as dependent and independent variables as follows:

**Dependent Variables**

There are six dependent variables involved in the study, each of which is included in one of the research hypotheses. The dependent variables involved in the first three hypotheses are the perceptions of the participating parents regarding: (a) their own academic experiences while they were attending school, (b) their commitment to their children’s academic achievement, and (c) their relationship with their children’s school.

The dependent variables involved in the remaining three research hypotheses are the self-perceptions of the participating students regarding: (a) their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters, (b) their academic experiences in school, and (c) the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. The items included in each dependent variable are measurable based on a scale of 1 for a lowest degree of agreement to 5 for a highest degree of agreement on the part of the participating children and their parents.

**Independent Variables**

There are three independent variables involved in the first three research hypotheses and one involved in the remaining three hypotheses. The independent variables involved in the first three research hypotheses are the participating parents’ age, level of education, and family income. The only independent variable involved in the
remaining three hypotheses is the participating students' grade level for comparison of the perceptions of third and fifth graders.

**Treatment of the Data**

The data obtained from the returned questionnaires were numerically coded and then entered into a database for computer programming and analysis purposes. The most recently released of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2001) was utilized for the analysis of the data and tabulation of the findings. In accordance with the quantitative and qualitative research designs discussed previously, the responses were analyzed: (a) to provide a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the participating parents and their children, (b) to examine the research questions, and (c) to test the null hypotheses derived from the research hypotheses.

**Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative analysis of the data was used to provide answers to the first research question by coding, categorizing, and interpreting the responses to the open-ended item of the survey instrument distributed to the participating parents. The responses to the open-ended item were coded and categorized based on the type and frequency of the responses. The most important responses, comments, and recommendations were presented in a narrative form. As suggested by Thomas (1996), in qualitative analyses, investigators must deal first with the problem of figuring out what things fit together. This leads to a classification system for the data. In qualitative analyses, Patton (1990) indicates that the process of data analysis involves both technical and creative
dimensions. He also emphasizes that for this reason, an analysis of certain statements made by the respondents and the frequency distribution of these statements should be used when possible.

**Quantitative Approach**

The quantitative analysis of the data was accomplished by using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. The descriptive analysis of the data was achieved through the use of frequency distributions of the responses to the multiple choice items of the survey instruments as well as the use of selected measures of central tendency and dispersion, including the mean and standard deviation of the ratings assigned to the items of the survey. The inferential analysis of the data was performed by testing the null hypotheses derived from the research hypotheses through the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, the Chi-Square Test, and the use of the one-way Analysis of Variance for independent means. The following sections provide the rationale for using the descriptive and inferential statistics involved in the study.

**Frequency Distributions.** Number and percentage of the responses to the multiple choice items of the questionnaire were computed to provide answers to the research questions two to six.

**Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion.** Calculation of the means and standard deviations of the responses to the alternative categories of certain multiple choice items was necessary to compare the perceptions of the participant as reflected in the fifth and the sixth research hypotheses.
The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Technique. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Technique along with its test of significance, were used to test the first three research hypotheses seeking possible relationships between selected demographic and socioeconomic variables of the participating parents (i.e., age, level of education, and family income) and their perceptions regarding: (a) their own academic experiences while they were attending school, (b) their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in their homes, and (c) their relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement. This test is typically used to determine the extent to which two variables are correlated with each other. Investigators often use this statistic to predict one variable (criterion) from that of another (predictor). The value of this statistic ranges from “-1” for a perfect inverse correlation to “0” for no systematic correlation to “+1” for a perfect positive correlation. A positive correlation indicates the larger the value of one variable, the larger the value of another. Inversely, a negative correlation indicates the larger the value of one variable, the smaller the value of another.

The Chi-Square Test of Comparison. The fourth research hypothesis was examined using the Chi-Square Test to compare the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters. This test is typically used to compare the relative frequency distribution of non-parametric variables. Non-parametric variables are considered to be nominal in nature, which are treated differently from parametric variables that are quantitative. The Chi-Square value is computed based on the comparison of the expected and calculated frequencies.
The One-Way Analysis of Variance for Independent Means. In reference to
the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2001), the one-way Analysis of
Variance (ANOVA) along with the Scheffe’ Test of post-hoc comparison were used to
test the last two research hypotheses examining the differences between the perceptions
of the third grade and fifth grade students regarding: (a) the academic achievement gap
between African-American and White students; and (b) their academic experiences in
school. The one-way Analysis of Variance is typically used to compare the variation
between groups with the variation within groups. On an occasion that the ratio “between
group variation” to “within group variation” is statistically significant, there is a
possibility of significant differences between mean scores which requires a post-hoc test
of comparison. The Scheffe’ Test of pairwise comparison was selected for this study
because it can be used for both equal and unequal sample sizes.

Selection of the Level of Significance. To test the statistical hypotheses, it was
necessary to select an appropriate level of significance relevant to the nature of the study.
The level of significance is defined as the risk of error in generalization of the findings
obtained from a sample to the population from which the sample had been drawn (Crowl,
1993). With respect to the common agreement among statisticians in adopting a level of
significance for studies involving human perceptions, the 0.05 level of significance was
also selected for testing the null hypotheses involved in this study. Conceptually, the 0.05
level of significance allows a maximum 5% risk of error and secures a minimum 95%
confidence in generalizing the hypothesis results from the sample to the population.
The methods and procedures used in the study were discussed in this chapter. The data for the study were collected through distributing a self-developed survey instrument to a sample of third grade and fifth students, and another one to their parents. The qualitative analysis of the data was used to provide answer to the first research question. This procedure was achieved by coding, categorizing, and interpreting the responses to the only open-ended item of the survey instrument distributed to the participating parents. The quantitative analysis of the data was used to provide answers to the remaining five research questions and to test the research hypotheses. This procedure was accomplished through the use of appropriate descriptive and inferential analyses. The descriptive analysis included: (a) using the frequency distribution of the responses to the alternative categories of the multiple choice items of the survey instruments; and (b) using certain measures of central tendency and dispersion, including mean and standard deviation of the ratings assigned to the measuring items of the survey instrument. The inferential analysis included: (a) using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient technique and its appropriate test of significance to examine the first three research hypotheses, (b) using the Chi-Square test of comparison to examine the fourth research hypothesis, and (c) using the one-way Analysis of Variance for independent means to examine the final two research hypotheses. The 0.05 level of significance was selected as a criterion for acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses derived from the research hypotheses. Analyses of the data and presentation of the findings are incorporated in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The data collected for the study were analyzed in this chapter through the use of appropriate qualitative and quantitative research methods and procedures. As described in the preceding chapter, the qualitative analysis of the data was used to determine the opinions of the participating parents about the major causes of the existing achievement gap between African-American and White students. The quantitative analysis of the data used certain descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. A descriptive analysis of the data was performed: (a) to provide a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the participants, and (b) to examine the research questions related to the perceptions of the participants regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American students and their White classmates. The inferential analysis of the data was accomplished by testing the null hypotheses derived from the research hypotheses. The chapter is concluded by presenting a summary of the significant findings of the study.

Examining the Research Questions

The research questions are examined through the use of appropriate qualitative and quantitative procedures. The qualitative method was used to examine the first research question by categorizing the responses of the participating parents to the open-ended item of the questionnaire. Quantitative methods were used to examine the
remaining five research questions by analyzing the responses to the items of the survey related to each research question. Frequency distributions of the individual items as well as certain measures of central tendency and dispersion (i.e., mean and standard deviation of the responses to each item) were used to provide answers to the research questions. The descriptive analysis of the data was performed: (a) to provide a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the participant; and (b) to examine the research questions related to the perceptions of the participants regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American students and their White classmates. The following format was used in providing answers to each research question: (a) restatement of the research question, (b) tabulation of the findings based on the number and percentage of the responses to the alternative categories of the individual items related to each research question, (c) calculation of the findings based on the appropriate statistical results, and (d) interpretation of the findings based on the overall understanding of the responses provided by the participant to the individual items pertinent to each research question.

Examining the First Research Question

**Research Question.** What are the perceptions of parents of African-American male students regarding the causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students?

**Findings.** Of the total 35 participants, fifteen did not respond to the open-ended item related to this research question, and five others believed there is no major academic achievement gap between African-American and White children. Table 5 presents the
major causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students, as perceived by the remaining fifteen parents.

Table 5. Parents’ perceptions of the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most African-American children are from single-parent families which makes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it hard to compete with White children who are raised in two-parent families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an African-American household, the parents usually take little or no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility at all for the academic achievement of their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are less educational opportunities for African-American children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as compared with their White counterparts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since more African-Americans are raised under poor environmental conditions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it would be unfair to compare them with their White classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since many African-American children are raised by their mothers, there is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lack of male role models in their households to follow through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teachers should be partially blamed for the existing academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement gap between African-American and White students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American parents should be partially responsible for the existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic achievement gap between their children and their White classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure is a factor which appears to have a significantly negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect on academic achievement of African-American children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of appropriate self-esteem and/or necessary self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among African-American children that may cause the existing achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since African-American and White students are not treated equally, it may</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause the academic achievement gap between the two groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of necessary involvement and participation of African-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American parents in their children’s educational accomplishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers need to consider their job as a responsibility to teach with love,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kindness, and fairness equally to all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many teachers are not appropriately trained to deal with the problem of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a high expectation on the part of African-American parents for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the academic achievement of their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of necessary relationship between African-American parents and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school concerning the academic achievement of their children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the short comments listed above, a number of the participant made detailed comments and elaborated more thoroughly on the issue of existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White children. Their comments are directly quoted here in order to avoid any personal bias on the part of the researcher:

1. In general, White students may receive a better education due to the fact that their parents may be more involved with their children’s education. They may live in better neighborhoods where more tax monies are put toward schools and education. Family structure may also be different. Many Black males lack role models for them to be encouraged by to follow through. My son works hard in school even though his parents are separated because we still nurture him and set expectations and limits on him. He already knows his education is very important to succeed as an adult. We both are positive role models for our son. We openly talk to him about moral values and everything in between.

2. There are differences in the learning of African-American and White children because of the environment and the lifestyles. Certain areas have a more advantaged learning system. Others are in an environment where there are a lot of Blacks, where the teachers are fed up in dealing with the environment, where the parents don’t care to spend additional time with their children, and where the children are very disrespectful to others and do not want to listen to the people outside of the household. The reason that I answered a lot of questions “somewhat agree” is because I work so much that I don’t take the time that I should with them.
3. I think most African-American boys are viewed as being lazy or not motivated when it comes to learning. I don’t think they are pushed or challenged enough because some teachers feel Blacks are not capable of doing the work. I think a lot of factors come into play. Often times African-American boys are labeled especially if they come from a single-parent household.

4. I believe the major cause of the existing achievement gap between African-American children and White children is lack of parent participation. Single parents don’t make the time to contribute and be a part of their children’s educational experience. You have to continuously encourage your children that education is the single most important gift they can give to themselves, their community, and their country.

5. I suggest that lifestyles and quality of life have a noticeable impact on the education of children, especially African-American males. Having to concern themselves with adult concerns steals their innocence and diverts their focus. If their home lives are in disarray, what they witness at school and if you have no one who could relate or be empathetic to your circumstances, it is very difficult to feel safe and secure. As a parent of a young male, I have noticed a change in his demeanor. He seems to be very aware of what is fair and reasonable and constantly tests to see if love or concern is still available when he is unfair and unreasonable. Every day it is difficult to raise a God-fearing, respectful, assertive, and loving young man.

6. There are many occasions that a White teacher considers a Black student as a problem child before intervention to understand why a behavior exists and before trying to make
necessary efforts to remedy such behavior. However, most of the time a Black teacher understands a Black student’s background and where he is coming from; and thus relates to him better without establishing an attitude. Being a Jamaican and not knowing much about racism, my children or my grand children did not bother to challenge their competitive educational accomplishments, because they have been raised to be color blind and because I personally believe all men are created equally to occupy the land as God feels best for everyone.

Taken as a whole, the findings indicate that those parents who responded to this particular question believed that the academic achievement gap between African-American children and their White counterparts is largely impacted by a number of socioeconomic factors including single-parent family structure, peer pressure, lack of appropriate self-esteem and/or necessary self-confidence among African-American children, poor educational environment, lack of equal educational opportunity, and little participation in their children’s educational accomplishment due to financial restraints, job-related obligations, and other family commitments.

Examining the Second Research Question

**Research Question.** Is there a relationship between the socioeconomic status of the participating parents as defined in terms of occupation, family income, level of education, family structure, the sex and age of siblings living in the household, and receiving Title I support services and their perceptions regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students?
Findings. The socioeconomic factors included in this study are occupation, family income, level of education, family structure, number of siblings in the household, and whether their children receive Title I support services in reading and math. The responses of the participating parents to these factors are analyzed in order to provide answer to this research question.

Occupation. Of the total 35 parents, five were either retired or unemployed, three were housewives, two were college students, four were holding two different jobs, and the remaining twenty-one were holding a single job. Those with two different occupations reported to have the following job titles: one of them was a social worker and a customer relations representative, one was a teacher’s aide and a part-time nurse, one was a school administrator and a part-time office assistant, and the remaining individual was a receptionist and a billing clerk. The other twenty-one participants included three licenced practical nurses, two dietary aide employees, two administrative assistants, a law enforcement officer, an immigration officer, a security officer, a medical lab technician, a quality control lab technician, a teacher’s aide, a senior clerk specialist, an office secretary, a post office clerk, a night shift supervisor, a bus monitor, a bus driver, a security guard, and a cook. These findings indicate that a majority of the parents who participated in this study were typically working as para-professionals, semi-professionals, or in lower wage occupations.

Family Income. A distribution of the annual family income of the participating parents is presented in Table 6. The reported family incomes are distributed
as follows: about 11.4% reported annual family incomes of less than $10,000; 22.9% reported annual family incomes of $10,000 to $15,000; another 22.9% reported annual family incomes of $15,000 to $30,000; 31.4% reported annual family incomes of $30,000 to $50,000; and the remaining 11.4% reported annual family incomes of more than $50,000. A combination of these figures indicates that approximately 57% of the participating parents reported annual family incomes of less than $30,000.

Table 6. Number and percentage of the participating parents by family income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Family Income</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 to $15,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 to $30,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 to $50,000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $50,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level of Education.** Table 7 presents a distribution of the participating parents' level of education. As may be seen, the findings indicate that only 11.4% of the parents had no high school diploma, while 40.0% reported holding high school diploma, 28.6% had some post-secondary education, and the remaining 20.0% reported holding college degrees. A combination of these figures indicates that more than 50% of the participating parents had no post-secondary education.
Table 7. Number and percentage of the participating parents by level of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some post-secondary education</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Structure. As shown in Table 8, the participating parents represented a variety of family structure: eighteen were single-parent female head of household (mother); two were single-parent male head of household (father); three were single-parent female grandmother/guardian; one was single-parent male grandfather/guardian; eight were two-parent male and female (natural parents); one was two-parent male and female grandparents/guardians; and two were two-parent natural mother and step father. A combination of these figures indicates that nearly 69% of the respondents were living in some single parent type household.

Table 8. Number and percentage of the participating parents by family structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent female head of household (mother)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent male head of household (father)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent female grandmother/guardian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent male grandfather/guardian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent male and female (natural parents)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent male and female grandparents/guardians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-parent natural mother and step father</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Number of Siblings Living in the Household. In response to the question of how many siblings are currently living in their households, of the total of 35 parents, three indicated having no siblings in their households, nine indicated having only one sibling, eight replied two siblings, nine had three siblings living with them, three had four siblings in their household, two indicated they have five siblings, and only one reported having six siblings in their households. Based on an analysis of the responses, the average number of siblings living in each household is a little more than two. Table 9 presents a breakdown of the number and percentage of siblings living in the households according to age and sex. The findings indicate that of the total 80 siblings reported by the participating parents that are living in the household, 42 were males and the remaining 38 were females. The findings also indicate that of these total 80 siblings, 10 fell in the age group of 5-years or younger (4 males and 6 females), 28 of them were between 5 to 10 years of age (18 males and 10 females), 24 cases fell in the 11 to 15 years of age (13 males and 11 females), 13 others were between 16 to 20 years of age (5 males and 8 females), and the remaining 5 cases were over 20 years of age (2 males and 3 females).

Table 9. A Breakdown of the number of siblings living in the household by sex and age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male Siblings</th>
<th>Female Siblings</th>
<th>Total Siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or younger</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years or older</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Title I Support Services. Of the total 35 participating parents seven indicated their children are currently receiving Title I support services in reading and five indicated their children are currently receiving Title I support services in math.

Examining the Third Research Question

Research Question. What are the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences while in school?

Findings. Table 10 presents perceptions of the parents regarding their own experiences while they were going to school. As may be seen, in response to the question of the extent to which they liked school when they were going school, 60.0% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed, 25.7% showed a moderate degree of agreement, and the remaining 14.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Conversely, in response to the question of the extent to which they did not like school, only 14.3% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed, 11.4% showed a moderate degree of agreement, and the remaining 74.3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. In response to the question of whether they received good grades when they were going school, 51.4% either agreed or strongly agreed, 37.1% showed a moderate degree of agreement, 11.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Conversely, in response to the question of whether they received poor grades, only 8.6% either agreed or strongly agreed, 11.4% showed a moderate degree of agreement, and the remaining 80.0% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. As may be seen, only 60% of the students indicated that they like school and only 51.4% indicated that they receive good grades.
Table 10. Perceptions of the participating parents regarding their own experiences while they were attending school.

| When I was a student: | Agree | | | Somewhat Agree | | | Disagree |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|-------|
|                       | Number| Percent| Number| Percent| Number| Percent|
| I liked school        | 21    | 60.0   | 9     | 25.7   | 5     | 14.3   |
| I did not like school | 5     | 14.3   | 4     | 11.4   | 26    | 74.3   |
| I got good grades     | 18    | 51.4   | 13    | 37.1   | 4     | 11.4   |
| I got poor grades     | 3     | 8.6    | 4     | 11.4   | 28    | 80.0   |

Examining the Fourth Research Question

**Research Question.** What are the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement?

**Findings.** Analysis of the data presented in Table 11 reveals that most of the participating parents believed they significantly contributed to their children’s learning activities in the home. In fact, 88.6% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they contributed significantly to in-home learning of their children by stressing the importance of a good education to them; 77.1% indicated a significant contribution in helping their children to do their homework; 74.3% indicated a significant contribution in checking their children’s homework; 71.4% indicated that they discuss with their children what is going on in school; 68.8% indicated that in the home, they read to their children; and 60.0% indicated that they have their children read to them. Only 8.6% reported that they do nothing special in supporting their children’s learning in the home.
Table 11. Perceptions of the participating parents in regard to the relationship to their contribution to their children’s learning activities in home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In learning my child in our home:</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I discuss what is going on in school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check my child’s homework</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help my child with his homework</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stress the importance of education</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have my child read to me</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read to my child</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do nothing special</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examining the Fifth Research Question

Research Question. What are the parents’ perceptions of their relationship with their children’s school?

Findings. Table 12 presents the perceptions of the parents related to family and school relationship. The findings indicate that 88.6% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that a good parent/teacher relationship contributes to good academic performance of their children; 82.9% of the parents believe that how their children’s teachers feel about their children impacts their performance; 80.0% felt the school is doing a good job educating their children; and 60.0% maintain regular contacts with their children’s teachers to review their academic progress. However, only 22.9% believed that African-American boys learn better from teachers of the same ethnicity; 31.4% indicated they usually leave most of their children’s learning activities up to their teachers; and 37.1% believed that African-American boys learn differently than White boys.
Table 12. Perceptions of the participating parents about family and school relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In regard to family/school relationship:</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the school is doing a good job</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s learning is up to his teacher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective regular contact with teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective parent/teacher relationship</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of my child’s teacher feeling</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect of teachers of the same ethnicity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child learns differently than Whites</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examining the Sixth Research Question

**Research Question.** How do the students perceive their academic achievements in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters?

**Findings.** As reflected in Table 13, the students perceived their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters as follows:

A. **What do you do best?** The findings indicate that 41.9% of the participating students replied math, 20.4% indicated writing, 17.2% said reading, 12.9% replied science, and 7.5% believed that they do best in other subject matters.

B. **What do you like to do best?** Math was found to be liked by 45.2% of the students, followed in order by 19.4% who favored reading, 15.1% who favored science, 12.9% who favored writing, and 7.5% who favored other subject matters.

C. **What does your teacher tell you that you do best?** Based on the findings, 35.5% of the students indicated that their teachers tell them that they do best in
math, 22.6% indicated reading, 20.4% replied writing, 15.1% indicated other subjects, and 6.5% indicated that their teachers tell them that they do best in science.

**D. What do others tell you that you do best?** The findings indicate that 34.4% of the participating students replied that others tell them that they do best in math, 20.4% indicated reading, 17.2% replied writing, 15.1% indicated other subject matters, and the remaining 12.9% indicated that others tell them that they do best in science.

Overall, math was found to be the most favorable subject for the students, followed in order by reading, writing, science, and other subject matters.

Table 13. Perceptions of students about what do: (A) they do best? (B) they like to do best? (C) their teachers tell them they do best? and (D) others tell them they do best?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing Best</th>
<th>Question A</th>
<th>Question B</th>
<th>Question C</th>
<th>Question D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Testing the Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses formulated for the study are examined in this part through the use of appropriate statistical procedures. The null hypotheses were tested at the selected 0.05 level of significance by utilizing: (a) the Pearson Correlation technique for the first three hypotheses, (b) the Chi-Square test of comparison for the fourth
hypothesis, and the one-way Analysis of Variance along with the Scheffe’ Test of post-hoc comparison for independent means for the remaining two research hypotheses. The following format was adopted to examine each research hypothesis: (a) statement of the hypothesis in the null form, (b) tabulation and presentation of the statistical results, (c) test of the null hypothesis at the selected level of significance, and (d) interpretation of the significant findings based on the rejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis.

**Examining the First Research Hypothesis**

**Research Hypothesis.** Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences.

**Null Hypothesis.** Family income, level of education, and age are not significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences.

**Findings.** The Pearson correlation along with its test of significance at the 0.05 level was used to examine the null hypothesis. Table 14 presents correlations of age, education, and family income with the perceptions of the parents regarding their own academic experiences while they were attending school. The findings related to each correlation are separately discussed as follows:

**Age.** This factor was significantly and positively correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they liked school (r = +0.49, p = 0.003 < 0.05); and (b) the extent to which they received good grades in school (r = +0.42, p = 0.013 < 0.05). The positive correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the older the parents were, the more they were found to be satisfied with their
academic experiences while they were attending school. Age was also found to be significant, but negatively, correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they did not like school \( r = -0.46, p = 0.006 < 0.05 \); and (b) the extent to which they did not receive good grades in school \( r = -0.37, p = 0.031 < 0.05 \).

However, the negative correlations indicate that the younger the parents were, the more they were found to be dissatisfied with their academic experiences while they were attending school. Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for all four items tested indicating that age was significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted for the same four items.

**Education.** Like age, this factor was also significantly and positively correlated with the perceptions of the parents regarding: (a) the extent to which they liked school \( r = +0.38, p = 0.023 < 0.05 \); and (b) the extent to which they received good grades in school \( r = +0.36, p = 0.033 < 0.05 \). The positive correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the more educated the parents were, the more they were found to be satisfied with their academic experiences while they were attending school.

Education was also found to be significantly, but negatively, correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they did not like school \( r = -0.51, p = 0.002 < 0.05 \); and (b) the extent to which they did not receive good grades in school \( r = -0.41, p = 0.013 < 0.05 \). However, the negative correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the less educated the parents were, the more they were found to be dissatisfied with their academic experiences while they were attending school. Overall,
the findings indicate that the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for all four items tested.

**Family Income.** Family income was significantly and negatively correlated with the parents' perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they did not like school (r = -0.36, p = 0.035 < 0.05); and (b) the extent to which they did not receive good grades in school (r = -0.46, p = 0.005 < 0.05). The negative correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the lower their family income were, the more they were found to be dissatisfied with their academic experiences while they were attending school. However, there were no significant correlations between family income and the parents' perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they liked school (r = +0.28, p = 0.170 > 0.05); and (b) the extent to which they received good grades in school (r = +0.24, p = 0.124 > 0.05). Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for two of the four items tested. The test results indicate that liking school and receiving good grades were not significantly correlated with family income.

Table 14. Correlations of age, education, and income with the parents' perceptions of their own academic experiences while they were attending school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I was a student:</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked school</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not like school</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got good grades</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got poor grade</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols: r = bivariate relationship  p = probability of error in rejecting a null hypothesis

Note: A p-value of less than 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between pairs of variables

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Examining the Second Research Hypothesis

**Research Hypothesis.** Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in the home.

**Null Hypothesis.** Family income, level of education, and age are not significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in the home.

**Findings.** The null hypothesis associated with the research hypothesis was also tested through the use of the Pearson correlation technique along with its test of significance at the 0.05 level. Table 15 presents correlations of age, education, and family income with the perceptions of the parents regarding their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in the home. The findings related to each correlation are separately discussed as follows:

**Age.** This factor was significantly and positively correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they were committed to check their children’s homework (\( r = +0.33, p = 0.049 < 0.05 \)); (b) the extent to which they helped their children with their homework (\( r = +0.34, p = 0.041 < 0.05 \)); (c) the extent to which they had their children read to them (\( r = +0.54, p = 0.001 < 0.05 \)); and (d) the extent to which they read to their children (\( r = +0.52, p = 0.001 < 0.05 \)). The positive correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the older parents were more likely to show commitment to their children’s academic achievement. Age was also significantly,
but negatively, correlated with the parents’ response to the statement: “I do nothing special” \( r = -0.45, p = 0.007 < 0.05 \). However, the negative correlation resulting from analysis of the data indicates that the younger the parents were, the less they showed commitment to their children’s academic achievement. Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for five of the seven items tested.

**Education.** Education was also significantly and positively correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they cared to discuss with their children what is going on in school \( r = +0.37, p = 0.030 < 0.05 \); (b) the extent to which they were committed to check their children’s homework \( r = +0.35, p = 0.042 < 0.05 \); (c) the extent to which they helped their children with their homework \( r = +0.40, p = 0.019 < 0.05 \); (d) the extent to which they had their children read to them \( r = +0.34, p = 0.043 < 0.05 \); and (e) the extent to which they read to their children \( r = +0.44, p = 0.008 < 0.05 \). The positive correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the more educated the parents were, the more they showed commitment to their children’s academic achievement. Education was also significantly, but negatively, correlated with the parents’ perceptions in response to the statement: “I do nothing special” \( r = -0.38, p = 0.025 < 0.05 \). However, the negative correlation resulting from analysis of the data indicates that the less educated the parents were, the less they showed commitment to their children’s academic achievement. Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for six of the seven items tested.

**Family Income.** There were no significant correlations between family income and the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they cared to
discuss with their children what is going on in school \( (r = +0.19, p = 0.270 > 0.05) \); (b) the extent to which they were committed to check their children’s homework \( (r = +0.22, p = 0.202 > 0.05) \); (c) the extent to which they helped their children with their homework \( (r = +0.20, p = 0.255 > 0.05) \); (d) the extent to which they express the importance of a good education to their children \( (r = +0.08, p = 0.634 > 0.05) \); (e) the extent to which they had their children read to them \( (r = +0.24, p = 0.170 > 0.05) \); and (f) the extent to which they read to their children \( (r = +0.25, p = 0.143 > 0.05) \). However, family income was found to be significantly and negatively correlated with the parents’ perceptions in response to the statement: “I do nothing special” \( (r = -0.51, p = 0.002 < 0.05) \). The negative correlation resulting from analysis of the data indicates that the higher income parents are less likely to “do nothing special” for their children’s academic achievement.

Table 15. Correlations of age, education, and income with the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children academic achievement in home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In relationship to learning, in home:</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>( r )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I discuss what is going on in school</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check my child’s homework</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help my child with his homework</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stress the importance of education</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have my child read to me</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read to my child</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do nothing special</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols: \( r \) = bivariate relationship \( p \) = probability of error in rejecting a null hypothesis

Note: A p-value of less than 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between pairs of variables
Examining the Third Research Hypothesis

**Research Hypothesis.** Family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of the relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement.

**Null Hypothesis.** Family income, level of education, and age are not significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of the relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement.

**Findings.** The Pearson correlation technique along with its test of significance at the 0.05 level was utilized to examine the null hypothesis derived from the research hypothesis. Table 16 presents correlations of age, education, and family income with the parents’ perceptions of the relationship with their children’s school. The findings related to each correlation are separately discussed as follows:

**Age.** There were significant and positive correlations between age and the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they maintained regular contact with their children’s teachers to review their progress ($r = +0.46, p = 0.006 < 0.05$); and (b) the extent to which they believe a good parent/teacher relationship contributes to good academic performance of the children ($r = +0.60, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The positive correlations resulting from analysis of the data indicate that the older the parents were, the more they believe their relationship with school is important in academic achievement of their children. Age was also found to be significantly, but negatively, correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding the extent to which they agreed to leave their children’s
learning up to their teachers (r = -0.34, p = 0.044 < 0.05). The negative correlation resulting from analysis of the data indicates that the younger the parents were, the more they left their children’s learning up to their teachers. However, the findings revealed no significant relationships between age and the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they believed the school is doing a good job educating their children (r = +0.17, p = 0.340 > 0.05); (b) the extent to which they believed how their children’s teachers feel about them impacts their academic performance (r = +0.26, p = 0.130 > 0.05); (c) the extent to which they believed African-American boys learn better from teachers of the same race (r = -0.15, p = 0.376 > 0.05); and (d) the extent to which they believed African-American boys learn differently from White boys (r = +0.02, p = 0.917 > 0.05). Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for three of the seven items related to parental relationship with the school. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted for the same three items.

**Education.** There was a significant and positive correlation between parents’ education and their perceptions regarding the extent to which they maintained regular contact with their children’s teachers to review their progress (r = +0.43, p = 0.009 < 0.05). This positive correlation indicates that the more educated parents maintained regular contact with their children’s teachers to review their progress. A significant and negative correlation was also found between parents’ education and their perceptions regarding the extent to which they have left their children’s learning is up to their teachers (r = -0.44, p = 0.009 < 0.05). This negative correlation indicates that the less educated the parents were, the more they left their children’s learning up to their
teachers. However, the findings revealed no significant relationships between parents’ education and their perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they believed the school is doing a good job educating their children \( (r = +0.02, p = 0.910 > 0.05) \); (b) the extent to which a good parent/teacher relationship contributes to good academic performance of the children \( (r = +0.32, p = 0.058 > 0.05) \); (c) the extent to which they believed their children’s teachers feel about them impacts their academic performance \( (r = +0.10, p = 0.556 > 0.05) \); (d) the extent to which they believed African-American boys learn better from teachers of the same race \( (r = -0.06, p = 0.746 > 0.05) \); and (e) the extent to which they believed African-American boys learn differently from White boys \( (r = +0.09, p = 0.603 > 0.05) \). Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for two of the seven items tested.

**Family Income.** Family income was found to be significantly and positively correlated with the parents’ perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they maintained regular contact with their children’s teachers to review their progress \( (r = +0.47, p = 0.005 < 0.05) \). This positive correlation indicates that the higher their family income, the more they maintained regular contact with their children’s teachers to review their progress. However, the findings revealed no significant relationships between parents’ income and their perceptions regarding: (a) the extent to which they believed the school is doing a good job educating their children \( (r = +0.11, p = 0.528 > 0.05) \); (b) agreed to leave their children’s learning is up to their teachers \( (r = -0.16, p = 0.359 > 0.05) \); (c) the extent to which a good parent/teacher relationship contributes to good academic performance of the children \( (r = +0.13, p = 0.455 > 0.05) \); (d) the extent to
which they believed how their children’s teachers feel about them impacts their academic performance \( (r = +0.09, p = 0.591 > 0.05) \); (e) the extent to which they believed African-American boys learn better from teachers of the same race \( (r = -0.07, p = 0.672 > 0.05) \); and (f) the extent to which they believed African-American boys learn differently from White boys \( (r = +0.05, p = 0.783 > 0.05) \). The null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for only one of the seven items related to parental relationship with the school. The research hypothesis was only accepted for the same item.

Table 16. Correlations of age, education, and income with the parents’ perceptions regarding their relationship with their children’s school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family/school relationship:</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
<th>Education</th>
<th></th>
<th>Income</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the school is doing a good job</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.340</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.910</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly contact with my child’s teacher</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/teacher relationship is important</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How teacher feels about a child is important</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black boys learn differently than White boys</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.603</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols: \( r \) = bivariate relationship \quad p = probability of error in rejecting a null hypothesis

Note: A p-value of less than 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between pairs of variables

**Examining the Fourth Research Hypothesis**

**Research Hypothesis.** There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters.
**Null Hypothesis.** There are no significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters.

**Findings.** The Chi-Square test of comparison at the 0.05 level of significance was used to test the null hypothesis derived from the research hypothesis. The statistical test for each of the four questions involved in the hypothesis is presented as follows:

1. **What do you do best?** Table 17 presents the resulting statistical test in comparison of the responses of the third graders and fifth graders to this question. The findings indicate that the null hypothesis is rejected for only one of the five academic subjects tested and the research hypothesis was accepted for the same item. For each academic subject, the findings are separately presented as follows:

   **A. Reading.** In this comparison, 23.8% of the third graders and 11.8% of the fifth graders indicated that they do best in reading. Therefore, the resulting statistical test revealed a significant difference in the percentage of the two groups indicating that a larger proportion of the third grade students believed that they do best in reading ($\chi^2 = 4.04, p = 0.045 < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

   **B. Writing.** In this comparison, 16.7% of the third graders and 23.5% of the fifth graders indicated that they do best in writing. The resulting statistical test, however, did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who believed that they do best in writing ($\chi^2 = 1.15, p = 0.167 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.
C. Math. In this comparison, 40.5% of the third graders and 43.1% of the fifth graders indicated that they do best in mathematics. However, the resulting statistical test did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who believed that they do best in math ($\chi^2 = 1.15, p = 0.167 > 0.05$).

D. Science. In this comparison, 11.9% of the third graders and 13.7% of the fifth graders indicated that they do best in science. The resulting statistical test, however, did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who believed that they do best in science ($\chi^2 = 0.13, p = 0.589 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

E. Other Subjects. In this comparison, 7.1% of the third graders and 7.8% of the fifth graders indicated that they do best in other academic subjects. However, the test did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who believed that they do best in other academic subjects ($\chi^2 = 0.03, p = 0.986 > 0.05$).

Table 17. A comparison of the perceptions of third and fifth grade students regarding what they think they do best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing Best</th>
<th>Third Graders</th>
<th>Fifth Graders</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between the two groups.
2. **What do you like to do best?** Table 18 presents the resulting statistical test in comparison of the responses of the third graders and fifth graders to this question. Based on the data in this table, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for only one of the five academic subjects tested. For each academic subject the findings are presented separately as follows:

**A. Reading.** In this comparison, 26.2% of the third graders and 13.7% of the fifth graders indicated that they like reading the best. Therefore, the resulting statistical test revealed a significant difference in the percentage of the two groups indicating that a larger proportion of the third grade students like to do reading the best ($\chi^2 = 3.92$, $p = 0.048 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**B. Writing.** In this comparison, 14.3% of the third graders and 11.8% of the fifth graders indicated that they like to do best in writing. The resulting statistical test, however, did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who would like do best in writing ($\chi^2 = 0.24$, $p = 0.648 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

**C. Math.** In this comparison, 40.5% of the third graders and 49.0% of the fifth graders indicated that they like to do best in math. The resulting statistical test, however, did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who would like do best in math ($\chi^2 = 0.81$, $p = 0.237 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.
D. **Science.** In this comparison, 11.9% of the third graders and 17.6% of the fifth graders indicated that they like to do best in science. However, the resulting statistical test did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who would like do best in science ($\chi^2 = 1.10$, $p = 0.152 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

E. **Other Subjects.** In this comparison, 7.1% of the third graders and 7.8% of the fifth graders indicated that they like to do best in other academic subjects. However, the resulting statistical test did not reveal a significant difference between the third and fifth graders who like to do best in other academic subjects ($\chi^2 = 0.03$, $p = 0.986 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 18. A comparison of the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding what they like to do best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing Best</th>
<th>Third Graders</th>
<th>Fifth Graders</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

3. **What does your teacher tell you that you do best?** Table 19 presents the resulting statistical test in comparison of the responses of the third graders and fifth graders to this question. According to the data in this table, the null hypothesis was
rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for only two of the five academic subjects tested. For each academic subjects the findings are presented separately as follows:

**A. Reading.** In this comparison, 35.7% of the third graders and 11.8% of the fifth graders indicated their teachers tell them that they do best in reading. Therefore, the resulting statistical test revealed a significant difference in the frequency of the two groups indicating that a larger proportion of the third grade students responded that their teachers tell them that they do best in reading ($\chi^2 = 12.03, p = 0.016 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**B. Writing.** In this comparison, 11.9% of the third graders and 27.5% of the fifth graders indicated their teachers tell them that they do best in writing. Therefore, the resulting statistical test revealed a significant difference in the percentage of the two groups indicating that a larger proportion of the fifth grade students responded that their teachers tell them that they do best in writing ($\chi^2 = 6.18, p = 0.031 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**C. Math.** In this comparison, 28.6% of the third graders and 41.2% of the fifth graders indicated their teachers tell them that they do best in math. However, the test results did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the percentage of the third and fifth graders who responded that their teachers tell them that they do best in math ($\chi^2 = 2.27, p = 0.085 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

**D. Science.** In this comparison, 4.8% of the third graders and 7.8% of the fifth graders indicated their teachers tell them that they do best in science. The test results
did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who responded that their teachers tell them that they do best in science ($\chi^2 = 0.71, p = 0.270 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

**E. Other Subjects.** In this comparison, 19.0% of the third graders and 11.8% of the fifth graders indicated their teachers tell them that they do best in other academic subjects. However, the test results did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who responded that their teachers tell them that they do best in other academic subjects ($\chi^2 = 1.68, p = 0.114 > 0.05$).

Table 19. A comparison of the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding what their teachers tell them that they do best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing Best</th>
<th>Third Graders</th>
<th>Fifth Graders</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

4. **What do others tell you that you do best?** Table 20 presents the resulting statistical test in comparison of the responses of the third graders and fifth graders to this question. According to the data in this table, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for only one of the five academic subjects tested. For each academic subject the findings are presented separately as follows:
A. Reading. In this comparison, 26.2% of the third graders and 15.7% of the fifth graders indicated others tell them that they do best in reading. However, the test results did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who responded that others tell them that they do best in reading ($\chi^2 = 2.63$, $p = 0.073 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

B. Writing. In this comparison, 19.0% of the third graders and 15.7% of the fifth graders indicated others tell them that they do best in writing. The test results, however, did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who responded that others tell them that they do best in writing ($\chi^2 = 0.31$, $p = 0.916 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

C. Math. In this comparison, 33.3% of the third graders and 35.3% of the fifth graders indicated others tell them that they do best in math. However, the test results did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who responded that others tell them that they do best in math ($\chi^2 = 0.06$, $p = 0.895 > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

D. Science. In this comparison, 7.1% of the third graders and 17.6% of the fifth graders indicated others tell them that they do best in science. Therefore, the resulting statistical test revealed a significant difference in the percentage of the two groups indicating that a larger proportion of the fifth grade students responded that others tell them that they do best in science ($\chi^2 = 4.46$, $p = 0.043 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted.
E. Other Subjects. In this comparison, 14.3% of the third graders and 15.7% of the fifth graders indicated others tell them that they do best in other academic subjects. The resulting statistical test, however, did not reveal a significant difference between the percentage of the two groups who responded that others tell them that they do best in other academic subjects ($\chi^2 = 0.07, p = 0.796 > 0.05$).

Table 20. A comparison of the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding what others tell them that they do best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing Best</th>
<th>Third Graders</th>
<th>Fifth Graders</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Examining the Fifth Research Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis. There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

Null Hypothesis. There are no significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

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**Findings.** The null hypothesis associated with the research hypothesis was also examined through the use of the one-way Analysis of Variance for comparison of two independent means at the 0.05 level of significance. According to the data in Table 21, the test results revealed a significant difference between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the extent to which they believe that teachers show favoritism towards White male students ($F = 3.851$, $p = 0.048 < 0.05$). In comparison of the two computed mean scores, it was found that while both groups showed some degrees of disagreement in response to the aforementioned statements, the third graders tended to show a relatively higher degree of disagreement. The resulting statistical test also revealed a significant difference between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the extent to which they believe teachers show favoritism towards Black male students ($F = 3.982$, $p = 0.045 < 0.05$). In this comparison, it was found that while both groups showed some degrees of disagreement in response to the aforementioned statements, the fifth graders tended to show a relatively higher degree of disagreement. However, the test results revealed no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups regarding the extent to which they believe: (a) students learn better from teachers who come from the same race ($F = 0.001$, $p = 0.996 > 0.05$); (b) White male students are smarter than Black males ($F = 2.302$, $p = 0.133 > 0.05$); (c) there is a difference between the way Black males and White males learn ($F = 0.123$, $p = 0.726 > 0.05$); (d) White males work harder than Black male students ($F = 2.190$, $p = 0.142 > 0.05$); (e) Teachers show favoritism towards students who come from the same race ($F = 1.708$, $p = 0.195 > 0.05$); (f) Black males work harder than White male students.
(F = 0.042, p = 0.839 > 0.05); and (g) Black male students are smarter than White males (F = 0.660, p = 0.419 > 0.05). Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance for only two of the nine items tested. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted for the same two items.

Table 21. A one-way analysis of variance to compare the perceptions of third and fifth grade students about achievement gap between black and white students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Third Grade and Fifth Grade Students</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students learn better from teachers who come from the same race.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male students are smarter than Black males.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>2.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a difference between the way Black males and White males learn.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers show favoritism towards White male students.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>3.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers show favoritism towards Black male students.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>3.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White males work harder than Black male students.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>2.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers show favoritism towards students from the same race</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black males work harder than White male students.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black male students are smarter than White males.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols: F = a determinant of difference  p = probability of error in rejecting a null hypothesis
Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between two computed means
Examining the Sixth Research Hypothesis

**Research Hypothesis.** There are significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in school.

**Null Hypothesis.** There are no significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in school.

**Findings.** The one-way Analysis of Variance for comparison of two independent means at the 0.05 level of significance was used to examine the null hypothesis derived from the research hypothesis. As reflected in Table 22, the test results revealed significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding: (a) the extent to which they believe even when they work hard, they receive poor grades ($F = 5.056, p = 0.027 < 0.05$); and (b) the extent to which they think they receive poor grades because their teachers do not think they are smart ($F = 3.720, p = 0.049 < 0.05$). In comparison of the two computed mean scores, it was found that while both groups showed some degrees of disagreement in response to the aforementioned statements (i.e., the extent to which they think they receive poor grades because their teachers do not think they are smart), the fifth graders tended to show a relatively higher degree of disagreement. However, the test results revealed no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups in comparing their responses to the following statements: (a) I am a smart person ($F = 0.006, p = 0.937 > 0.05$); (b) My teacher thinks I am smart ($F = 0.112, p = 0.739 > 0.05$); (c) I want my friends to think I am smart ($F = 0.168, p = 0.682 > 0.05$); (d) When I work hard, I get good grades ($F = 0.053, p = 0.819 > 0.05$); (e) I get
poor grades because I do not put forth my best effort (F = 0.028, p = 0.867 > 0.05); (f) I get good grades because my teacher thinks I am smart (F = 2.504, p = 0.117 > 0.05); (g) I get good grades because I think I am a smart person (F = 0.287, p = 0.594 > 0.05); (h) I feel embarrassed when I get poor grades (F = 1.153, p = 0.286 > 0.05); (i) I can tell if a teacher likes me (F = 0.017, p = 0.896 > 0.05); (j) My teacher tells me when I do good work (F = 0.028, p = 0.869 > 0.05); (k) I get good grades in school because I like my teacher (F = 0.152, p = 0.698 > 0.05); (l) I get good grades in school because my teacher likes me (F = 0.418, p = 0.520 > 0.05); (m) Students learn better from teachers who like them (F = 0.372, p = 0.543 > 0.05); (n) I can tell if a teacher doesn’t like me (t = 1.940, p = 0.167 > 0.05); and (o) I work harder when I believe the teacher likes me (F = 2.695, p = 0.104 > 0.05). Overall, the null hypothesis was rejected for only two of the items tested.

Table 22. A one-way analysis of variance to compare the perceptions of third and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Third Graders and Fifth Graders</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am a smart person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher thinks I am smart.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my friends to think I am smart.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I work hard, I get good grades.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get poor grades because I don’t make my best effort.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols: F = a determinant of difference, p = probability of error in rejecting a null hypothesis

Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between two computed means
Table 22 (Continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Third Grade and Fifth Grade Students</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get good grades because my teacher feels I am smart</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>2.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even when I work hard, I get poor grades in school.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>5.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get good grades because I think I am a smart person.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel embarrassed when I get poor grades.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can tell if a teacher likes me.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher tells me when I do good work.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get good grades in school because I like my teacher.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get poor grades because my teacher does not think I am smart.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>3.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get good grades in school because my teacher likes me.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students learn better from teachers who like them.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can tell if a teacher doesn’t like me.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work harder when I believe the teacher likes me.</td>
<td>Third Graders</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols: F = a determinant of difference  p = probability of error in rejecting a null hypothesis
Note: An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference between two computed means
Summary

The data collected for the study were analyzed in this chapter through the use of appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method was used to examine the first research question based on the responses of the participating parents to the open-ended item of the questionnaire asking them to indicate the major causes of the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. Most responses were based on socioeconomic status of the African-American families. The quantitative analysis of the data was accomplished through the use of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The descriptive analysis of the data was achieved by examining the remaining five research questions through the use of frequency distribution of the responses to the related items of the survey instruments as well as certain measures of central tendency (i.e., mean scores) and dispersion (i.e., standard deviation of scores). The inferential analysis of the data was accomplished by testing the null hypotheses associated with the research hypotheses. The first three hypotheses were tested using the Pearson correlation technique along with its test of significance. The fourth hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square test of comparison. The remaining two hypotheses were examined through the use of the one-way Analysis of Variance for independent means. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Overall, the findings indicate that certain socioeconomic factors play a significant role in the academic achievement gap between African-American children and their White counterparts. The findings also indicate significant differences between the third
grade and fifth grade students with regard to their academic achievement in reading, writing, and science. The findings further indicate that African-American children who participated in this study did not have an impression that: (a) teachers show favoritism toward Black or White students; and (b) even when they work hard, they get poor grades.

A discussion of the findings is presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly,
to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better.
— Carter G. Woodson —

This study was conducted to analyze the perceptions of African-American male students and their parents concerning the impact of the academic achievement gap between Black and White students. The study included six elementary schools serving predominantly minority students in an urban school district. Because of the racial makeup of the schools, it was hoped that there would be large population of African-American male students in the third and fifth grades at the selected schools in this study. However, after visiting the six schools, the researcher learned the proportion of the third and fifth grade African-American male students was much lower than expected. The population of African-American males enrolled in the mainstream third and fifth grades totaled only 100 cases, among them 93 participated in this study. This is relevant to the difficulty in securing a larger number of participants.

It is important to find out where the majority of these students are and how they are being educated. One of the possibilities is that a large number of them may be in special education. This is an issue which deserves further investigation. An examination
of the academic placement and enrollment of African-American males may help to focus more attention on the relegation of African-American male students into special education and other types of alternative programs. A further investigation of the school placement of African-American students may also help provide a connection between the educational inequities and the over-representation of African-American students in special education classes.

Discussions with other educators about the over-representation of African-American students in special education and the underachievement of the African-American students, Black males in particular, have led to the conclusion that the academic underachievement of Black males and their limited enrollment in mainstream classrooms is directly related to cultural differences between teachers and students. Parents participated in this study also believed that teachers’ practices and insensitivity to culturally different students negatively affect the achievement of Black males. In view of the demographic information uncovered in this study, we must focus attention on the placement of African-American students, particularly Black males.

A review of the socioeconomic data revealed that although the majority of students were of low socioeconomic status, they failed to make a connection between their socioeconomic status and the disparity in the academic achievement gap. Even though research has shown a disparity between the academic performance of African-American students on standardized tests and the academic performance of their White peers, the students participating in this research perceived themselves to be knowledgeable, particularly in the area of mathematics, and comparatively equal in
academic achievement. This could perhaps be a manifestation of the less challenging work that Black students tend to receive from teachers who do not believe that Black students possess the innate intelligence to engage in the more challenging course work that White students receive.

There is a contradiction between Black students’ perceptions of their academic performance and the actual data reporting their lack of educational parity with their White peers on standardized tests. This indicates that either they are being misinformed by their teachers or they fail to comprehend the meaning of academic success. These students do not realize that the quality of their education differs from that of their White peers. Therefore, most of them, do not even know that they are receiving an inferior education.

In contrast, the data revealed that parents’ perceptions of the achievement gap differed from that of their children. Only five of the thirty-five respondents believed that there is no major academic achievement gap between African-American and White children. Fifteen parents responded to the open-end questions concerning this issue. The richness of their perceptions was captured through their written responses. Parent respondents perceived that as a result of their low socioeconomic status, their children fail to have access to the same educational opportunities as do many White students. They also recognized that low socioeconomic status is a factor contributing to African-American children failing to receive high-level and quality educational opportunities. While the majority of parents believe their relationship with the school contributes to good academic achievement for their children, the majority indicated they abdicated the responsibility of educating their children to teachers. However, they consistently remind
their children of the need to get a “good education.” It is the researcher’s view that neither students nor parents understand the meaning of a “good education.” Many African-Americans, and other minorities, hold the belief that a good education simply means attending school regularly, exhibiting controlled and non-threading behaviors (challenging the teachers to respect students and acknowledge them as intelligent individuals), completing inconsequential homework assignments, and simply being promoted to the next grade (even though they may be able to read competently).

However, according to Miller (1995), as research has shown, many African-American children are being promoted through school systems and graduating from high schools with inferior and unmarketable skills.

If we are to reverse the phenomenon of the underachievement of minority students, particularly African-American males, it is essential that teachers begin to re-evaluate their approaches to teaching culturally and economically different students in diverse ways. Teachers must transform their beliefs concerning the abilities of African-American students and view them as capable and intelligent human beings. It is imperative that teachers and parents alike begin to encourage students to put forth their best effort in all of life’s endeavors. African-American children must possess greater self-esteem and demonstrate the self-confidence in their worthiness and their ability to attain a high level of academic proficiency. Otherwise, we will remain “A Nation at Risk.”

There are a number of findings as a result of examining the research questions and testing the research hypotheses in this study that are somewhat consistent with those reflected in the literature review. First, in response to the survey instrument, it was found
that: (a) many African-American parents were either unemployed or were working as
para-professionals, semi-professionals, or in lower level occupations with low annual
incomes; (b) most of them did not have any post-secondary education; and (c) many were
single parents. As reflected in the findings of this study, these are some contributing
factors instrumental to the academic achievement gap between African-American
children and their White counterparts. The findings are also somewhat consistent with a
number of findings revealed in the literature (Anderson, 1988; Comer, 1988; Jencks &

Second, as perceived by the African-American parents participated in this study,
the typical causes of academic achievement gap between Black and White children are:
(a) the negative impact of a low socioeconomic status of African-American families on
their children’s academic achievement and their future roles in the society; (b) a lack of
legitimate equal educational opportunities for African-American children; (c) a lack of
necessary male role models in some African-American families to provide
encouragement for their children’s academic achievement; (d) a greater peer pressure
among African-American children; (e) a lack of appropriate self-esteem and/or necessary
self-confidence levels among African-American children; (f) little involvement and
participation of African-American parents in their children’s educational
accomplishment; (g) a growing number of African-American children with single-parent
families; (h) a lack of appropriate expectation on the part of African-American parents for
the academic achievement of their children; (i) a lack of appropriate expectation on the
part of some teachers for the academic achievement of African-American students; and (j)
lack of adequate relationships between African-American parents and the school concerning the academic achievement of their children. Basically, similar types of problems have been identified as the major causes of academic achievement gap by a number of other researchers as cited in the literature review (Clark, 1965; Coleman, 1966; Edmonds, 1979; Hammond, 1983; Irvine, 1880; Kennedy et al., 1986; Kluegel, 1990; Kunjufu, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 1995). While these are some problems confronting both African-American families and a majority of the school systems throughout the nation, obviously, one cannot find a simple or immediate solution to the underachievement problems of African-American students. However, considering a long term solution to these problems, there is a need for full participation of African-American families, school districts, as well as local, state, and federal governments.

Third, although many African-American parents indicated that they significantly contributed to their children’s learning activities by stressing the importance of a good education to them and by helping them to do their homework, they also believe that their attempts have not been as successful as they expected them to be. As reflected in a research study by Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1988), this is perhaps another reason why low socioeconomic status of African-American plays a significant role in the academic achievement gap between their children and their White counterparts. Furthermore, while a majority of African-American parents agreed that a good parent/teacher relationship can contribute to good academic performance of their children, they argue that such a relationship is sometimes impossible due to their working conditions, time constraints, and their involvement in other family commitments. Studies
of Brophy (1984), Foster (1984), and McCracken (1991) have also reached to similar conclusions. However, realizing the fact that such an argument has been found to be legitimate, school principals may facilitate after school or weekend meetings between parents and teachers to share their views of children’s education and to implement strategies for academic achievement of children. In a publication of the National Committee for Citizens in Education, The Middle School Years: A Parents’ Handbook, Berla, Henderson, and Kerewsky (1989) suggest ways for parents to help improve the achievement of their middle school-age children. More specifically, for lower-income parents, they suggest the following strategies that have been identified as successful: (a) teach parents or guardians how to help children with homework; (b) encourage parents to volunteer in the school; (c) encourage parents to continue their education; (d) provide opportunities for parents to learn with their children; and (e) conduct community education classes in the school.

Fourth, parents’ age and level of education were significantly and positively correlated with: (a) their perceptions of their own academic experiences in school; (b) their commitment to children’s academic achievement in the home; and (c) their relationship with the school concerning their children’s academic achievement. This indicates that the older they were, and the higher their educational credentials were, the more they were satisfied with their own academic experiences in school, their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in the home, and their relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement. This implies that younger parents who are less educated need more assistance by the school concerning their
commitment to children’s education in home and in school. These findings are somewhat consistent with those reflected in studies of McCracken (1991) and Miller (1995).

Fifth, there were significant differences between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, and science. While the third graders indicated performing well in reading, the fifth graders indicated performing well in writing and science. These findings imply that maturity plays a relatively significant role in building confidence among children in order to learn how to write and how to understand the science. Studies of Kunjufu, 1995; and Steele and Aronson, 1995 also have reached to similar conclusions. Significant differences were also found between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in the school. While both groups showed some degree of disagreement to the following statements, the fifth graders tended to show a relatively higher degree of disagreement: “I get poor grades because my teacher doesn’t think I am smart”; and “Even when I work hard, I get poor grades”. Similar findings were also revealed in a number of other studies including those of Berla, Henderson, and Kerewsky (1989); Comer (1998); and Kluegel (1990). These findings indicate that grade level is a significant factor in students’ perceptions of their academic experiences in the school.

Finally, there is little argument about the need to improve our capacity to provide for healthy development and educational success for all children, including and particularly minority students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who live in some of the most adverse inner-city situations. School has been and should continue to be the primary focus in finding ways to improve our capacity to provide healthy
development and educational success for all children and youth. Other efforts surely will come to naught if we fail to offer powerful forms of education in schools. However, significant learning occurs outside schools, and the conditions for learning in schools are greatly influenced by the family and all elements of the community.

The following chapter presents a summary of the study, general conclusions and implications, suggestions for future research, as well as recommendations to school boards, educational policy makers, school administrators, school teachers, parents, African-American community.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter presents a summary of the study, general conclusions and implications derived from the study’s significant findings, recommendations to school boards, to educational policy makers, to school administrators, to school teachers, and to African-American community. The chapter is concluded with several suggestions for future research and the researcher’s concluding remarks.

Summary of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male students and their parents about the academic achievement gap between Black male students and their White counterparts at the elementary school level in urban school districts. The study was also conducted to determine the extent to which certain socioeconomic factors contribute to the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students. In pursuing these objectives, the researcher conducted a survey of African-American students and their parents to determine their perceptions regarding the relationship between socioeconomic factors and the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students.

The data for the study came from two survey instruments developed by the researcher. The first survey was administered to a group of third grade and fifth grade African-American male students who were attending six different elementary schools in
Massachusetts. The target schools were selected because of the large number of African-American students attending each school. The second survey was distributed to a group of parents who agreed to participate in the study.

Qualitative analysis of the data from the survey of parents was used to provide an answer to the first research question by coding, categorizing, and interpreting the responses of the participating parents to the open-ended item of the survey instrument. Quantitative analysis of the data was applied through the use of selected descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Research questions 2 to 6 were examined by descriptive analysis of the data. Inferential analysis of the data was used to test the null hypotheses derived from the six research hypotheses. The findings are summarized as follows:

1. A majority of the African-American parents who participated in this study were found to be of a low socioeconomic status because: (a) those who had a job were typically working as para-professionals, semi-professionals, or in lower level occupations; (b) over 50% of them reported to have less than a $30,000 annual family income; (c) nearly 60% of them were living as some kind of single parent; (d) Only 14.3% of them indicated that their children are currently receiving Title I support services in math, and another 20% indicated their children are currently receiving Title I support services in reading; and (e) more than 50% did not have any post-secondary education.

2. As perceived by the participating parents, the major causes of the existing achievement gap between African-American and White students are that: (a) most African-American children are from single-parent families which makes it hard to
compete with White children who are raised in two-parent families; (b) due to the socioeconomic constraints, African-American parents usually take little or no responsibility for the academic achievement of their children; (c) the system provides less educational opportunities for African-American children in comparison with their White counterparts; (d) since more African-Americans are raised under poor environmental conditions, it would be unfair to compare them with their White classmates; (e) since many African-American children are raised by their mothers, there is a lack of male role models in their households for follow through; (f) school teachers should be partially blamed for the existing academic achievement gap between African-American and White students; (g) African-American parents should be partially responsible for the existing academic achievement gap between their children and their White classmates; (h) peer pressure is a factor which appears to have a significantly negative effect in academic achievement of African-American children; (i) there is a lack of appropriate self-esteem and/or necessary self-confidence among African-American children that may cause the existing achievement gap; (j) since research evidence indicates that African-American and White students are not treated equally in the school districts, it may cause the academic achievement gap between the two groups; (k) there is a lack of necessary involvement and participation of African-American parents in their children’s educational accomplishment; (l) teachers need to consider their job as a responsibility to teach with love, kindness, and fairness equally to all students; (m) many teachers are not appropriately trained to deal with the problem of achievement gap between African-American and White students; (n) lack of a high expectation on the part of African-
American parents for the academic achievement of their children; and (o) lack of necessary relationship between African-American parents and the school concerning the academic achievement of their children.

3. In reflecting their own academic experiences when they were attending school, most of the participating parents indicated that: (a) they liked school, and (b) they received good grades if they worked hard.

4. With regard to their commitment to their children’s academic achievement in the home, most of the parents believed that they significantly contribute to their children’s learning activities by: (a) stressing the importance of a good education to them; (b) helping them to do their homework; (c) checking their homework; (d) asking them what is going on in school; (e) reading to them; and (f) asking their children to read to them.

5. With regard to family and school relationship, most of the parents believed that: (a) a good parent/teacher relationship contributes to good academic performance of their children; (b) how their children’s teachers feel about them impacts their performance; (c) the school is doing a good job educating their children; and (d) they should maintain regular contacts with their children’s teachers to review their academic progress.

6. Math was found to be the most preferred subject for the participating students, followed in order by reading, writing, science, and other subjects.

7. In testing the first hypothesis to determine whether or not family income, level of education, and age are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their own academic experiences while they were attending school, a number of significant
relationships were found indicating: (a) the younger they were, the more they expressed dissatisfaction with their own academic experiences; (b) the more educated they were, the more they showed satisfaction with their own academic experiences; and (c) the lower their incomes were, the more they expressed dissatisfaction with their own academic experiences, and the lower their grades were in the school.

8. In examining the second hypothesis to determine whether or not family income, level of education, and age) are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their commitment to their children’s academic achievement, a number of significant relationships were found indicating: (a) the younger they were, the less they showed commitment to their children’s academic achievement; and (b) the more educated they were, the more they showed commitment to their children’s academic achievement.

9. In testing the third hypothesis to determine whether or not family income, level of education, and age) are significantly correlated with the parents’ perceptions of their relationship with school, and consequently their children’s academic achievement, a number of significant relationships were found indicating: (a) the older they were, the more they felt the relationship with school is important in the academic achievement of their children; (b) the younger they were, the more they believed that their children’s achievement is up to teachers; (c) the more educated they were, the more they maintained regular contact with their children’s teachers to review their progress; (d) the less educated they were, the more they felt their children’s academic achievement is up to their teachers; (e) the lower their incomes were, the more they maintained regular contact with their children’s teacher to review their academic progress.
10. In examining the fourth hypothesis to determine whether or not significant differences exist between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject matters, a number of significant differences were found including: (a) a larger proportion of the third graders indicated that they do best in reading, that they would like to do best in reading, and that their teachers tell them that they do best in reading; and (b) a larger proportion of the fifth graders indicated that their teachers tell them that they do best in writing, and that they do best in science.

11. In testing the fifth hypothesis to determine whether or not significant differences exist between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding the academic achievement gap between African-American and White students, a number of significant differences were found indicating: (a) while both groups expressed some degrees of disagreement that teachers show favoritism toward White male students, the fifth graders showed a relatively higher degree of disagreement; and (b) while both groups showed some degrees of disagreement that teachers show favoritism toward Black male students, again the fifth graders showed a relatively higher degree of disagreement.

12. In examining the sixth hypothesis to determine whether or not significant differences exist between the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade students regarding their academic experiences in school, it was found that while both groups disagreed that even when they work hard, they receive poor grades, the fifth graders showed a relatively higher degree of disagreement.
General Conclusions and Implications

The following conclusions and implications were drawn from examining the research questions and testing the research hypotheses:

1. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, as a result of low family socioeconomic status, a majority of the African-American children have the disadvantage of not being able to enjoy the quality education they deserve. In fact, the data collected for the study indicates that a majority of African-American children have been raised in low income, and less educated, families. Additionally, in analyzing the perceptions of African-American parents, it was found that, among other factors, the low socioeconomic status of the families play a negative role in their children’s academic achievement. A further analysis also indicates that, although African-American parents claim that they have tried hard to make contributions to their children’s education in the home and by pursuing a relationship with the school, they have not been able to overcome the academic achievement gap between their children and their White American counterparts. An implication of these findings is that, in general, the low socioeconomic status of the family has a negative impact on the child’s academic performance.

2. As reflected in testing the first three research hypotheses to determine the extent to which age, education, and income are related to the perceptions of the African-American parents, it can be concluded that: (a) the younger parents with low income status are more likely to show dissatisfaction with the quality of education provided to their children; (b) the more educated the African-American parents are, the more likely
they show commitment to their children’s academic achievement; and (c) the older the African-American parents are, the more they value the relationship with school concerning their children’s academic achievement. These findings imply that, in general, while African-American families would like to help improve academic achievement of their children, certain socioeconomic obstacles make it hard for them to spend additional time focusing on their children’s education.

3. As reflected in testing the remaining three research hypotheses to determine the perceptions of third grade and fifth grade children regarding their academic experiences, it was concluded that: (a) a significant proportion of fifth graders indicated doing best in science and writing, whereas a significant proportion of third graders indicated doing best in reading; (b) while both third grader and fifth grade children demonstrated some degrees of disagreement that teachers show favoritism toward White students, the fifth graders tend to show a relatively higher degree of disagreement; (b) while both third grader and fifth grade children demonstrated some degrees of disagreement that teachers show favoritism toward Black students, again the fifth graders tend to show a relatively higher degree of disagreement; and (c) while both third grader and fifth grade children disagreed with the statement that “even when they work hard, they receive poor grades”, the fifth graders showed a relatively higher degree of disagreement. An implication of these findings indicates that, in general, the more mature the African-American children are, the more positive attitudes they have toward their teachers and their schooling.
Recommendations

Based on the findings derived from the study’s research questions and research hypotheses, as well as the general conclusions and implications drawn from the findings, a number of recommendations may be particularly helpful to school administrators, to teachers, to the African-American community, and to educational policy makers.

Recommendations to School Boards

1. School boards need to adopt policies and procedures that recognize that the wide range of ability among students is not a function of race, religion, gender, ethnic group, color of skin, height or anything other than the amount of nurturing stimulation that they receive at home prior to entering school. They can go a long way to reduce inequalities by paying attention to the real learning indicators.

2. As reflected in the literature review, board members need to review the policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that administrators are implementing them by paying special attention to youngsters from homes in which parent education is low and support is lacking.

Recommendations to Educational Policy Makers

1. As reflected in literature, professional development and periodic teacher training programs are significantly effective in improving the quality of education for all students. They need to be rigorously approached by the educational policy makers. Students’ individual differences are equally important and should be considered as a part of training programs designed for the professional development of the teaching faculty.
Attention should be directed to the new information technology and telecommunication training needs of the teaching faculty in order to provide students with the intellectual stimulation and necessary opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills, through internet communication systems and networking facilities.

2. A number of feasibility studies have focused on the important role of educational policy makers in providing equal educational opportunities for racial/ethnic minority children. While some policies are assessed to be beneficial to the academic achievement of the minority, some others create discrimination and prejudice against them. Therefore, educational policy makers serving school systems are recommended to review and revise their current policies and practices in order to ensure all children are provided with an equal opportunity to enjoy the quality of education they deserve. In revising the current policies and procedures, educational policy makers should emphasize critical areas of concern oversee each school in order to: (a) adopt known effective instructional strategies suitable to the needs of all students, (b) encourage teachers to actively participate in cooperative efforts between core academic areas, (c) provide teachers with the necessary information to make adjustments in curriculum instruction, (d) facilitate necessary technical assistance and teaching materials, and (e) establish appropriate criteria for evaluating teacher performance and student achievement.

3. As reflected in the literature, making developmental practices responsive to overcome racial/ethnic academic achievement differences presents a significant challenge for teachers, requiring them to adopt role definitions, and curricula and teaching practices that challenge rather than reflect the values of the wider society and themselves.
However, only when teachers do so will young children be encouraged to extend their learning to include the things that schools consider important, and only then will their parents endorse the school as a partner in their children's education. Educating racially/culturally diverse students will require a multifaceted approach to school change. In reaching this important goal, educational policy makers are recommended to consider a number of policies, procedures, and practices as follows:

**Emphasize prevention.** The prevention of school failure is less costly in both monetary and human terms than treating the problems that arise from unresponsive educational programs. The preschool and primary years are critical ones if children are to be successful in school, and the treatment of children during these years must be carefully reviewed to determine whether it is sufficiently responsive to racial/cultural differences.

**Enhance the quality of children's preschool experience.** School readiness can be increased by high-quality preschool education and day care. Policies that raise the quality of early environments will increase the probability of school readiness for many children, particularly poor children. Such policies would include raising licensing standards for early childhood programs, providing more family resource and support services, and stimulating better collaboration between schools and the other human services.

**Use authentic assessments for children considered at-risk of school difficulty.** Risks do not predict individual development. Assessments of individual children should focus on each child's unique response to his or her experience rather than assume a stereotype based on the child's social and economic background. In order for assessments of young
children's functioning to be reliable and valid, multiple methods and sources must be used in a variety of settings, within the context of children's daily lives.

**Listen to the voices of excluded minorities.** It is essential that minority communities feel a greater sense of ownership regarding school standards if they are to cooperate in preparing their children. Involvement by parents and community members from these minority groups in setting nationwide readiness criteria can help diffuse this issue.

**Prepare teachers and schools to educate a greater range of children.** Early childhood personnel need to be better prepared to help children for whom school represents a major challenge. When the match between children's prior experience and the expectations of schools is too great, children are less likely to succeed. Mismatches occur when developmental criteria, expectations for individual performance, and definitions for members of various racial/ethnic groups are overly narrow or rigid.

**Change how schools interact with other community institutions.** Collaboration with social service and health delivery systems is just the beginning. Establishing cooperative relationships with park districts, libraries, day care centers, and homes is equally important. Any school that is not collaborating cannot seriously claim to be focusing on educational success for all.

**Recommendations to School Administrators**

1. Much of the research relative to socioeconomic status and the achievement gap suggests that a substantial portion of the racial gap achievement is accounted for by both family and classroom/school characteristics. For years, researchers who have studied
Effective schools have found that such schools possess the following characteristics: (a) a clear sense of purpose, (b) core standards within a rigorous curriculum, (c) high expectations, (d) commitment to educate all students, (e) safe and orderly learning environment, (f) strong partnerships with parents, and (g) a problem solving attitude.

However, the influence of family background on academic achievement is partially mediated through classroom and school processes. What this suggests is that the institution of education, as it currently stands, partially reproduces the inequalities for racial/ethnic minorities. Even if one presumes that there is an equal educational opportunity for all students within the school environment, one should realize that African-American students, for one reason or another, still need additional help from their school and their parents to overcome academic problems. Therefore, school administrators are recommended to further concentrate on the importance of PTA contributions to the educational accomplishment of racial/ethnic minority students through continuous follow-up on the part of teachers and school administrators to communicate an individual's problems or accomplishments to his/her parents.

Researchers have repeatedly concluded that many African-Americans are alienated from Whites and distrustful of mainstream institutions, including schools, teachers, and administrators. Unfortunately, most schools have not appropriately responded to this important issue, and as a result African-American students have the disadvantage of not being able to enjoy the quality education they deserve. Therefore, school curriculum planners are recommended to provide African-American students with an opportunity to participate in the heterogeneous classroom with more African-American
teachers, higher teacher expectations, more holistic lesson plans, a more relevant curriculum, and the use of cooperative learning rather than dividing children by ability.

3. Research studies have commonly found the positive effect of parent/family involvement in the academic achievement of their children. Principals of schools are, therefore, encouraged to: (a) actively facilitate a parent/family involvement program which seeks for and is responsive to ongoing feedback from all participants so that adjustments are ongoing and specific practices in the program are flexible and appropriate to each context; (b) consistently facilitate and engage in collaborative decision-making and problem solving among participants, including parents, educators, and administrators; (c) facilitate ongoing professional development for teachers in: how to partner with parents, parent/family involvement in education, and communication and interpersonal skills helping parents to feel comfortable and respected; (d) provide staff development regarding effective and positive communication techniques and the importance of regular two-way communication between the school and the family; (e) engaged in creating an environment and a culture in which families truly feel that have joined a school community; (f) establish opportunities for parents and educators to share partnering information through such means as making phone calls before the school year begins and letting school out early to make home visits; (g) provide clear information regarding school activities, student services, and optional programs; (h) mail report cards and regular progress reports to parents and provide support services and follow-up conferences as needed; (i) disseminate information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, and include parents in any related decision-making process; (j) conduct
conferences with parents at least twice a year, with follow-up as needed; (k) encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise; (l) distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis; (m) communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior or failure; and (n) provide opportunities for parents to communicate with teachers and administrative staff.

**Recommendations to School Teachers**

1. Abundant research points to a link between the academic underachievement of economically disadvantaged African-American students and students from single-parent households. Teachers must realize that the reason behind academic underachievement of African-American students is not always due to lack of desire or motivation to learn. Rather, they should realize that the current educational system works best for students from a select population -- White, native born with continuity in their homes, as well as between their schools and communities. Therefore, teachers are urgently recommended to do everything possible to create an appropriate non-discriminatory learning environment for all students with equal opportunities to improve their academic achievement.

2. In light of many research studies on teacher expectations of their students’ academic achievement, it has been found that most teachers tend to rely primarily on an individual’s school records, conversation with other teachers, and their classroom experiences with their students, to develop their initial impressions of the academic prospects and needs of each student. While these practices seem to be legitimate for
evaluation of all students, teachers need to realize that there are a number of practices that should be taken into consideration prior to any assessment of the academic achievement of African-American and other racial/ethnic minorities. Such practices may include: paying more attention to children who need additional help, placing more academic demands on them, exercising greater supervision over them, interacting with them in private more than publicly, and providing them with more opportunity to work independently.

3. Research studies repeatedly emphasize the significant role of teachers in encouraging parent/family involvement in their children’s academic achievement. School teacher are, therefore, recommended to: (a) seek and encourage parental participation in decision-making that affects students; (b) inform parents of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level; (c) provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and provide you with appropriate feedback; (d) regularly assign interactive homework that will require students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in class; (e) sponsor workshops or distribute information to assist parents in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assessments; (f) help develop guidelines for involving parents in children’s education at school and at home.

**Recommendations to African-American Community**

1. In reference to the literature, the rates of high school and college graduation for African-American students still lag behind those of other groups. This pattern of failure in
school achievement seriously threatens the development of future African-American leadership. In fact, many educational experts are in agreement regarding the severity of this problem, the desired outcomes of, and the responsibilities of the African-American community to provide educational leadership. Knowing that effective leadership is essential to African-American survival in our nation, African-Americans themselves must take primary responsibility for improving the educational success of their children.

2. Generally, many research studies have proven the positive effects of parental involvement in their children’s academic achievement. Many other studies have also proven the negative effects African-American parents’ socioeconomic status on their children’s academic achievement. However, while it is hard to overcome the disadvantages of socioeconomic status, African-American parents are encouraged to do their best in getting involved with their children’s educational accomplishments by participating in a continuous relationship with the school and its teaching faculty.

Suggestions for Future Research

As is the case with the majority of the studies reviewed, this study has its own scope and limitations including the sample selection, the survey instrument, the data collection procedures, as well as the research design. Accordingly, the following suggestions may be considered worthwhile by future researchers who might be interested in conducting other possible studies related to the topic:

1. This study was limited to the perceptions of a selected sample of African-American male children and their parents at selected elementary schools in an urban
school district. Interested future investigators are encouraged to conduct a replication of
the study in other school districts at both elementary and high school levels to determine
the extent to which the findings of such studies are consistent throughout the nation.

2. While relatively comprehensive in nature, the survey instruments developed for
this study lacked a number of open-ended items to explore the reasons behind perceptions
of the survey participants. Therefore, further research studies are recommended for
conducting interviews with students and their parents to determine the extent to which
they perceive the reasons for the academic achievement gap. Follow-up questions should
be included in order to better understand the problem of the academic achievement gap
between African-American and White students.

3. School districts should encourage researchers to conduct studies concerning the
issue of the academic achievement gap between Whites and racial/ethnic minority
students in order to determine the major reasons for the achievement gap, to find
appropriate solutions to the educational problems of racial/ethnic minorities, and to set up
policies and practices suitable to the academic achievement needs of all students.

4. This researcher conducted her study based on self-perceptions of children and
their parents concerning the problem of the academic achievement gap. Other researchers
are encouraged to conduct studies concerning the same problem through the use of
experimental research designs and standardized tests: (a) to identify the areas of academic
achievement gap between African-American and White students; and (b) to recommend
practical solutions in narrowing the gap.
5. A nationwide replication of this study would help all school districts throughout the United States in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their school curricula, and making them suitable to academic and career preparation of all students. Replication studies may consider to include the following applicable questions: (a) How clearly are the goals and purposes of school districts in dealing with the academic problems of the racial/ethnic minority students?; (b) What is the congruence between the objectives of individual courses and the overall educational goals of school districts as they relate to the academic needs of racial and ethnic minority students?; (c) How can school districts best identify and help students facing problems without reducing academic standards?; (d) How can schools help racial and ethnic minority students develop a greater sense of belonging, and a deeper involvement in the teaching-learning process, without overwhelming an already busy teaching faculty?; (e) How can schools improve the quality of internal communications and consistent feedback among students, teachers, and administrators?; (f) How can schools best use instructional technology to enhance the quality of learning among students without losing the warm human touch?; and (g) How can schools best evaluate the quality of student learning and overall effectiveness of educational programs for all students?

**Concluding Remarks**

Disturbing numbers of poor and minority students in the United States urban schools continue to underachieve academically. In spite of years of reform, a persistent achievement gap remains between students in urban schools and elsewhere. Many
practitioners and policymakers agree that this situation cannot persist; urban students must be given the caliber of education they need to fully contribute to a democratic society. Simply stating the goal of "higher achievement for all students" isn't enough. In order to transform the United States schools, we need to impart knowledge about what works best in the urban context and provide ongoing support for reform efforts.

To counter trends and reduce the achievement gap between African-American and White students requires both an inclusive approach to student diversity and powerful instruction that will lead to educational success for all students. The overall problem of school integration should remain on the agenda, but providing quality education must be the central civil rights issue of today. If real progress is to be realized in achieving school success for all children, educational improvement efforts must address whether equal opportunity for education leads to equity in educational outcomes. Providing equal educational opportunities without being accountable for educational outcomes simply perpetuates in a more subtle form the injustices that the Brown decision attempted to rectify. Undoing these injustices will require a major redefinition of educational equity.

The way we think about differences among students, how we view the purposes of elementary and secondary education, the way we choose to organize schools, and the forging of school connections with families and communities are all fundamental to the principle that standards of educational outcomes must be upheld for every student. The challenge is in identifying practices that deny the right to schooling success.

School efforts to close the gap in academic achievement between racial/racial minority and White students have been largely unsuccessful to date. Differences in
educational performance persist at all achievement levels, with the gap greatest between African-American students and their White and Asian-American peers at high achievement levels. The need for a solution to this problem has new urgency now—here in the increasingly diverse United States— as the relationship between educational success and social and economic opportunity steadily strengthens and the relationship between educational differences and social conflict becomes more manifest. It is not possible to achieve significant school improvement without forging working connections with multiple forces that influence the development of children or the social ecology of neighborhoods. The capability of the schools can be greatly enhanced when insights and expertise are drawn from many disciplines and professions and when family and community resources are harnessed to forge a coordinated approach to fostering resilience development and learning success.

Fortunately, there is now also greater potential for closing the achievement gap as a new resolve to do so takes hold. An upsurge in concrete steps to improve minority achievement in schools across the nation is encouraging, since the efforts are knowledge based— informed by the existence of proven and promising strategies and by new research pointing to additional innovative measures. Moreover, it is now widely recognized that schools, communities, and families must be committed to the achievement of all children, must begin educating them when they are very young, and must make a long-term commitment to educational improvement. Creating an overall atmosphere for children that reflects these principles is becoming a priority nationally, and a wide range of supportive resources are being deployed.
The greatest challenge, however, is to improve the quality of education offered in the nation's public schools. It is necessary to capitalize on advances already made in family, school, and public policy research over the past few decades. The factors that mediate high achievement in African-American children can be applied to all children. Achievement is optimal when principals, teachers, parents, and community members share a common vision of the school’s mission to foster high achievement, to maintain discipline and order, and to respect one another's needs. The increasing diversity of our school population will present important challenges to educators, but these are challenges that can be successfully met.

Finally, greater educational productivity will be necessary to compete in the global economy. Federal and state education agencies and local schools must be linked with other educational, social, and health service institutions to establish priorities in all aspects of urban services to ensure that children and youth receive the highest quality education possible. A common standard of educational outcomes must be upheld for every student, including those in urban schools with high concentrations of students from ethnic and language minority backgrounds. Access to education is one thing; providing quality education that enables all students to succeed in school is quite another.
APPENDIX A

FINAL VERSION OF STUDENT SURVEY

Elementary School Students’ Perceptions of the Achievement Gap in Urban Schools

Name ___________________________ Grade _____ Age _____

Please circle only one of the responses below each statement or question.

1. What do you do best?
   Read   Write   Math   Science   Other

2. What do you like to do best?
   Read   Write   Math   Science   Other

3. What does your teacher tell you that you do best?
   Read   Write   Math   Science   Other

4. What do others tell you that you do best?
   Read   Write   Math   Science   Other

5. I am a smart person?
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Somewhat Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
   1               2             3               4          5

6. My teacher thinks I am smart.
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Somewhat Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
   1               2             3               4          5

7. I want my friends to think I am smart.
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Somewhat Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
   1               2             3               4          5

205
8. When I work hard, I get good grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

9. I get poor grades because I do not put forth my best effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

10. I get good grades because my teacher thinks I am smart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

11. Even when I work hard, I get poor grades in school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. I get good grades because I think that I am a smart person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

13. I feel embarrassed when I get poor grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

14. I can tell if a teacher likes me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

15. My teacher tells me when I do good work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

206
16. I get good grades in school because I like my teacher.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

17. I get poor grades because my teacher does not think I am smart.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

18. I get good grades in school because my teacher likes me.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

19. Students learn better from teachers who like them.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

20. I can tell if a teacher doesn’t like me.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

21. I work harder when I believe the teacher likes me.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

22. Students learn better from teachers who come from the same race.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5

23. White male students are smarter than Black males.
   Strongly Agree  Agree  Somewhat Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   1  2  3  4  5
24. There is a difference between the way Black males and White males learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

25. Teachers show favoritism towards White male students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

26. Teachers show favoritism towards Black male students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

27. White males work harder than Black male students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

28. Teachers show favoritism towards students who come from the same race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

29. Black males work harder than White male students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

30. Black male students are smarter than White males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

FINAL VERSION OF PARENT SURVEY

You do not need to write your name on this questionnaire.

Parent Interview Questionnaire
Demographic Data

1. Please indicate your race.
   ____ African-American
   ____ Black
   ____ Hispanic
   ____ White
   ____ Other

2. Please indicate your age.
   ____ 21-24
   ____ 25
   ____ 26
   ____ 27
   ____ 28
   ____ 29
   ____ 30
   ____ Other (Please indicate) __________

3. Please indicate your sex.
   ____ Female
   ____ Male

4. Please indicate your occupation

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Family Structure

5. Please indicate your family situation.
   ____ Single-parent female head of household (mother)
   ____ Single-parent male head of household (father)
   ____ Single-parent female grandmother/guardian
   ____ Single-parent male grandfather/guardian
   ____ Two-parent male and female (natural parents)
   ____ Two-parent male and female grandparents/guardians
   ____ Other

6. Please list the sex and age of siblings living the household.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex (M or F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. Please indicate your educational background.
   ____ I did not finish high school
   ____ I graduated from high school.
   ____ I have some post high school education.
   ____ I have a college degree

8. Please indicate your family’s income level.
   ____ Less than $10,000 per year
   ____ $10,000 – $15,000 per year
   ____ $15,000 – $30,000 per year
   ____ $30,000 – $49,000 per year
   ____ More than $50,000 per year
9. Does your son receive Title I support services in:
   (If yes for either subject, how many hours per week?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please respond to the following questions by circling one response to each question:

10. When I was a student, I liked school.
    | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
    | 1              | 2     | 3              | 4        | 5               |

11. When I was a student, I did not like school.
    | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
    | 1              | 2     | 3              | 4        | 5               |

12. When I was a student I got good grades.
    | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
    | 1              | 2     | 3              | 4        | 5               |

13. When I was a student I got poor grades.
    | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
    | 1              | 2     | 3              | 4        | 5               |

In relationship to learning, in our home I:

14. Discuss what is going on in school.
    | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
    | 1              | 2     | 3              | 4        | 5               |

15. Check my child’s homework.
    | Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
    | 1              | 2     | 3              | 4        | 5               |
16. Help my child with his homework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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17. Stress the importance of a good education.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

19. Read to my child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

20. Do nothing special.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

Family/School Relationship.

21. In general, I feel the school is doing a good job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

22. I leave most of my child’s learning up to his teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

23. I maintain regular contact with my child’s teacher to review his progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<table>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
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</table>
25. How my child’s teacher feels about him impacts his performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

26. African-American boys learn better from teachers of the same ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

27. African-American boys learn differently than White boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

Please write your opinion:

What do you believe is the major cause(s) of the existing achievement gap between African-American and White students, especially males?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for making time in your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your answers are extremely valuable, and may help to provide recommendations that will help close the academic achievement gap.
Dear Principal Colleague,

As you may know, I am a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts, I am writing to ask for your assistance in a study that explores some of the causes attributed to the academic achievement gap that exists between African-American and White students. Special emphasis will be placed on the underachievement of African-American boys in third grade and fifth grade.

My study will include a survey of third grade and fifth grade African-American male students in order to gain a better understanding of their opinions relative to the existing academic achievement gap between Black and White students. I also would like to administer a questionnaire to as many of your third and fifth African-American boys as possible.

Participation in this study will require about 20 minutes of their time for the completion of the questionnaire. As you know, I will need your permission and parents’ permission to administer the questionnaire within the school setting.

I ask that you assist me by distributing the parent consent forms to your third grade and fifth grade African-American males. My letter to the parents will request that they return the consent forms and their questionnaires to you. I then will collect them from you. That way, you will know who has agreed to participate. An envelope will be included for their convenience and privacy when returning the questionnaires.

To obtain useful results, I need the participation of as many third grade and fifth grade African-American male students and their parents as possible. I hope that you are willing to help.

I know very well how busy you are and how valuable your time is; however, the results of this study may be useful in helping our Black children and their parents have a better understanding of their school experience.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of parents and students, no names will appear on any of the questionnaires or test results, nor will the be identified, in any way, when the results of the study are summarized.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 783-9592 (home) or 787-7117 (office). In any event, I will contact you within the next few days to seek your response.

Thank you for any assistance that you are willing to provide.

Sincerely yours,

Gloria Williams
Dear Parents,

As an elementary school principal in the Springfield Public Schools System and a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts, I am writing to request your assistance in a study that explores the so-called academic achievement gap between African-American and White male students at the elementary school level.

Participation in this study will require approximately 20 minutes of your time for completion of a self-administered questionnaire, in the privacy of your home. In addition, I am requesting your permission to administer a similar questionnaire to your child within the school setting.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality throughout the study. Participants’ names will not appear on any of the questionnaires or test results. You will not be identified, in any way, when the results of the study are completed.

In order to acquire useful results, I need the participation of as many third grade and fifth grade parents as possible. I hope that you will lend your support to this initiative. I am hopeful that the results of this project will help children to have a more successful experience.

As compensation for your valuable time, a gift will be given to each participating family.

The results of this study will be available upon completion. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at school (787-7443) or at my home (783-9592).

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Gloria B. Williams, Principal
Frank. H. Freedman Elementary School

Gloria B. Williams — Research Project

_____ Yes, I am willing to participate in this research project. I will complete the questionnaire and return it as requested. _____ No, I will not participate, but . . .

_____ Yes, you may administer a survey to my child.

Parent’s signature __________________________ (Do not include on questionnaire).

Address and Telephone number ________________________________

Child’s Name (Will not be written on questionnaire).

Please return to your child’s school principal by February 28, 2000.
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