THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC EMPHASIS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IN PREDOMINATELY WHITE SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

African-American students in suburban schools are underperforming. Data reveals that African-American students who attend suburban schools do not perform as well as their Caucasian peers (Alson, 2003; Ferguson, Clark, & Stewart, 2002; Ogbu, 2002). The achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students appears in not only scores, but also in other academic areas, such as attendance rates, graduation rates, special and gifted education placements, percentages of students in college preparatory or advanced placement classes, numbers of students in extracurricular activities, honor roll nominations, and grade-point-averages (Kober, 2001; Ogbu, 2002). The purpose of this study is to examine the difference in academic emphasis between high performing and low performing African-Americans in predominately white suburban schools by examining the relationship between academic emphasis and the achievement of African-American students. More specifically, examine the relationship between academic emphasis and the achievement of African-American children in predominately white suburban schools by observing the opinions of parents. The study is designed to indicate the importance of School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis for African-American children in predominately white suburban schools based on parents’ perceptions. Participants in this study were black parents of
221 African-American students attending predominately white suburban schools. Parents’ opinions were collected during the third quarter of the academic school year 2007-08 using a self-constructed questionnaire. Results reflected that after controlling for significant demographic variables, School Academic Emphasis was not related to grade point average; however, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis, as well as, characteristics of academic emphasis remained to have significant relationships to student achievement.
Dedicated to my family, friends, and the people of Newark, New Jersey.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On July 2, 1966, James S. Coleman changed the perception on the achievement gap in American public schools with his report, “The Equality of Educational Opportunity.” Data from his report suggested that achievement gaps between African-American and Caucasian students were a result of differences in socioeconomic characteristics and not the quality of education (Coleman, 1966). At the time, it was commonly believed that the achievement gap was attributed to the difference in education provided to African-American students when compared to Caucasian students – suggesting that African-Americans did not receive a quality education. Coleman’s data alluded to the fact that the quality of education was not the cause of the achievement gap. According to Coleman, schools predominately enrolled with African-American students had similar characteristics and funding to those predominately enrolled with Caucasian students. Thus, suggesting that achievement gaps could not be reduced by improving the quality of education for African-American students. Instead, Coleman implied that integration was the key to eliminate the achievement gap in America. By integrating schools, African-American students would benefit from factors associated with middle class Caucasian children such as their attitudes towards achievement. Coleman suggested
that African-American students had less confidence in their abilities to control outcomes in their lives. As a result of Coleman’s study, the United States Department of Education strengthened their plan to desegregate public schools across America. Unfortunately, instead of improving the quality of education for schools located in urban areas, African-American students were transferred to schools outside of their neighborhoods (Schugurensky, 2002). Thus, the belief that education is better in suburban schools was thereafter upheld as a fact by many Americans.

Researchers like Ronald R. Edmonds and John R. Frederiksen attempted to disprove Coleman’s findings by identifying schools in lower class urban neighborhoods that were successful in educating children in poverty. Based on their analysis of Coleman’s study, Edmonds and Frederiksen concluded that achievement gaps are attributed to the quality of education provided by schools – not socioeconomic characteristics. They revealed that the differences in achievement gaps were attributed to five characteristics of schools. These characteristics were: (1) principal leadership, (2) a high level of student expectation, (3) orderly and structured classrooms, (4) teachers dedication to education, and (5) monitoring student progress. With the recognition of successful schools in lower class urban neighborhoods, data supported that the quality of education contributes to the achievement gap (Edmonds, 1979). Unfortunately, it is still commonly believed by many that achievement gaps are a result of only socioeconomic factors.

On January 1, 2003, this debate reopened with the release of John U. Ogbu’s book titled, Black American Student in an Affluent Suburb. Ogbu’s book focused on achievement gaps that exist in areas that many believed to be nonexistent such as those
that exist between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white affluent neighborhoods. Ogbu concluded that one of the many reasons the achievement gap exists in predominately white suburban schools are because African-American parents lack engagement in their children’s education – not the quality of education or socioeconomic characteristics. Data in Ogbu’s study revealed that African-American parents were less involved in their children’s education when compared to Caucasian parents. Furthermore, African-American students were not taking advantage of opportunities offered by schools in affluent neighborhoods (Ogbu, 2002). Black children also took less challenging classes, completed less work, and did not participate in school activities that promoted achievement. As concluded by Ogbu, the achievement gap in affluent neighborhoods is a result of the lack of engagement from African-Americans in predominately white suburban neighborhoods.

Ferguson (2002) attempted to disprove Ogbu’s findings in his study titled, *What Doesn’t Meet the Eye: Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in High-Achieving Suburban Schools*. Ferguson examined the differences in socioeconomic characteristics as well as academic efforts and student performances. Ferguson’s data revealed that although African-American children lived in middle class neighborhoods, they still experienced far more socioeconomic difficulties when attending schools in these neighborhoods. For instance, data revealed that African-American children in middle class neighborhoods were more likely to live in households that consisted of one parent, one parent and a step-parent, or no biological parents. Caucasian children were more likely to live with both biological parents. Also, the study indicated that African-American children were more likely to have three or more siblings with fewer resources
such as books at home or households that were limited to one computer. Assuming that more siblings equal more sharing of resources, the study revealed that African-American families were at a greater disadvantage than their Caucasian classmates (Ferguson, 2002). For the most part, Ferguson suggested that socioeconomic characteristics could not be left out when explaining the achievement gap in suburban schools.

With respect to school engagement, Ferguson (2002) revealed that the level of engagement by African-American students did not explain the achievement gap in suburban schools as indicated by Ogbu. Ferguson inferred that although behaviors exhibited by African-American students were different from Caucasian students, the difference was not significant nor should it be used to suggest that African-American students lacked engagement. For instance, Ferguson concluded that Caucasian students engaged in homework approximately five minutes more per night than African-American students. However, this time difference was attributed to the types of classes in which Caucasian students were enrolled – when comparing basic skills or advanced placement classes. To a large extent, more African-American students were enrolled in basic skills classes. The data also showed African-American students were also completing less homework than Caucasian students. Again, Ferguson suggested that these findings were also not significant and should not be used to infer that African-American students are not engaged in their education. He believed that teachers also assumed that African-American students were less engaged in their academics because they completed less homework. Ferguson concluded that homework completion does not indicate how much time was spent on homework – nor should it indicate student engagement. Students who experienced difficulties in school may spend more time on homework while completing
less homework. For instance, in Ferguson’s study, data revealed that African-American students worked longer to complete the same amount of homework as Caucasian students. This could suggest that African-American students were just struggling to complete their homework. Despite the aforementioned findings and potential rationales, teachers may still assume African-American students are not interested in acquiring an education.

Statement of the Problem

Research has indicated that there is an achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban schools. Unfortunately, there is a disagreement on the primary cause of these gaps. Research has also revealed that when opinions are surveyed from schools, most teachers and students in predominately white suburban neighborhoods believe that the achievement gap is attributed to African-American parents and their lack of engagement in their children’s education. African-American parents’ opinions are rarely discussed. Secondly, research has not identified the differences between high achieving and low achieving African-American students in suburban schools. It may appear that all African-American students in predominately white suburban schools are failing or have similar characteristics. This is not the case. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the difference in academic emphasis between high performing and low performing African-Americans in predominately white suburban schools by examining the relationship between academic emphasis and the achievement of African-American students based on parents’ perception. Parents’ opinions of the achievement gap and academic emphasis were surveyed.
Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to examine the achievement gap in suburban schools beyond traditional research of achievement gaps in affluent areas. Again, in previous studies, achievement gaps were usually examined to identify the differences between African-American and Caucasian students. This study examined the achievement gap between high achieving and low achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. In addition, this study collected African-American parents’ opinions about the achievement gap through a mail-in survey. In prior research that analyzed the achievement of middle class African-American children, teachers and students’ views were usually collected; parent opinions were rarely studied. This study not only collected parent opinions, but examined the achievement gap from a socio-cultural context. Students do not experience school in a vacuum but do so within a socio-cultural context of school, family, children, and peers (PAES, 2009). The achievement gap in this study was analyzed through four types of academic emphasis, namely, School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis.

Research Questions

1. Is there a significant correlation between academic emphasis, characteristics of academic emphasis, and demographic variables for African-American children in predominately white suburban schools?

2. How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?
3. How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban school after controlling for significant demographic variables?

4. Do African-American students with higher levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis perform better than students with only one and no forms of academic emphasis?

5. How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?

6. How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools after controlling for significant demographic variables?

7. Do African-American students with higher levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis perform better than students with only two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis?

8. What do parents of low achieving and high achieving African-American students feel are the causes for achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools?
Definitions of Terms

1. Academic Emphasis – The extent to which emphasis is placed on academics. In this study, such emphasis is measured by five characteristics. They are: setting challenging goals, setting learning environments that are structured and conducive to learning, believing in academic abilities, working hard towards academic excellence, and respecting and acknowledging achievement.

2. School Academic Emphasis – The extent to which parents view school’s drive toward academic achievement. Such drive is measured by: (1) parents’ perceptions of schools setting challenging goals for their children, (2) parents’ views of the school organizing an environment conducive to learning, (3) parents’ opinions of teachers believing in their children’s abilities, (4) parents’ perceptions of teachers working hard to provide students with an adequate education, and (5) parents’ take on schools acknowledging their children’s achievement.

3. Family Academic Emphasis – The extent to which parents view their own drive toward helping their children achieve. It is measured by observing parents’ self-perceptions of: (1) setting challenging but achievable goals for their children, (2) managing a structured and orderly home, (3) believing in their children’s abilities, (4) working hard for their children’s education, and (5) acknowledging their children’s accomplishments.

4. Children Academic Emphasis – The extent to which parents’ view their children’s drive towards academic excellence. It is measured by observing parents’ perception of their children’s determination. Such determination is measured by: (1) parents’ views of their children setting challenging goals, (2) parents’ views of
their children creating an organized environment conducive to learning, (3) parents’ opinions of their children’s confidence, (4) parents’ opinions of their children’s studious practices, and (5) parents’ views on their children respecting other students who achieve.

5. Student Peer Academic Emphasis – The extent to which parents view their children’s friends and their drive toward academic excellence. Such drive is measured by parents’ opinions of their children’s peers and their practice of: (1) setting challenging goals, (2) belonging to a positive social group, (3) helping their children with academic difficulties, (4) believing in their children, and (5) respecting other children who achieve in school.

6. Characteristics of Academic Emphasis – Pertains to the characteristics of academic emphasis. These characteristics are: setting challenging goals, setting learning environments that are structured and conducive to learning, believing in academic abilities, working hard toward academic excellence, and respecting and acknowledging achievement.

7. Setting Goals – The extent to which parents view schools, their children, their children’s peers, as well as themselves, setting challenging goals for their children.

8. Setting Environment – The extent to which parents view schools, their children, their children’s peers, as well as themselves, setting structured and organized environments conducive to learning for their children.
9. Believing in Children – The extent to which parents view schools, their children, their children’s peers, as well as themselves, believing in their children’s academic abilities.

10. Working Hard – The extent to which parents view schools, their children, their children’s peers, as well as themselves, working hard toward academic excellence.

11. Acknowledging Achievement – The extent to which parents view schools, their children, their children’s peers, as well as themselves, respecting and acknowledging achievement.

12. Student Achievement – Pertains to the grade point average of students. Also called academic achievement, grade point average, student performance, etc.

13. Predominately White Suburban Schools – Public schools located in a suburban district where the majority of students are made up of Caucasian children.

*Limitations of the Study*

As with all research, the current study has a series of methodological limitations that need to be taken into account. Although all participants were provided with a questionnaire in a manner that would allow them to return their survey randomly, these results may not be generalized to all African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. Surveys were only collected from one Midwestern suburban neighborhood. Secondly, there are drawbacks to using and relying on someone else’s opinions when collecting data. While one of the purposes of this study was to collect parents’ opinions, these opinions may not be as accurate when compared to the accuracy of collecting data from school, children, and student peers. Parents may not have an
accurate account of academic emphasis provided by schools, children, and students’ peers.

Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions were made to collect the parents’ perceptions of academic emphasis:

1. The perceptions of parents are meaningful.
2. Parents are knowledgeable of their children’s schools.
3. Parents are knowledgeable of their children’s behaviors.
4. Parents are knowledgeable of the behaviors of their children’s friends.
5. Parents will accurately record their perceptions of academic emphasis.
6. Parents will accurately record the grade point average of their children.
7. Survey research was an appropriate methodology for collecting data.
The purpose of this study was to examine the difference in academic emphasis between high and low performing African-American students in predominately white suburban schools by analyzing the relationship between academic emphasis and student achievement. This literature review begins with a brief summary of the existence of achievement gaps at various levels of education and possible causes that are well documented. A review of No Child Left Behind will follow as well as its influence on research examining achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools. After reviewing No Child Left Behind, the causes of the achievement gap in predominately white suburban schools will be presented – specifically those causes cited by Ogbu (2002) and Ferguson (2002). Finally, the achievement gap in regards to academic emphasis will be discussed. This chapter will conclude with a section on the limitations found within current literature.

*The Achievement Gap in Education*

The achievement gap in education refers to a discrepancy of academic measurements between student groups usually defined by gender, race, and socioeconomic status (K12 Academics, 2009). Achievement gaps appear in academic
scores, attendance rates, graduation rates, special and gifted education placement, percent of students in college preparatory or advanced placement classes, numbers of students in extracurricular activities, honor roll nominations, and grade point averages (Kober, 2001; Ogbu, 2002). Even though efforts have been made to close achievement gaps, they still exist. Most of the documented research on the achievement gap in education focuses on Caucasians and African-American students. Caucasian students are outperforming their African-American classmates. According to data sources such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2007), only 14% of African-American fourth graders across the United States scored at or above the “basic” level in reading compared to 43% of Caucasian students. These same gaps exist at the eight grade level where 13% of African-American students scored proficient compared to 40% of their Caucasians classmates. Achievement gaps continue throughout high school. Less than 84% of African-American students graduate from high school compared to 92% of Caucasian students (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001). Although Caucasian students are outperforming their African-American classmates, it should be noted that there are studies that reveal that Caucasian students are also underperforming in school (Singham, 2003). Therefore, the achievement gap has not significantly changed over the last four decades. Unfortunately, data reveals that African-American students continue to underachieve when compared to Caucasian students – at all grade levels.

The Achievement Gaps in Early and Primary Education

Achievement gaps exist in children before they enroll in school (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jenks & Phillips, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Research reveals that by
the time children enter elementary school, achievement gaps exist because of the
different experiences children have at home (Rock & Stenner, 2005; Fryer & Levitt,
study by Hart and Risley (1995), data indicated that before children enter primary
schools, children raised in lower class families experienced approximately 30 million less
words than those who were raised in middle class families. Unfortunately, the
discrepancy is not only in the quantity of words. It also exists in the quality of words.
There is a difference in the amount of positive words heard from children of different
socioeconomic statuses (Hart & Risley, 1995). On average, middle class families provide
their children with 32 positive words and 5 negative words per hour. Negative words
were described as words that prohibited a child’s behavior whereas positive words were
defined as opposite. Conversely, the average child in a working class family heard 12
positive words compared to 6 negative words. Unfortunately, lower class children
suffered the most. They heard only 6 positive words compared to 11 negative words per
hour. As Hart and Risley suggested, if this trend is projected for a year, children in
middle class families would hear 166,000 affirming words versus 26,000 prohibiting
words, children in working class families would hear 62,000 positive words compared to
36,000 negative words, and children in lower class families would hear 26,000 positive
words versus 57,000 prohibiting words. Moreover, research supports that children from
different socioeconomic levels may differ in the amount of access they have to formal
registers of language (Moore, 1998). Thus, suggesting that children enroll into school
with different educational experiences (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). These
experiences are linked to their achievement as they enter primary school and continue throughout high school.

The Achievement Gap in Elementary and Secondary Education

Once achievement gaps exist they are likely to continue throughout a student’s education (Entwisle & Alexander, 1999). In a study conducted by Davison, Seo, Davenport, Butterbaugh, & Davison (2004), researchers concluded that achievement gaps measured in early grades exist between the same groups of students compared again in their future educational years. In their study, Davison et al. collected the proficiency scores of third grade students and grouped each student according to their score. In other words, every student that had the same score was assigned to the same group. Davison et al. then collected the same students’ proficiency scores in the fifth grade. Data revealed that there was not a single group of students who obtained a low proficiency score in the third grade who achieved a score equal to or better than students who scored higher when compared again in the fifth grade. The achievement gap between these students remained the same. As concluded by Davison et al., achievement gaps continue to exist because when students fall below their grade level, they must make more progress during the academic school year to close the achievement gaps. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen especially when effective interventions are not implemented. In Davison et al.’s study, data also revealed that students who scored low on their third grade proficiency test did not make more progress than students who scored higher. In fact, data revealed that students who scored lower made less progress over the years than those that scored higher in the third grade. As a result, the achievement gap increased over the years.
When students continue to underachieve in school, teachers and parents attempt to help by providing them with interventions that are likely to increase learning. If learning is still not achieved, special education is sometimes used as an option. Unfortunately, research indicates that different student groups are more apt to be placed in special education. For instance, females are less likely to be placed in special education than male students (Arms, Bickett, & Graf, 2008). Similarly, Caucasian students are also less likely to be placed in special education compared to African-American and Latino-American students. In a study by Losen and Orfield (2002), data revealed that African-American students are placed in special education at significantly higher rates than Caucasian students. Although African-American students make up 14% of student enrollment in American public schools, black students make up more than 20% percent of enrollment in special education. Disproportionality increases when analyzing the difference in classification and placements provided to African-American and Caucasian students (Vines, 2002). For instance, African-American students are 2.4 times more likely to be classified as cognitively impaired when compared to Caucasian students (Klinger, Artiles, Kozleski Harry, Zion, Tate et al., 2005). African-American students are also 1.7 times more likely to be classified as emotionally disturbed and 1.3 times more likely to be identified as a child with a specific learning disability. Once placed in special education, research also shows that African-Americans make less progress in special education and spend more than 60% of their time outside general education when compared to Caucasian students with special needs (Quality Counts, 2004). African-American students are not benefiting from being placed in a least restrictive environment. Moreover, they are less likely to be provided with the general education curriculum when
placed in special education (Gloeckler & Daggett, 2004; Quality Counts, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). They are simply put at a disadvantage when placed in special education.

Differences have also surfaced when analyzing the percentages of students being retained for a year in school. African-American students are more likely to be retained when compared to Caucasian students (Hoffman, Llagas, Snyder, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). In a data analysis review by Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, data indicated that African-American students had higher retention rates than Caucasians, Latino-Americans, and Asian-Americans. In their survey, 18% of African-Americans reported that they were retained at least one time while attending school compared to 13% of Latino-Americans, 9% of Caucasians, and 7% of Asian-Americans. Similar to special education, grade retention puts African-American students at a disadvantage. For instance, research supports that retention puts students at greater risk of dropping out of school (Sterns, Moller, Ptochnick, & Blau, 2007). Therefore, it is not surprising that Caucasian students are completing high school at higher percentage rates than African-American and Latino-American students. According to a study by Kaufman, Alt, and Chapman (2001), 84% of African-American and 64% of Latino-Americans obtain a high school diploma or pass the general education development assessment when compared to 92% of Caucasians. It is estimated that 13% of African-American students dropout of school each year. This percentage is considerably high when compared to the percentage of Caucasian that dropped out of school – 7%. Unfortunately, Latino-American students are dropping out at the highest rates. It is estimated that 28% of all Latino-American students are dropping out of school. According to research, school suspension and
expulsions account for a large percentage of dropout rates (Catterall, 1998; Jimerson, 1999). African-American students are more likely to get suspended from school when compared to Caucasian students. It is estimated that 35% of all middle and high school African-American students were either expelled or suspended from school (Hoffman, Llagas, Snyder, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). This is significantly disproportionate when considering that it was estimated that only 20% of Latino-American and 15% of Caucasians were also expelled or suspended.

Researchers have attributed the large percentage of African-American students that are placed in special education, retained, or expelled from school to racism that continues to exist in American public schools. According to researcher Blanchett (2006), racism continues to create achievement gaps in these areas because schools with African-American students continue to receive less funding than those enrolled with Caucasian students, teachers do not connect the curriculum to the lives of African-American students making it less culturally relevant, and many teachers do not know how to teach African-American students. It is not surprising that when schools receive less funding, African-American students are not provided with an equal learning experience. On the other hand, even when they are equally funded, African-American students may not receive an education that is culturally relevant. A cultural relevant education is an education that makes connections to between learning materials and the lives of diverse children. African-American students who are not provided with a culturally relevant education may experience difficulty realizing the benefits of education. Moreover, they may become less motivated in acquiring an education. Teachers should understand the needs of African-American students and engage in practices that motivate them. Many
African-American students may need to be shown why acquiring an education is beneficial to their lives. By making this connection, teachers may decrease the percentage of African-American students placed in special education, referred for grade retention, or expelled from school.

There is also an achievement gap with respect to the types of classes students enroll in during high school (Dillion, 2007). The percentages of African-American students in college preparatory or advanced placement classes are significantly lower when compared to other student groups. Dillion reported that in the academic year 2005-06, African-American students were the only student group who was underrepresented in advanced placement classes. While African-American students made up 14 percent of the student population, only 7% of African-American students were enrolled in advanced placement classes. This was not the case for other student groups. For instance, Asian-American students represented 6 percent of students but had 11 percent enrolled in advanced placement classes. Both Caucasian and Latino-American students were represented according to their population. Unfortunately, achievement gaps still occur between African-American and Caucasian students when enrolled in advanced placement classes. On average, African-American students score significantly lower on advanced placement exams when compared to Caucasian students (Dillion, 2007). Therefore, they are less likely to receive college credits for these courses when attempting to enroll into college.

Many researchers attribute the under representation of African and Latino-American students in advanced placement classes to a practice called tracking (Burris & Welner, 2005). Tracking is a practice used by some schools which place students in
classes according to their abilities. Unfortunately, too many African-American and Latino-American students are wrongfully placed in lower track classes because it is perceived that they lack ability. Despite research indicating that tracking does not close achievement gaps, many schools continue to use it (Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992). Many schools believe that by tracking students, teachers will be able to better instruct students – allowing teachers to concentrate on the strengths of high performing students or the weaknesses of students performing low. Regrettably, high achieving students are provided with challenging education at the expense of low performing students (Burris & Welner, 2005). Due to disproportionality, Caucasian students are usually placed in advanced classes or higher tracks. Detracking students may help close the achievement gap because it gives all children an equal and challenging education (Levin, 1987). As Levin suggested, this is one solution in narrowing the achievement gaps. By providing both groups of students with higher track classes or a challenging education, all schools will ensure that every student is equally challenged with a rigorous education.

The Achievement Gap in Post-Secondary Education

A large percentage of diverse students are enrolling in United States’ colleges when compared to previous years. In the academic year of 1999-2000, 31% of African-American students, ages 18 to 24, enrolled into college compared to 19% of African-Americans in 1980 (Hoffman, Llagas, Snyder, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). This trend is also occurring for Latino-American and Caucasian students. The percentage of Latino-American and Caucasian students, ages 18 to 24, enrolled in college during the 1999-2000 academic school year was 22% and 39%, respectively. Although enrollment in college increased for all students, Caucasian
students are still enrolling in college at higher rates than African-American, Latino-Americans, and Asian-Americans. Whereas African-American, Latino-American, and Asian-American students represent 27% of the total student population enrolled in college, Caucasians make up 68 percent of students in college. It should be noted that when the enrollment is measured with regard to gender only, female students enroll in college at a higher percentage across all student groups with the exception of foreign students.

The achievement gap in post-secondary education is beyond student enrollment. It continues through graduation and is evident in the types of degrees obtained by all students (Hoffman, Llagas, Snyder, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). For instance, Caucasian students are more likely to complete college when compared to African-American and Latino-American students. Moreover, a higher percentage of Caucasian students receive their bachelor’s degree when compared to African-Americans, Latino-Americans, and Native-Americans. On the other hand, African-Americans, Latino-Americans, and Native-Americans are more likely to receive an associate’s degree. In the academic year 1999-2000, 28% of African-Americans and 34% of Latino-Americans received an associated degree compared to 23% of Caucasian students. This gap decreases as groups obtain higher degrees. For example, approximately 2% of all groups receive doctorate degree with the exception of foreign students of which approximately 9% obtain such a degree. It should be noted that although the percentages are similar, more Caucasian students are obtaining doctorate degrees since they make up the majority of students enrolled in graduate school. In the academic year 1999-2000, over 50,000 Caucasian students obtained doctorate degrees.
In comparison, only 5,552 African-Americans, 3,865 Latino-Americans, 8,576 Asian-Americans, 564 Native-Americans, and 1,899 foreign students obtained doctorate degrees, which totaled approximately 40,000 less than all Caucasian students.

There are many reasons why African-American students are not enrolling in college and failing to graduate. According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2007), many schools fail to provide recruitment services necessary to inform African-American students of the application process needed to get into college. On the other hand, once in college, African-American students need to be provided with an encouraging environment to increase retention and graduation rates. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* suggests that colleges can help increase graduation rates by establishing the presence of African-American students on campus. Colleges should enroll more African-American students. Moreover, there is also a need for the presence of African-American faculty. African-American students need to be able to engage with successful African-Americans professors in a variety of fields. This will enrich advisor-advisee relationships. Moreover, it will further develop their interests in their academic concentration. Finally, the cost and lack of financial aid does not help African-Americans when attempting to continue college. Financial support is needed. Although some schools provide more financial support than others, many colleges are not affordable. All these problems, coupled with the lack of proficiency from kindergarten to grade 12, place African-American students at a disadvantage when trying to enroll and graduate from college.
No Child Left Behind

In an attempt to close achievement gaps, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act on January 8, 2002 (Public Law 107-110) – a law holding public schools accountable to ensure that all students in every school score proficiently in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Ankeny, 2006; Ferguson et al., 2002). To accomplish this goal, each school must meet an adequate yearly progress standard for reading and mathematics for all student groups, including subgroups of students containing 30 or more children (Ankeny, 2006). According to the legislation, schools that fail to meet their requirements will have sanctions applied to them such as being required to offer parents the option to transfer their children to other schools within the district. Hence, if a school continues to fail, its administrators must restructure the school by appointing outside consultants, reorganizing school personnel, and implementing scientific-based instruction.

Two important features of the No Child Left Behind Act impacted the quality of education provided to diverse student groups: (1) federal policy mandates that all schools must analyze academic achievement for all diverse student groups and (2) all schools must reduce any existing achievement gap between them (Ferguson et al., 2002). In other words, the federal government is mandating schools to disaggregate academic data (Ferguson et al., 2002). Disaggregated data for No Child Left Behind has indicated that many achievement gaps exist across different subgroups (e.g., African-American and Caucasian, underprivileged and privileged, English language learners and English speaking students, etc.). Moreover, achievement gaps are acknowledged within areas that were once ignored – such as those achievement gaps that exist between students in
middle class suburban schools. While it has been known that there was an achievement gap, this legislation has forced education and educators to finally address the issue. The problem can no longer be ignored. School districts are now mandated to demonstrate that they are closing the achievement gap (Ferguson, 2002).

Achievement Gaps in Predominately White Suburban Schools

Up until No Child Left Behind, achievement gaps in suburban schools were rarely discussed (Ferguson et al., 2002). Increasing attention has been given to the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban neighborhoods. Data revealed that Caucasian children are significantly outperforming African-American students (Ogbru, 2002). Although research supports an achievement gap, it should be noted that many studies support that African-American students in suburban schools are performing better than other African-Americans in urban schools (Strayhorn, 2009). Unfortunately, African-American parents are moving to suburban neighborhoods to improve the quality of their children’s education but a discrepancy remains between the achievement of African-American and Caucasian students. In fact, some research has indicated that the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students is greater in suburban schools than it is in urban schools (Alson, 2003).

Researchers have attempted to understand why achievement gaps continue to exist between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban neighborhoods. One of the most extensive studies in this area was conducted by John U. Ogbru. This comprehensive ethnographic study examined the academic engagement of African-Americans in Shaker Heights, Ohio, during the 1996-97 academic
school year. At the time of the study, Shaker Heights had a population of 30,000 residents with approximately 32.6% of the population being African-American and 50% being Caucasian. The average family annual income was $50,000 to $100,000 (Stupay as cited in Ogbu, 2002). Shaker Heights was described as a highly educated community in which 61% of the residents over the age of 25 had obtained a bachelor’s degree. Moreover, 85% of the students who graduated from Shaker Heights went on to attend college.

Although African-Americans benefited from the characteristics of Shaker Heights, an achievement gap remained. For instance, during the 1994-95 academic school year, 90% of African-American fourth grade students scored proficient in reading. The same year, nearly all Caucasians scored proficient in reading – 99%. Bigger achievement gaps in proficiency scores were revealed for mathematics, writing, and science. Comparing African-American students to Caucasians, only 75%, 74%, and 51% of African-Americans scored proficient in the areas of mathematics, writing, and science, respectively. The comparable proficient rates for Caucasian students were 98%, 95%, and 94%. Similar to national trends, Shaker Heights’ achievement gaps also increased in later grades. In the eighth grade, only 37%, 83%, 77%, and 48% of African-American students scored proficient in mathematics, reading, writing, and science, respectively, compared to 92%, 100%, 93% and 91% of Caucasian students. Moreover, between 1992 and 1995, only 22 African-American students out of 310 students ranked in the top 20 percent at Shaker Heights High School. Conversely, of the bottom 20% during that time period, 295 of 325 students were African-American. African-American students made up 91% of students ranked in the bottom 20% between the years 1992 and 1995. African-
American students in Shaker Heights were significantly underperforming when compared to Caucasians students.

To determine the causes of the achievement gaps in Shaker Heights, Ogbu (2002) conducted a comprehensive ethnographic study which focused on the following research goals: (1) understand Shaker Heights perception of the education system, (2) observe student engagement, (3) understand how parents implement their expectations of achievement, and (4) develop an understanding of how schools educate their students. Ogbu gathered his information by visiting Shaker Heights, conducting meetings with members of the community, and interviewing teachers and students. In discussions with the residents of Shaker Heights, Ogbu concluded that the achievement gaps are primarily attributed to the lack of academic engagement. Data revealed that African-American students did not work as hard as their Caucasian classmates. Teachers reported that African-American students did not take advantage of opportunities provided by Shaker Heights schools. For instance, African-American students were less likely to enroll in honor or advance placement courses. When African-American students were asked why they did not take advantage of advanced placement classes, many replied that they did enough just to pass. They reported that by taking less challenging classes, it opened up their time to engage in nonacademic activities after school. Moreover, they believed that taking less challenging classes helped them achieve because they felt they could not do well in those classes. The work was too hard. Ogbu also observed that many African-American students engaged in behaviors that put children at risk of academic failure. For instance, when analyzing students in the classroom, Ogbu noticed that African-American children were more likely to arrive late to class and less likely to return completed work.
Again, when African-American students were asked why they appeared disinterested in achieving, many reported that it was not “cool” to achieve in school. They revealed that school was boring and attributed some of their behaviors to their parents’ lack of academic engagement.

Ogbu suggested that African-American parents were less involved in their children’s education when compared to Caucasian parents. Teachers at Shaker Heights Schools reported that African-American parents were least likely to engage in school organizations, school events, or volunteer in programs dedicated to helping students who were experiencing difficulty in school – despite the fact that some of these academic programs were directed at helping African-American students. For instance, Ogbu recorded the participation of African-American parents at a parent workshop designed to explain how parents can prepare their children to pass state proficiency tests. Although most of the students who failed were African-Americans, parent participation in these workshops was extremely low. Teachers noticed that in the beginning of the workshops very few African-Americans parents attended. Unfortunately, as the program progressed, these same parents became absent and eventually did not complete the workshop. On the other hand, teachers revealed Caucasian parents in attendance were more likely to continue the workshop.

Similar findings were also reported from African-American students. African-American children revealed that their parents were less involved at home when compared to Caucasian parents. They stated that their parents were less likely to supervise their work, manage their behaviors, control peer pressures, and motivate them to achieve in school. In fact, many African-American children in Shaker Heights revealed that their
homework would be completed if their parents monitored them after school. They suggested that when compared to Caucasian parents, their parents did not expect them to have much homework. Data revealed that not only did Caucasian parents expect their children to have homework, they also were more likely to make sure it was completed and returned to the teacher. Unfortunately, for African-American children, they did not have the same support. Due to their lack of involvement, many African-American children reported that they became very distracted at home. A lot of their time was dedicated to watching television. The more time children spend watching television at home, the less likely they will do well in school (Dumais, 2006).

In gathering information from residents of Shaker Heights, Ogbu noted several explanations for the lack of parental involvement by African-American parents. Ogbu suggested that African-American parents were not well aware of the educational process. Teachers believed that African-American parents did not know the importance of school organizations, school events, and programs dedicated to helping their children achieve in school. Hence, they did not know how to help their children achieve in school. In contrast, Ogbu believed that Caucasian parents understood the importance of school involvement. They attended parent-teacher conferences and in return took advantage of opportunities offered to help their children. The absence of African-American parents at parent-teacher conferences frustrated teachers because Shaker Heights had programs installed to help African-American students. Unfortunately, African-American parents who did not attend were least likely to be informed of these programs. Teachers believed that African-American parents who lacked an understanding of how the educational process works did not participate in school functions because they believed it was the
schools’ responsibility to do everything needed for their children to achieve. Teachers believed that African-American parents did not feel responsible for participating in school programs or contacting a teacher to discuss their children’s progress. Simply put, it was enough for their children just to go to Shaker Heights schools.

Teachers suggested that another explanation for the lack of involvement by African-American parents was that schools may alienate them. According to teachers, some African-American parents informed them that visiting their children’s school was a negative experience. Moreover, teachers believed that there was a perception held by African-American parents that school programs were predominately composed of “stay-home white moms.” They believed that this lead African-American parents to mistrust the school. As suggested during a group discussion, feelings toward the school may be influenced by the history of mistreatment of African-American by Caucasians. Actions taken against African-Americans to keep them out of suburban neighborhoods have made them distrustful of their Caucasian neighbors (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Moreover, previous history to keep blacks undereducated may have made many African-Americans distrustful of America’s education system. Unfortunately, not much emphasis was put on this explanation in Ogbu’s study.

The generation gap between parents and their children may also play a critical role in determining the lack of parental involvement in African-American parents (Ogbu, 2002). As revealed by African-American students in Shaker Heights, many of them felt that their parents’ views were too old for them to take their advice. Instead, students would turn to their peers for advice. By keeping their parents out of discussions, their parents became less informed of their difficulties at school. In fact, many teachers
believed that parents did not help their children because they did not know that their children were having problems at school. Teachers recalled many African-Americans parents surprised at parent-teacher conferences. On too many occasions, African-American parents would attend these conferences thinking that their children were achieving when they were really failing.

Schools may be one of the leading causes for the achievement gap (Catterall, 1998; Borman & Overman, 2004). Although Ogbu did not find any evidence to support this belief, many African-American students in this study believed that Shaker Heights schools significantly contributed to the achievement gap. African-American students believed that teachers had low expectations of their abilities. Due to this belief, African-American students felt that teachers treated them differently when compared to Caucasian students. In fact, African-American students revealed that they felt their teachers did not attempt to push them toward achievement. Residents of Shaker Heights believed that teachers expected African-American students to behave differently from Caucasians. Sadly for African-American students, it was expected for them to behave in a manner that would put them more at risk of academic failure. It should be revealed that although African-American students mentioned that their teachers lacked expectation for their abilities, Ogbu noted that African-American students never discussed their own personal experiences with any of his researchers. They usually discussed general statements that may have occurred due to teacher’s low expectations. Ogbu believed that many of these occurrences may have never existed.

It was strongly believed by residents of Shaker Heights that school counselors also lacked expectations for African-American students. Many members of the
community believed that African-American students were not encouraged to take advanced placement classes because school counselors believed they could not achieve in these types of classes. Unfortunately, there was strong belief that teachers taught children better in advanced placement classes than those who attended basic skill classes. Since most of the students who enrolled in advanced placement classes were Caucasian, these beliefs implied that they were getting a better education when compared to African-American students. Surprisingly, teachers acknowledged that students in advanced placement received a better education. When they were asked if students in advanced placement classes read the same books at the same pace as students in basic skill classes, teachers revealed that these classes were different. Teachers stated that they expected students in advanced placement classes to be more engaged in classroom discussion. On the other hand, students in basic skills classes usually did not critically discuss materials in the class. On many occasions, their discussions were off topic. Teachers in advanced placement classes expected their students to discuss topics in ways that would exhibit higher levels of learning. On the other hand, students in basic skills classes, which were mostly made up of African-American students, were asked to recall information rather than discuss the lesson.

In another study examining racial and ethnic achievement gaps in middle and upper class neighborhoods, Ferguson (2002) reviewed data collected by the Minority Student Achievement Network – an organization formed to narrow achievement gaps in the 15 affluent neighborhoods of California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Data was collected by surveying 34,218 secondary students during the 2000-01 academic school year on the
differences in socioeconomic characteristics, academic efforts, and student performances. An achievement gap was also evident in this study. Compared to Caucasian students, African-American students were reported to have lower grade point averages. Only 15% percent of African-American students reported they received a grade point average equivalent to an A. On the other hand, 50% of Caucasians reported this grade. Unfortunately, African-American students also reported that they were less likely to understand their teachers’ lessons in school. In this study, the differences in grade point average and understanding are associated with differences in socioeconomic characteristics between African-Americans and Caucasian families – not student or parent disengagement. African-American children in these neighborhoods were more likely to live in households that consisted of one parent, one parent and a stepparent, or no biological parents – 66%. Caucasian children were more likely to live with both biological parents – 77%. African-American children were also more likely to have three or more siblings with fewer resources at home such as computers when compared to Caucasian children. On average, 51% of African-American students reported that they lived with three or more siblings at home. Only 19 % of Caucasian children reported having just as many siblings. Most African-American children lived in households that were limited to one computer and less than one hundred books – more specifically over 50%. Conversely, 57% of Caucasians reported to have two or more computers at home and 79% reported that they had over 100 books at home. Assuming that siblings equal more sharing, it appeared that African-American families are at a greater disadvantage than their Caucasian classmates (Ferguson, 2002).
With data on achievement and socioeconomic characteristics, Ferguson analyzed whether the magnitude of achievement is different for children from lower, middle, and upper socioeconomic statuses. Ferguson used a multiple regression analysis with fixed effects to control for different schools and grade levels. According to Ferguson, disparities in socioeconomic characteristics predicted substantial portions of the difference in grade point averages. On average, African-American students that were classified as living in families of lower socioeconomic status were predicted to acquire a 2.38 grade point average. On the other hand, Caucasian children of similar characteristics were predicted to acquire a 2.52 grade point average. Contrary to popular belief, as African-American and Caucasian students were classified into higher levels of socioeconomic status, the achievement gap increased. African-American children classified as living in families of higher socioeconomic status were predicted to obtain a grade point average of 3.18 while their Caucasian peers of the same status were predicted to acquire a grade point average of 3.68. It should be noted that there is a difference between the degree to which socioeconomic characteristics helped African-American and Caucasian students. As African-American children moved from lower class to lower middle, upper middle, and upper class statuses, they made smaller gains in achievement when compared to Caucasian children.

In agreement with Ogbu, Ferguson also revealed that African-American students complete less homework when compared to Caucasian students. These differences may make it appear as though Caucasian students are more engaged in their school work. Ferguson revealed this is not true. According to his study, the differences between African-American and Caucasian students are not significant. Although African-
American students are completing less homework, the amount of time African-American students spend studying and doing homework is not that different than Caucasian students. On average, Caucasian students engage in homework approximately five more minutes per night than African-American students. Further analysis of the data revealed that this difference is not due to race but to the difference in classes students take – basic skills or advanced placement. Since more Caucasian students are enrolled in advanced placement classes it appears that African-American students are not completing homework. Ferguson also suggested that homework completion is not a strong indicator of how much time is spent on homework or student engagement. Students who are experiencing difficulties in school may spend more time on homework while completing less work. In Ferguson’s study, data revealed that African-American students work longer to complete the same amount of homework as Caucasian students.

Finally, Ferguson’s analysis revealed that African-American and Caucasian students work really hard in school for the same reasons. Such reasons were to: (1) get grades for enrollment in college, (2) please or impress parents, (3) get a better job, (4) prepare for tough college courses, and (5) learn the material. Another two reasons were because parents put pressure on them and they were interested in a particular subject. According to Ferguson, for the most part, African-American and Caucasian students ranked the list of reasons equally; however, there were two differences. African-American students were three times more likely to cite teacher encouragement as an important motivator rather than teacher demands. Conversely, Caucasian students were equally motivated by teacher encouragement and demands. According to African-American students in the study, teacher encouragement was described as an interaction
between teachers and students that instills confidence in children. African-American students reported that they responded better to this type of interaction. On the other hand, they did not respond well to teacher demands – a direct command to submit to authority which carries no assurance of care by the teacher. In conclusion, Ferguson believed that teachers may have to interact with African-American students in a different manner to improve learning compared to their interaction with Caucasian students.

**Academic Emphasis and the Achievement Gap**

Many researchers dispute the causes of achievement gaps in suburban schools. Some researchers believe it is a result of teacher, parents, and student disengagement, while others believe it to be the result of characteristics associated with socioeconomic status or a combination of both. Although there is disagreement on the causes, there is a general belief that positive and personal relationships students have with teachers, parents, and other students helped them achieve in school – regardless of any researched cause of the achievement gap. Research reveals that when parents encourage their children to succeed it helps them achieve (Borman & Overman, 2004; Castillo, 1999; Catterall, 1998; Floyd, 1996; Jackson, 1999; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 1999). Data also reveals that African-American children report having relationships with people, besides their parents, that contribute to their achievement (Floyd, 1996) – most of which were teachers and counselors. Like all students, middle class African-American students in suburban schools need positive and personal relationships to achieve. Middle class African-American students benefit from these relationships because they place emphasis on academics, also known as academic emphasis.
Academic emphasis is the extent to which one develops high but achievable goals, an orderly learning environment, believes in children’s abilities, works hard for academic achievement, and respects education. Research reveals that schools with academic emphasis can decrease achievement gaps (Phillips, 1997). For instance, in a study conducted by Goddard, Sweetland, and Hoy (2000), data revealed that schools with academic emphasis increased student performance in the areas of language arts and mathematics. Results found that each unit of increase of academic emphasis, as measured by the Organizational Health Inventory, accounted for 30% of increase in student performance. However, little is known about academic emphasis from other contexts beyond school. How does academic emphasis hold up for middle class African-American students in predominately white suburban schools when provided by schools, families, student peers as well as children having their own academic emphasis?

Limitations of Previous Studies

In previous research similar to those in the literature review, teacher and student opinions were usually collected to understand the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban schools. African-American parents’ opinions were rarely discussed. This study collected the opinions of African-American parents in predominately white suburban neighborhoods. In addition, previous studies also only examined the achievement gap with regard to African-American and Caucasian students. Thus, suggesting that all African-American students in suburban schools were failing and have similar characteristics. This study examines this myth. This study identified the difference between high achieving and low achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools by examining
School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis according to parents’ opinions. Finally, there is no literature on School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis and its relationship to the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban schools. This study examined the achievement gap through a socio-cultural context. Therefore, the achievement gap is observed through School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis.

Conclusion

Nationally, African-American students are underperforming when compared to the achievement of Caucasian students. The same trend is true in predominately white suburban schools. Data revealed that African-American students who attend suburban schools do not perform as well as their Caucasian peers (Alson, 2003; Ferguson et al., 2002; Ogbu, 2002). The achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students appeared in not only test scores but also in many other academic areas (Kober, 2001; Ogbu, 2002). Research suggested that the achievement gap in predominately white suburban schools may be attributed to many factors. Fortunately, research also revealed that academic emphasis may narrow achievement gaps. The current study observed the relationship between academic emphasis and achievement for African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. Adding to the literature and noting previous limitations, the current research also examined the perceptions of academic emphasis from parents of African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. Parents’ opinions are important to measure because research has shown that it is a strong predictor of student achievement (Hood & LoVette, 2002). The current study: (1)
collected parents opinions of academic emphasis and the cause of the achievement gap in predominately white suburban schools, (2) attempted to find a difference in academic emphasis between high performing and low performing African-Americans in predominately white suburban schools, and (3) used a collective measure such as academic emphasis to indicate potential differences between high and low performing students.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Chapter three describes the methodology used to address eight research questions in regards to the relationship between School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis and the achievement of African-Americans in predominately white suburban schools. More specifically, the participants, materials, measurements, validity and reliability, design and procedure, and data analysis plan are addressed. Results and a discussion of the study’s findings follow in subsequent chapters.

Participants

The target population for this study was black parents and guardians of African-American and biracial students attending grades 7-12 in predominately white suburban schools in a Midwestern neighborhood. If parents identified their children as biracial, they had to identify that there children were partially African-American to qualify for this study. All students, whose parents were enlisted in the study, attended schools located in one predominately white suburban neighborhood. In this neighborhood, African-American families made up less than 10% of the total population (Census, 2000). African-American children made up approximately 16% of the overall student population of this neighborhood group. Of the total students qualifying for this study (N = 627), a
A subsample of 251 surveys were returned by parents (40%). Since this study was only interested in collecting information from African-American parents of black or biracial children, only African-American families who were parenting black or biracial high school children were used for this study. Parents of African-American children who did not identify themselves as black were not used in the study. Of the 251 surveys, 6 were dropped from the study as parents revealed they were not African-American. An additional 15 surveys were dropped from the study because parents completed a survey for one of their children who was not in grades 7-12. Seven more surveys were dropped because participants filled out two surveys for the same child – one survey was randomly selected for the study. Finally, two participants returned a survey blank with the exception of the open-ended question. They revealed in the open-ended question that they did not want to participate in the study so they were dropped. The final sample consisted of 221 completed surveys from black parents of African-American and biracial students attending grades 7-12 in a predominately white suburban district.

**Materials**

A self-constructed questionnaire (Appendix A) was used to survey parents’ opinions of academic emphasis and student achievement. Academic emphasis questions were constructed from the Organization Health Inventory for Secondary Schools (Hoy, 2006) – an instrument designed to measure academic emphasis in schools. In this instrument, academic emphasis is the extent to which the school is driven by the mission of academic achievement – challenging goals are set for students, learning environments are structured, teachers believe in student’s abilities, students work hard to gain academic excellence, and classmates respect children who achieve in school. For the purpose of
this study, academic emphasis was examined according to these characteristics not only with regard to schools but also families, children, and students’ peers.

The design of the survey was in accordance with guidelines supported by Miller (2005). For instance, the questionnaire was printed as an 8.5 x 5.5 inch booklet, items were listed in a 7 x 4.5 inch space in 10-point type font size, and the questionnaire was printed on 20 lb. paper. As suggested by Miller, these specifications allow for the questionnaire to be easily completed, folded, and returned in a regular business envelope. The questionnaire consisted of 40 closed-response academic emphasis items, 13 demographic questions, 2 academic achievement questions, and 1 open-ended question regarding the cause of the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban schools. Closed-response academic emphasis items were set in a summated rating scale format – also known as Likert Scales. Each closed-response academic emphasis item had two levels of disagreement and agreement: (1) Strongly Disagree = SD, (2) Disagree = D, (3) Agree = A, and (4) Strongly Agree = SA. A neutral response was not provided to force participants into making a choice.

Measurements

Items within the questionnaire measured School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis, characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement), demographic variables, and student achievement. It should be noted that items measuring the characteristics of academic emphasis are the same items used to measure School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis.
School academic emphasis. Ten items on the questionnaire were composed of statements concerning School Academic Emphasis. School Academic Emphasis was important to measure because research has shown that schools with academic emphasis close achievement gaps (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). In this study, School Academic Emphasis was the extent to which parents view schools’ drive toward academic achievement. Such drive was measured by: (1) parents’ perception of schools setting challenging goals for their children, “My child’s school sets high standards for my child” and “My child’s school is not challenging,” (2) parents’ view of schools organizing an environment conducive to learning, “My child’s classrooms are well structured and organized” and “My child’s school is orderly and very serious,” (3) parents’ opinion of teachers believing in their children’s abilities, “Overall, my child’s teachers do not believe in the abilities of my child” and “Teachers believe that my child has the ability to organize and execute their own school work,” (4) parents’ perception of teacher’s working hard to provide students with an adequate education, “My child’s school has programs available for when children need academic help” and “Teachers at my child’s school work hard to give my child a solid education,” and (5) parents’ take on schools acknowledging their children’s achievement, “The school rewards my child when he/she does well in school” and “My child’s achievements are acknowledge by the school.” It should be noted that two of these items were reverse coded. They were items stating “My child’s school is not challenging,” and “Overall, my child’s teachers do not believe in the abilities of my child.”

Family academic emphasis. Ten items on the questionnaire contained statements reflecting parents’ attitudes toward Family Academic Emphasis. Family Academic
Emphasis is important to measure because research has revealed that children who achieve in school report that their families contribute to their success (Jackson, 1999). Family Academic Emphasis was the extent to which parents view their own drive toward helping their children achieve. It was measured by: (1) observing parents’ self-perception of setting challenging but achievable goals for their children, “I expect my child to complete all of his/her homework” and “I expect my child to do well in school,” (2) managing a structured and orderly home, “I enforce rules that make my home well controlled and serious about school” and “I enforce rules at home to make sure school work is completed,” (3) believing in their children’s abilities, “I believe that my child has the ability to do well in school” and “I believe that my child has the ability to organize and execute their own work,” (4) working hard for their children’s education, “I help my child as much as I can with school work” and “I make sure my child has all supplies necessary to achieve in school,” and (5) acknowledging their children’s accomplishments, “My family respects children who do well in school” and “I praise my child when he or she does well in school.”

Children academic emphasis. The questionnaire had ten items which consisted of statements reflecting parents’ attitudes toward their children’s academic emphasis. Children Academic Emphasis was important to measure because research has shown that when students are highly engaged in academics, they are self-motivated (Siren & Rogers-Siren, 2004). Therefore, Children Academic Emphasis was the extent to which parents’ view their children’s drive toward academic excellence. It was measured by observing parents’ perceptions of their children’s determination. Such determination was measured by: (1) parents’ view of their children setting challenging goals, “My child challenges
themselves to do well in school everyday” and “My child sets high, but achievable goals,” (2) parents’ view of their children creating an organized environment conducive to learning, “My child studies in a room with minimal distractions” and “My child studies or completes his/her homework before watching TV,” (3) parents’ opinion of their children’s confidence, “My child believes that he/she can do well in school” and “My child dislikes school because he/she does poorly,” (4) parents’ opinion of their children’s studious practices, “My child takes on the initiative to seek extra assignments to further prepare for school” and “My child revisits previous assignments to correct wrong answers,” and (5) parents’ view on their children respecting other students who achieve, “My child respects other students who get good grades” and “My child feels that students who do well in school are ‘nerds’.” It should be noted that two items were reverse coded. They were: “My child dislikes school because he/she does poorly” and “My child feels that students who do well in school are ‘nerds’.”

Student peer academic emphasis. Ten items within the questionnaire reflected parents’ attitudes toward their children’s peers’ academic emphasis. Student Peer Academic Emphasis was important to measure because research revealed that at adolescence, teenagers stray away from their families and develop supportive relationships with their friends (Bixenstine, Decorte, & Bixenstine, 1976; Constanzo & Shaw, 1966). Peer relationships are an influential support group during adolescence (Clark, 1991). Student Peer Academic Emphasis was the extent to which parents view their children’s friends and their drive toward academic excellence. Such drive was measured by: (1) parents’ opinions of their children’s peers and their practice of setting challenging goals, “My child’s friends set high academic goals for themselves” and “My
child’s friends are not challenged to get good grades,” (2) belonging to a positive social group, “My child’s friends hang around other children who are serious about school” and “My child’s friends frequently study” (3) helping their children with academic difficulties, “My child’s friends study with my child” and “My child’s friends help each other with homework especially when it is hard,” (4) believing in their children, “My child’s friends think that my child is not smart” and “My child’s best friend thinks that my child has strong academic ability,” and (5) respecting other children who achieve in school “My child’s friends respect other students who get good grades” and “My child’s friends believe that making the honor roll is important.” It should be noted that two of these items were reverse coded. There were items stating “My child’s friends are not challenged to get good grades” and “My child’s friends thinks that my child is not smart.”

Setting goals. Items measuring the characteristic of Setting Goals were the same as those measuring School, Parent, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis; however, this scale consisted of only items that pertain to setting challenging goals for children. The eight questionnaire items pertaining to Setting Goals follow: “My child’s school sets high standards for my child,” “My child’s school is not challenging,” “I expect my child to complete all of his/her homework,” “I expect my child to do well in school,” “My child challenges themselves to do well in school everyday,” “My child sets high, but achievable goals,” “My child’s friends set high academic goals for themselves,” and “My child’s friends are not challenged to get good grades.” It should be noted that two of these items (the second item and the last item) were reverse coded.
**Setting environment.** Items measuring the characteristic of Setting Environment were the same as those measuring School, Parent, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis; however, the Setting Environment scale consisted of only items that pertain to setting structured environments conducive to learning. The eight questionnaire items follow: “My child’s classrooms are well structured and organized,” “My child’s school is orderly and very serious,” “I enforce rules that make my home well controlled and serious about school,” “I enforce rules at home to make sure school work is completed,” “My child studies in a room with minimal distractions,” “My child studies or completes his/her homework before watching TV,” “My child’s friends hang around other children who are serious about school,” and “My child’s friends frequently study.”

**Believing in children.** There were eight items that measured Believing in Children. These items were the same as those used to measure School, Parent, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis. They were as follows: “Overall, my child’s teachers do not believe in the abilities of my child,” “Teachers believe that my child has the ability to organize and execute their own school work,” “I believe that my child has the ability to do well in school,” “I believe that my child has the ability to organize and execute their own work,” “My child believes that he/she can do well in school,” “My child dislikes school because he/she does poorly,” “My child’s friends thinks that my child is not smart,” and “My child’s best friend thinks that my child has strong academic ability.” It should be noted that three of these items were reverse coded. They were: “Overall, my child’s teachers do not believe in the abilities of my child,” “My child dislikes school because he/she does poorly,” and “My child’s friends thinks that my child is not smart.”
Working hard. Items measuring Working Hard were the same as those measuring School, Parent, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis; however, the Working Hard scale consisted of only items that pertain to working hard to help children gain academic excellence. These items were: “My child’s school has programs available for when children needs academic help,” “Teachers at my child’s school work hard to give my child a solid education,” “I help my child as much as I can with school work,” “I make sure my child has all supplies necessary to achieve in school,” “My child takes on the initiative to seek extra assignments to further prepare for school,” “My child revisits previous assignments to correct wrong answers,” “My child’s friends study with my child,” and “My child’s friends help each other with homework especially when it is hard.”

Acknowledging achievement. Eight items measured Acknowledging Achievement. These items were the same as those used to measure School, Parent, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis; however, the Acknowledging Achievement scale consisted of eight items that pertain to acknowledging academic achievement. They were: “The school rewards my child when he/she does well in school,” “My child’s achievements are acknowledge by the school,” “My family respects children who do well in school,” “I praise my child when he or she does well in school,” “My child respects other students who get good grades,” “My child feels that students who do well in school are ‘nerds’,” “My child’s friends respect other students who get good grades,” and “My child’s friends believe that making the honor roll is important.” The item stating “My child feels that students who do well in school are ‘nerds’” was reversed coded.
**Demographic variables.** The questionnaire also contained 13 items (Appendix B) to measure demographic variables. Demographic information was needed to observe possible relationships between academic emphasis, student achievement, and demographic variables. The questionnaire requested the following demographic information: (1) child’s gender, (2) number of children in the household, (3) name of child’s current school, (4) grade of child, (5) guardianship, (6) relationship to child, (7) parent’s race/ethnicity, (8) satisfaction of school, (9) numbers of computers at home, (10) child’s race/ethnicity, (11) years lived in neighborhood, (12) family income, and (13) highest level of education completed by parents. Questions requesting guardianship and name of child’s school were only used to determine if participants qualified for the study. If participants revealed that they were not a guardian or their child did not attend a participating school, the survey was dropped from the study.

It should also be noted that open-response and closed-response items were used to collect demographic information. For instance, open-response questions were used to collect information on the number of children in the household, name of child’s current school, grade of child, numbers of computers at home, and years lived in neighborhood. Conversely, closed-response items were used to collect all other demographic variables. In order to collect the child’s gender, a closed-response item was given that allowed parents to select either “Male” or “Female.” Two other items allowed participants to respond by selecting “Yes” or “No” (i.e., “Are you the child’s legal parent/guardian?” and “Are you happy with your child’s school?”). Items that collected parent’s and child’s race/ethnicity were obtained similarly. They provided six options for participants to select. They were: (1) African-American, (2) Native-American, (3) Asian-American,
(4) Caucasian, (5) Latino/Hispanic, and (6) Other. It was determined that the selection of “Other” will offer parents the opportunity to write their race/ethnicity if they did not identify with those provided. This question was also used to determine if participants qualified for the study. If participants did not circle African-American as an option, they were dropped from the study. On the other hand, if participants selected African-American with another race/ethnicity or selected African-American and “Other,” they were considered biracial. Since this study only collected information from African-Americans or biracial parents of black or biracial students, this information was used in for the demographic variable Race of Parent and Race of Child. Race of Parent or Child measured whether participants and their children were African-American or biracial.

Another item allowed participants to select “Other” for an option. Participants were asked, “What is your relationship to the child?” and provided the options “Mother,” “Father,” and “Other.” Again, a space was provided for participants to share their relationship to their child. Finally, two closed-response items requested participants to provide information on family income (i.e., “What was your approximate household income last year (2007)?”) and highest level of education completed by parents (i.e., “What is the highest level of education your have completed?”) Participants were provided with six options to select their family income. Each selection was in ranges of $20,000, beginning with the selection “Less than $20,000” and ending with “More than $110,000.” This item was written in a closed-response format to encourage participants to provide an answer. To collect information on highest level of education completed by parents, eight options were provided: (1) Some High School, (2) High School Diploma or

Student achievement. Two items in the demographic section measured student achievement. Parents were asked to provide their child’s grade point average from 0 to 4.0 and to circle the types of grades their children typically received (e.g., A, B, C, etc.). It should be noted that the question requesting the types of grades children typically received was developed as a backup plan if a large percentage of parents did not indicate their children’s grade point average. This was not the case so their responses were not used.

Validity

The questionnaire was put through a series of assessments to examine validity. The questionnaire was sent to an expert in the literature of academic emphasis to review items in regards to face and content validity. Items were edited according to feedback by the expert. After items were edited, the questionnaire was administered to participants of a Black Parent Association meeting held in another Midwestern predominately white suburban neighborhood. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and to identify problems they had in understanding and answering all items. Twenty-eight participants completed the questionnaire and provided feedback. After feedback was provided, items were analyzed again for face and content validity. Face and content validity were determined in accordance with guidelines supported by research (Patten, 1997). Again, each item was reviewed and carefully constructed with the supervision of an expert in the literature of academic emphasis. The Organizational Health Inventory for Secondary Schools was also used as a model (Hoy, 2006). To further ensure content
validity, items were written in a manner appropriate for all participants. The questionnaire was written on a fourth grade level to make certain that all questions were comprehensible as detected by a feature in Microsoft Word.

Reliability

Coefficient alphas were computed for the internal consistency estimate of reliability for academic emphasis scales. The alphas for School Academic Emphasis, Family Academic Emphasis, Children Academic Emphasis, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis were .84, .72, .81, and .84, respectively. Moreover, the alphas for Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement were .67, .65, .78, .60, and .67. According to Patten (1997), most published tests have reliability coefficients of .80 or higher; however, a reliability of .50 to .60 is satisfactory for newly developed instruments. All scales had a coefficient alpha higher than .60. These results are indicated in Table 3.1.
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Table 3.1: Coefficient Alphas for Academic Emphasis Scales and Characteristics
(N = 221)

Design and Procedures

The existing research is a quantitative study that used survey methodology to gather data. This research was designed to analyze the relationship between the achievement of African-American students and parents’ attitudes towards School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis and its characteristics. Parents’ attitudes were collected during the third quarter of the 2007-08 academic school year using a self-constructed questionnaire described in the previous “Materials” section.

Participants were contacted by using the mailing list of African-American and biracial students attending grades 7-12 in a predominately white suburban school district.
located in the Midwest region of the United States. The mailing list was used to recruit families because all African-American parents whose children attended schools in this neighborhood were listed on the mailing list. It should be noted, that the school district used for this study was also selected for two reasons: (1) all of their schools are located within a predominately white suburban neighborhood and (2) they were willing to provide the contact information of all their secondary African-American students. Since all African-American parents were provided with a questionnaire, it was assumed that threats to external validity would be minimal because all participants were provided with a questionnaire in a manner that would allow them to return their survey randomly. It should also be noted, that other predominately white suburban districts were contacted to participate in this study; however, they declined to participate because they didn’t want to disclose student’s contact information.

The Tailored Design Method, a survey procedure based on the theory of human interaction, was used to make contact with parents, distribute questionnaires, and receive data (Dillman, 2007). The first step of the Tailored Design Method was to initiate contact with parents. Therefore, a pre-notice postcard was sent to African-American parents two days prior to the shipment of the questionnaire packet (Appendix C). The postcard informed participants of the arrival of the questionnaire. After the postcard was mailed, the questionnaire packet was sent to participants. The packet included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix D), a questionnaire attached with a dollar, and a stamped, return-addressed envelope. A dollar was used as an incentive for parents to fill out the questionnaire. Parents with more than one child were sent additional questionnaires and incentives to match the number of children enrolled in
volunteering schools that also qualified for the study. One additional cover letter (Appendix E) and questionnaire were sent to participants who did not return a questionnaire within one week of shipping. This procedure was used to minimize selection bias – an internal validity threat that occurs when one type of participant is used for a study (e.g., participants that actively volunteer for studies). After two weeks from the initial postcard distribution, a final postcard was sent to thank participants for volunteering in the study (Appendix F). All data was collected through U.S. mail.

Using mail surveys poses strengths and weaknesses. In regards to strengths, mail survey is a reliable method for conducting large-scale research (Dillman, 2007). It allows a single experimenter to collect data about a number of variables from a large group of participations. It also allows the experimenter to provide research questions to participants and enables participants to respond at their own convenience. Conversely, there are limitations. Such limitations include: inaccuracy of responses, non-responsiveness, and subjective interpretation of rating scales. Since mail surveys are not completed in front of the experimenter, participants may inaccurately fill out questionnaires. Another significant weakness in using mail surveys is that questionnaires are open for interpretation without the presence of the experimenter. For instance, in summated rating scales, the magnitude of each statement is interpreted by the participants. Participants may not be aware of the reason they selected one answer over another. Other limitations in using mail survey are the validity and reliability of responses. While completing a survey, participants usually provide information on their feelings toward an item; however, responses cannot always be taken as accurate measures of what participants actually feel. According to Dillman (2007), this is particularly true
for feelings and behaviors that are not socially accepted. If a participant feels that their actual behaviors are not socially accepted, they may provide information to appear more positive. This is particularly true if the experimenter is not present at the time participants complete their survey—much like a mail survey. Finally, participants may not return their questionnaire, thereby reducing response rates.

Measures were taken to minimize limitations of mail survey methodology. For instance, to reduce inaccurate responses, directions were provided on the first, second, and third pages of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also written in a manner to reduce subjective interpretation. As previously stated, items were written on a fourth grade reading level to make certain that all questions were comprehensible and questionnaire items were written in a summated rating scale format. There were only four selections for each item: (1) Strongly Disagree = SD, (2) Disagree = D, (3) Agree = A, and (4) Strongly Agree = SA. By using only four selections, interpretation for each statement was minimized. Finally, to reduce non-responsiveness, one additional cover letter and questionnaire were sent to participants who did not return a questionnaire within one-week of shipping. As previously mentioned, this procedure was used to minimize selection bias. It should be noted that an additional 93 surveys were returned upon the second distribution of questionnaires.

Data Analysis Plan

Analysis of data proceeded in several stages. In the first stage of the data analysis plan, power was calculated to ensure that there were enough subjects to detect significant statistical differences. Assuming a standard power of .80, a standard alpha of .05, a medium effect size ($r = .15$), and at least eight independent variables, the minimum
number of subjects needed for data analysis purposes was n = 107. The final n = 221 represents more than enough power for all planned data analyses (Cohen, 1988; 1992). After power was referenced, descriptive analyses were used to examine the demographic data, student achievement, and academic emphasis. Correlation was used to answer Research Question 1 – “Is there a significant correlation between academic emphasis, characteristics of academic emphasis, and demographic variables for African-American children in predominately white suburban schools?” Following this research question, another correlation analysis was conducted between School, Family, Children, Student Peer Academic Emphasis and grade point average to answer Research Question 2 – “How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?”

A partial correlation analysis was used to answer Research Question 3 – “How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban school after controlling for significant demographic variables?” In order to complete this analysis, first a correlation analysis was completed between demographic variables and grade point average. Significant demographic variables were controlled for during the partial correlation analysis. These results were compared to the previous research question.

After analyzing how School, Family, Children and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on the achievement of African-American students in predominately white suburban schools after controlling for significant demographic variables, a partial
correlation analyses and an univariate analysis of variance was conducted to answer Research Question 4 – “Do African-American students with higher levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis perform better than students with only one and no forms of academic emphasis?” In order to complete this analysis, African-American students were assigned to two subcategories based upon their academic emphasis scores. These subcategories were: (1) African-American students who did not score high on at least two forms of academic emphasis and (2) African-American students who scored high on two or more forms of academic emphasis. Scores were considered high if they were one standard deviation above the mean. A partial correlation analysis was completed between these subcategories and grade point average. Again, significant demographic variables were controlled. Furthermore, after the partial correlation analysis was conducted, grade point averages for these subcategories were compared using a univariate analysis of variance (UNIANOVA). One-way analysis of variance is a statistical technique that is used to test for mean differences among two groups. The null hypothesis suggested that all averages will be similar.

Following analyses of School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis, characteristics of academic emphasis were analyzed in the same manner. A correlation analysis was conducted between characteristics of academic emphasis and grade point average to answer Research Question 5 – “How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?”
Another partial correlation analysis was used to answer Research Question 6 – “How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools after controlling for significant demographic variables?” Again, significant demographic variables were controlled for during the partial correlation analysis. Results from this partial correlation were compared to the results of Research Question 5.

After analyzing how characteristics of academic emphasis load on the achievement of African-American students in predominately white suburban schools, a partial correlation analyses and a analysis of variance was conducted to answer Research Question 7 – “Do African-American students with higher levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis perform better than students with only two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis?” Similar to Research Question 4, African-American students were again assigned to two subcategories based upon their scores. These subcategories were: (1) African-American students who did not score high on at least three characteristic of academic emphasis and (2) African-American students who scored high on three or more characteristics of academic emphasis. Again, scores were considered high if they were one standard deviation above the mean. A partial correlation analysis was completed between these subcategories and grade point average. After the partial correlation analysis was conducted, grade point averages for these subcategories were compared using a univariate analysis of variance (UNIANOVA). Again, the null hypothesis assumed that all averages were similar.
Finally after all descriptive statistics were completed, the following open-ended question was examined: “Research shows that there is an achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in suburban school districts. In other words, White children are doing better academically than Black children in suburban schools. What do you feel causes this achievement gap?” The open-ended question was reviewed through thematic analysis (Smith, 1993). Thematic analysis enabled the experimenter to select specific answers that reflected achievement gap themes while also examining the academic achievement of the participants’ children. After the thematic analysis was conducted, responses were “dummy” coded for a partial correlation analysis. Therefore, if a participant’s response was a reoccurring theme, they received a 1 for the “dummy” code. Conversely, if they did not provide a reoccurring theme, they received a zero. This was used to answer Research Question 8 – “What do parents of low achieving and high achieving African-American students feel are the causes for achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools?” The data analysis plan was calculated in a computer software called SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study examined the relationship between academic emphasis and student achievement for African-American students in predominately white suburban neighborhoods. The following chapter reports data collected from black parents of African-American or biracial students in predominately white suburban schools during the third quarter of the 2007-08 academic school year. First, descriptive analysis results will be reviewed – followed by research questions. This chapter will end with the final research question, “What do parents of low achieving and high achieving African-American students feel are the causes for achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools?”

The general demographic information for participant responses is presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Participants of the study were predominantly mothers (77.4%) of high school children (59.7%). Each family averaged 2.14 children and had 1.81 computers in the household. Parents described their family as: (1) having a parent, on average, with at least an associate’s degree or a bachelor’s degree, (2) living in their neighborhood for approximately 6 years and 8 months, and (3) having an annul household income approximately between $61,000 and $80,000. Approximately 89% of
participants identified themselves, as well as their children, as African-American, non-mixed. The remaining percentage identified themselves and their children as African-American, mixed with another race/ethnicity. Their children’s gender was evenly divided – 50.9% female to 49.1% male. In regards to their children’s achievement, participants on average described their children as having a 2.96 grade point average. Furthermore, 91.6% of parents were happy with their children’s school.

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</tbody>
</table>

* Item was written in a closed-response format where:

1 = Less than $20,000          2 = $21,000 - $40,000          3 = $41,000 - $60,000
4 = $61,000 - $80,000          5 = $81,000 - $100,000          6 = More than $100,000

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Demographic Variables and Grade Point Average (N = 221)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorical Demographic Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Guardian</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (Non-Mixed)</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (Mixed)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (Mixed)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current School of Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School A</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School B</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School C</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Frequencies and Percents for Categorical Demographic Variables

(N = 221)

The descriptive statistics for School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis scales, as well as their characteristics, are listed in Table 4.3.

Participants revealed that their children receive the least academic emphasis from their
student peers (M = 29.4). On average, parents rated their children’s academic emphasis as 30.7 and their children’s school as 32.5. They rated their own academic emphasis highest (M = 37.2). In regards to characteristics of academic emphasis, parents revealed that Believing in Children was the most frequent characteristic of academic emphasis provided to their children (M = 27.4). Their ratings indicated that they believed Setting Goals (M = 26.7) was the second most frequent characteristic of academic emphasis followed by Acknowledging Achievement (M = 25.3), Setting Environment (M = 25.0), and Working Hard (M = 24.0).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Peer Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>4.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Goals</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Environment</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing in Children</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Hard</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging Achievement</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for Academic Emphasis Scales and Characteristics (N = 221)
Correlation analyses were conducted between School, Family, Children, Student Peer Academic Emphasis scales, characteristics of academic emphasis, and demographic variables to address Research Question 1 – “Is there a significant correlation between academic emphasis, characteristics of academic emphasis, and demographic variables for African-American children in predominately white suburban schools?” These results can be found in Table 4.4.

Most of the significant relationships between academic emphasis and characteristics of academic emphasis were with three demographic variables: the demographic variable indicating that another guardian, besides a mother or father, completed the questionnaire; school happiness; and gender of child. Of the three demographic variables, school happiness was significantly and positively correlated with the most forms and characteristics of academic emphasis. It had a significant positive relationship with School Academic Emphasis ($r = .422$, $p < 0.01$), Student Peer Academic Emphasis ($r = .201$, $p < 0.01$), Setting Goals ($r = .314$, $p < 0.01$), Believing in Children ($r = .201$, $p < 0.01$), Working Hard ($r = .202$, $p < 0.01$), and Acknowledging Achievement ($r = .239$, $p < 0.01$). Gender of child followed second. It had significant and positive correlations to Children Academic Emphasis ($r = .285$, $p < 0.01$), Student Peer Academic Emphasis ($r = .210$, $p < 0.01$), Setting Goals ($r = .200$, $p < 0.01$), Believing in Children ($r = .225$, $p < 0.01$), and Working Hard ($r = .164$, $p < 0.05$). Conversely, the demographic variable indicating that another guardian, besides a mother or father, completed the questionnaire was negatively correlated to Family Academic Emphasis ($r = -.134$, $p < 0.05$), Believing in Children ($r = -.167$, $p < 0.05$), and Acknowledging Achievement ($r = -.145$, $p < 0.05$). There were two demographic variables that had only one significant
relationship to academic emphasis or a characteristic of academic emphasis. These correlations were between the number of computers in a household and School Academic Emphasis ($r = -.153$, $p < 0.05$) and the number of children in a household and Acknowledging Achievement ($r = -.168$, $p < 0.05$).

Another correlation analysis was conducted between School, Family, Children, Student Peer Academic Emphasis and grade point average to answer Research Question 2 – “How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?”

These results can be found in Table 4.5. All academic emphasis scales were positively correlated to grade point average at a 0.01 significant level with the exception of School Academic Emphasis. School Academic Emphasis was positively correlated to grade point average at a 0.05 significance level. According to the results, Children Academic Emphasis had the strongest correlation with grade point average ($r = .612$, $p < 0.01$) while Student Peer Academic Emphasis ($r = .436$, $p < 0.01$), Family Academic Emphasis ($r = .361$, $p < 0.01$), and School Academic Emphasis ($r = .165$, $p < 0.05$) had weaker, but still significant, relationships.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Other Guardian</th>
<th>Race of Parent</th>
<th>School Happiness</th>
<th>Gender of Child</th>
<th>Race of Child</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Number of Computers</th>
<th>Parents' Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Years in Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.442**</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>-.153*</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>-.134*</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.283**</td>
<td>-.089</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Peer Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.201**</td>
<td>.210**</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Goals</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>-.062</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.314**</td>
<td>.200**</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.107</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Environment</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>-.079</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing in Children</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>-.167*</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.201**</td>
<td>.225**</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Hard</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.202**</td>
<td>.164*</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging Achievement</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.239**</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.168*</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table 4.4: Correlation Analyses for Academic Emphasis Scales, Characteristics of Academic Emphasis, and Demographic Variables (N = 221)
Partial correlation analysis was used to answer Research Question 3 – “How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban school after controlling for significant demographic variables?” As indicated in Table 4.6, only six demographic variables had significant relationships to grade point average – the demographic variable indicating that another guardian, besides a mother of father, completed the questionnaire (r = -.240, p < 0.01); school happiness (r = .149, p < 0.05); gender of child (r = .339, p < 0.01); parents’ highest level of education (r = .169, p < 0.05); family income (r = .166, p < 0.05); and years lived in neighborhood (r = .159, p < 0.05). These demographic variables were removed from the partial correlation analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Academic Emphasis</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.165*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.361**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.612**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Peer Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.436**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 4.5: Correlation Analyses for Academic Emphasis Scales and Grade Point Average (N = 196)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Guardian</td>
<td>-.240**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Parent</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Happiness</td>
<td>.149*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of Child</td>
<td>.339**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Child</td>
<td>-.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>-.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Computers</td>
<td>.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Highest Level of Education</td>
<td>.169*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>.166*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Neighborhood</td>
<td>.159*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 4.6: Correlation Analyses for Demographic Variables and Grade Point Average
(N = 196)

After significant demographic variables were removed from the correlation analysis, only three forms of academic emphasis continued to hold significant relationships with grade point average – Family Academic Emphasis ($r = .328$, $p < 0.01$),
Children Academic Emphasis ($r = .590$, $p < 0.01$), and Student Peer Academic Emphasis ($r = .353$, $p < 0.01$). School Academic Emphasis was not correlated to grade point average. These results can be found in Table 4.7. It should be noted that the rankings for School, Family, Children, Student Peer Academic Emphasis and grade point average remained the same before and after controlling for demographic variables. In other words, Children Academic Emphasis had the strongest relationship to grade point average, followed by Student Peer Academic Emphasis, Family Academic Emphasis, and School Academic Emphasis even after controlling for demographic variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Academic Emphasis</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.328*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.590*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Peer Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>.353*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 4.7: Partial Correlation Analyses for Academic Emphasis Scales and Grade Point Average (N = 170)

In order to answer Research Question 4 – *"Do African-American students with higher levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis perform better than students with only one and no forms of academic emphasis?"* African-American students were assigned to two subcategories based upon their academic emphasis scores. These subcategories were: (1) African-American students who did not score high at least two
forms of academic emphasis, and (2) African-American students who scored high on two or more forms of academic emphasis. Scores were considered high if they were one standard deviation above the mean. It should be noted that the original research question was, “Do African-American students with higher levels of four forms of academic emphasis perform better than students with only three, two, one and no forms of academic emphasis?” Unfortunately, groups that had high levels of two, three, and four forms of academic emphasis were combined because there were not enough participants who qualified for each category. Descriptive data for African-American students who scored high on four, three, two, one, and no forms of academic emphasis are provided in Table 4.8. After combining categories to represent the revised research question, there were 168 African-American students who did not score high on at least two forms of academic emphasis and 53 African-American students who scored high on two or more forms of academic emphasis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Levels of Academic Emphasis</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero High Levels of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One High Level of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two High Levels of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three High Levels of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four High Levels of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Frequencies and Percents for Students with High Levels of Zero, One, Two, Three, and Four Forms of Academic Emphasis (N = 221)
Again, the six demographic variables that had significant relationships to grade
point average were removed from the partial correlation to answer Research Question 4. 
After these variables were removed from the correlation analysis, students with high
levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis had a significant correlation to grade
point average ($r = .247$, $p < 0.01$).

Additionally, a univariate analysis of variance (UNIANOVA) was used to further
check the difference of grade point averages between these two groups. African-
American children with high levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis had
significantly higher grade point averages. These results can be found in Table 4.9.
Table 4.9: UNIANOVA Table Showing the Significance of Having High Levels of Two or More Forms of Academic Emphasis (N = 178)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>12.128*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.064</td>
<td>17.078</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>485.617</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>485.617</td>
<td>1367.677</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of Child</td>
<td>7.252</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.252</td>
<td>20.426</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More High Levels of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>2.540</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.540</td>
<td>7.155</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>62.137</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1637.953</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>74.265</td>
<td>177</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* R Squared = .163 (adjusted R Squared = .154)

The following covariates were not statistically significant and thus not used for the final model: the demographic variable indicating that another guardian, besides a mother of father, completed the questionnaire, school happiness, parents’ highest level of education, family income, and years lived in neighborhood.

Similar to Research Question 2, a correlation analysis was conducted between characteristics of academic emphasis and grade point average to answer Research Question 5 – “How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?” These results are provided Table 4.10.
All characteristics of academic emphasis were positively correlated to grade point average. The characteristic of academic emphasis which had the strongest significant relationship to grade point average was Believing in Children ($r = .572$, $p < 0.01$).

Results also indicated that Setting Goals ($r = .430$, $p < 0.01$) had the second strongest relationship to grade point average while Acknowledging Achievement ($r = .405$, $p < 0.01$), Working Hard ($r = .383$, $p < 0.01$), and Setting Environment ($r = .293$, $p < 0.01$) had weaker, but still significant, relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Goals</td>
<td>.430*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Environment</td>
<td>.293*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing in Children</td>
<td>.572*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Hard</td>
<td>.383*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging Achievement</td>
<td>.405*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 4.10: Correlation Analyses for Characteristics of Academic Emphasis and Grade Point Average (N = 196)

As addressed in Table 4.6, six demographic variables had significant relationships to grade point average – the demographic variable indicating that another guardian completed the questionnaire ($r = -.240$, $p < 0.01$), school happiness ($r = .148$, $p < 0.05$), gender of child ($r = .339$, $p < 0.01$), parents’ highest level of education ($r = .169$, $p < 0.05$), family income ($r = .166$, $p < 0.05$), and years lived in neighborhood ($r = .159$, $p < 0.05$).
These demographics were removed from the partial correlation analysis to answer Research Question 6 – “How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools after controlling for significant demographic variables?”

After significant demographic variables were removed from the correlation analysis, all characteristics of academic emphasis continued to have a significant positive relationship to grade point average. Believing in Children remained to have the strongest correlation with grade point average ($r = .510, p < 0.01$). Setting Goals had the second strongest relationship to grade point average ($r = .346, p < 0.01$), while Working Hard ($r = .340, p < 0.01$), Setting Environment ($r = .252, p < 0.01$), and Acknowledging Achievement ($r = .238, p < 0.05$) had weaker, but significant, relationships. These results are presented in Table 4.11. It should be noted that after controlling for demographic variables, the order of relationships between characteristics of academic emphasis and grade point average had changed. Believing in Children and Setting Goals had remained the strongest and second strongest relationship, respectively, to grade point average after controlling for demographics variables. The order of relationships between Working Hard, Setting Environment, Acknowledging Achievement, and grade point average had changed.
### Characteristics of Academic Emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Goals</td>
<td>.346**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Environment</td>
<td>.252**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing in Children</td>
<td>.510**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Hard</td>
<td>.340**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging Achievement</td>
<td>.238*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 4.11: Partial Correlation Analyses for Characteristics of Academic Emphasis and Grade Point Average (N = 170)

In order to answer Research Question 7 – “Do African-American students with higher levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis perform better than students with only two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis?” African-American students were assigned to two subcategories based upon their academic emphasis scores. These subcategories were: (1) African-American students who did not score high on at least three characteristics of academic emphasis and (2) African-American students who scored high on three or more characteristics of academic emphasis. Again, scores were considered high if they were one standard deviation above the mean. It should also be noted that the original research question was, “Do African-American students with higher levels of five characteristics of academic emphasis perform better than students with only four, three, two, one and no characteristics of academic emphasis?” Groups with high levels of three, four, and five characteristics of
academic emphasis were combined because there were not enough participants who qualified for each category. Descriptive data for African-American students who scored high on five, four, three, two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis are provided in Table 4.12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Levels of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero High Levels of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One High Level of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two High Levels of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three High Levels of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four High Levels of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five High Levels of Characteristics of Academic Emphasis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Frequencies and Percents for Students with High Levels of Zero, One, Two, Three, Four, and Five Characteristics of Academic Emphasis (N = 221)

Again, the six demographic variables that had significant relationships to grade point average were removed from the partial correlation analysis to answer Research Question 7 – “Do African-American students with higher levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis perform better than students with only two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis?” Students with high levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis had a significant correlation to grade point average (r = .204, p < 0.05).
Similar to Question 4, a univariate analysis of variance was used to further check the differences in grade point averages amongst students that had high levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis when compared to students with less than three high levels of characteristics of academic emphasis. African-American children with high levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis had significantly higher grade point averages. These data results are presented in Table 4.13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>12.200*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.100</td>
<td>17.201</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>472.531</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>472.531</td>
<td>1332.376</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of Child</td>
<td>8.392</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.392</td>
<td>23.663</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or More High Levels of</td>
<td>2.613</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.613</td>
<td>7.368</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Emphasis Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>62.064</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1637.953</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>74.265</td>
<td>177</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* R Squared = .164 (adjusted R Squared = .155).

The following covariates were not statistically significant and thus not used for the final model: the demographic variable indicating that another guardian, besides a mother of father, completed the questionnaire, school happiness, parents’ highest level of education, family income, and years lived in neighborhood.

Table 4.13: UNIANOVA Table Showing the Significance of Having High Levels of Three or More Characteristics of Academic Emphasis (N = 178)
Finally, thematic analyses were conducted on responses for the open-ended question, “Research shows that there is an achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in suburban school districts. In other words, White children are doing better academically than Black children in suburban schools. What do you feel causes this achievement gap?” This procedure was used to answer Research Question 8 – “What do parents of low achieving and high achieving African-American students feel are the causes for achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools?” Eight emerging themes were noted after several readings by both the experimenter and an outside reader, namely:

1. School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity – themes relating to prejudice of African-American students by racist teachers, discrimination in educational services and programs provided to African-American students when compared to Caucasian students, and a lack of African-American teachers in predominately white suburban schools (e.g., “White teachers spend extra time relating with white students. There is more of a bond. They also expect wrong doing and attitudes of black students to be negative before they even know them. There needs to be a push for more black teachers.”)

2. Lack of Family Involvement – themes relating to African-American parents not vesting in their children’s education (e.g., “The African-American family structure has suffered for many years. They key is to be involved with your children and being in constant contact with their teachers.”)

3. Socioeconomic Issues – themes associated to African-American families having less financial resources than Caucasian families such as having less time to spend
with their children because of their employment or recently transitioning into middle class status from lower class status (e.g., “Black children are behind when the move into suburban districts because they got that way in urban districts,” and “The achievement gap is caused by differences in socioeconomics. Incomes in Caucasian homes can afford private tutors such as Sylvan Learning Center and Huntington.”)

4. Identity Issues with Black Children – themes relating to African-American children trying to establish identities that place them at risk of failing school (e.g., “There is a perception by African-American children that you’re a nerd if you do well in school.”)

5. Lack of Children Motivation – themes not associated to Identity Issues with Black Children but related to children not vested in school (e.g., “Black children don’t push themselves hard enough academically. I think black children do just enough to get a good grade and don’t push themselves beyond.”)

6. Lack of School Encouragement – themes not associated with School Prejudices, Racism, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity but related to teachers not vesting in children’s education (e.g., “There is a low expectancy from staff and limited encouragement and rewards for achievement in schools.”)

7. Disbelief in the Achievement Gap – themes relating to an improvement in the achievement gap or nonexistence of a gap (e.g. “African-American children are making rapid strides in closing the achievement gap because of the exposure in society and various programs that are being bought to their attention.”)
8. Lack of Education in Parents – themes associated to African-American families having less education than Caucasian parents (e.g., “On average, their Caucasian parents have a higher level of education versus African-American parents.”)

Inter-rater reliability was estimated at .89. Unfortunately, twenty-eight parents did not provide a response to the open-ended question. Descriptive data on the eight emerging themes appears in Table 4.14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Stated by Parents</th>
<th>N*</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Family Involvement</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Issues</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Issues with Black Children</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Children Motivation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of School Encouragement</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbelief in Achievement Gap</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Education in Parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Columns do not add up to 221 because participants reported more than one reason for the achievement gap.

Table 4.14: Self-Reported Causes for the Achievement Gap (N = 221)

After emerging themes were indicated, each response was “dummy” coded for a partial correlation analysis. Then all demographic variables that had significant
relationships to grade point average, were removed from the partial correlation analysis to answer Research Question 8 – “What do parents of low achieving and high achieving African-American students feel are the causes for achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools?” After significant demographic variables were removed from the correlation analysis, only one emerging theme continued to hold significant relationships with grade point average – Lack of Children Motivation (r = -.221, p < 0.05). This indicates that parents of low achieving African-American students were more likely to attribute the achievement gap to their children’s lack of motivation. On the other hand, parents of high achieving students were less likely to attribute the achievement gap to student motivation. Although not significant, parents of achieving African-American students were more likely to attribute the achievement gap to Lack of Family Involvement (r = .141, p < 0.05). The opposite was true for the parents of low achieving African-American students. Results are provided in Table 4.15.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Stated by Parents</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Family Involvement</td>
<td>.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Issues</td>
<td>-.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Issues with Black Children</td>
<td>-.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Children Motivation</td>
<td>-.211*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of School Encouragement</td>
<td>-.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbelief in Achievement Gap</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Education in Parents</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 4.15: Partial Correlation Analyses for Self-Reported Causes for the Achievement Gap from Parents of High and Low Achieving Students (N = 178)
In this chapter, significant results generated by the study will be discussed. The discussion begins with a brief review of objectives for this study and a summary of results with interpretations. This will be followed by recommendations needed for helping African-American students in predominately white suburban schools and implications for future research. Finally, this chapter will end with a summary and a conclusion.

This study was conducted to examine the achievement gap in suburban schools beyond traditional research. In previous studies, causes for achievement gaps that were examined between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban schools were usually based upon the opinions of teachers and students. This study, examined the achievement gap between high performing and low performing African-American students, collected parents’ opinions of causes of the achievement gap, and examined the achievement gap through a socio-cultural context of School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis – the extent to which emphasis is placed on academics by schools, family, children as well as student peers by setting challenging goals, setting learning environments that are structured and conducive to learning,
believing in academic abilities, working hard towards academic excellence, and respecting and acknowledging achievement.

In regards to overall demographics of African-American families who completed questionnaires for this study, 77.4% of participants were mothers, 14.9% were fathers, and 7.7% were another type of guardian – not a biological mother or father. The participation in this study may suggest that African-American mothers in this study may be more engaged in their children’s education compared to their fathers since they completed the questionnaire. More importantly, it also reveals that African-American children are being raised by at least one biological parent when compared to another type of guardian. Demographics variables also indicated that African-American children in this predominately white suburban neighborhood have fewer siblings and more computers at home when compared to other studies. In a study by Ferguson (2002), data revealed that African-American children were more likely to live in a household of three or more siblings and one computer when compared to Caucasian students. Ferguson indicated that this may place African-American children at a disadvantage since more siblings equal more sharing resources. In this study, African-American families on average consisted of 2.14 children and 1.81 computers in the household. They almost matched the number of computers in a household. Most parents obtained a degree after high school. On average, most parents received an associate’s degree or a bachelor’s degree. Moreover, they lived in the neighborhood for approximately 6 years and 8 months and had an annual household income between $61,000 and $80,000. Data revealed that there were less socioeconomic disadvantages when compared to average demographic variables of African-American families in other studies. Finally, parents on
average described that their children received academic emphasis mostly from their family, followed by schools, children, and student peers. Their children had 2.96 grade point average which in this school district is equivalent to a “C+.” Hence, on average most African-American students were not failing but also not highly achieving. They were performing average.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant correlation between academic emphasis, characteristics of academic emphasis, and demographic variables for African-American children in predominately white suburban schools?

There were significant correlations between academic emphasis, characteristics of academics emphasis, and demographic variables for African-American children in predominately white suburban schools. School happiness had the most significant relationships to other variables. Not surprising, it was significantly and positively correlated to School Academic Emphasis, Student Peer Academic Emphasis, as well as characteristics of academic emphasis such as Setting Goals, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement. These results may simply reflect that parents who are happy with their children’s schools were more likely to rate School Academic Emphasis and Student Peer Academic Emphasis, as well as, characteristics of academic emphasis such as Setting Goals, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement more favorable.

Another demographic variable that was significantly and positively related to academic emphasis, as well as its characteristics, was the gender of child for which a parent completed a questionnaire. African-American parents’ ratings indicated a
difference between male and female students. For instance, the ratings for female African-American students indicated that females were more likely to be perceived as having higher levels of Children Academic Emphasis and Student Peer Academic Emphasis, as well as, characteristics such as Setting Goals, Believing in Children, and Working Hard. On the other hand, the opposite was true for male African-American students. Their parents’ ratings indicated that they were perceived as having less Children Academic Emphasis, Student Peer Academic Emphasis, as well as less characteristics of academic emphasis – more specifically Setting Goals, Believing in Children, and Working Hard.

Female African-American students may have been perceived to have higher levels of Children Academic Emphasis, School Peer Academic Emphasis, and characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Believing in Children, and Working Hard) because of the belief that African-American males are less engaged in their education when compared to African-American females and their Caucasian classmates. This belief is usually supported by an achievement gap that exists between African-American males and females. Data from this study also support that females obtain higher grade point averages than male students. No matter the reasons why parents of female African-American students rated their Children and Student Peer Academic Emphasis higher than parents of male students, parents’ ratings revealed that African-American males may receive less Student Academic Emphasis and characteristics of academic emphasis. They also have less Children Academic Emphasis. Unlike School and Family Academic Emphasis, Children Academic Emphasis and Student Peer Academic Emphasis are two forms of academic emphasis which African-American males can control. This data may
reveal that African-American males in predominately white suburban neighborhoods are potentially less engaged in their academics when compared to females. Moreover, they befriended students who provide less Student Peer Academic Emphasis.

Surprisingly, parents’ ratings revealed that children raised by their parents received higher levels of academics emphasis when compared to children being raised by another guardian, besides a mother or father. This is surprising because it would appear that if a guardian, other than a biological parent, took on the responsibility of parenting a child, they would provide the same level of academic emphasis when compared to biological parents raising their own children. Unfortunately, this does not occur. Biological parents may be more likely to provide their children with higher levels of academic emphasis because they are more vested in their own children’s education. On the other hand, African-Americans raised by another guardian may not be as vested as a biological parent. This may happen for many reasons. For example if a child is being raised by their grandparents, they may not be able to provide the same levels of academic emphasis due to many hardships that may not be experienced by younger biological parents. On the other hand, when another relative takes on the responsibility of raising a child (e.g., aunt, uncle, older sibling, etc.) they may be more vested in providing academic emphasis to their own biological children or themselves – if they themselves are still attending school. Again, no matter the reason, data revealed that there were significant negative relationships between this variable and Family Academic Emphasis, as well as, Believing in Children and Acknowledging Achievement. This suggested that children raised by another guardian besides their biological parents are less likely to receive ratings that indicate higher levels of Family Academic Emphasis. Moreover,
these children were also less likely to receive ratings that indicate characteristics such as Setting Goals, Believing in Children, and Working Hard toward academic excellence.

Finally, there were two demographic variables that had only one significant relationship to academic emphasis or its characteristics. These significant negative correlations were between the number of computers in a household and School Academic Emphasis, as well as the number of children in a household and Acknowledging Achievement. Although it is unclear why School Academic Emphasis is negatively correlated with the numbers of computers in a household, it is also not surprising that there is a significant negative correlation between the number of children in a household and Acknowledging Achievement. This may occur because it may be harder for parents with more children to provide each child with individual attention and encouragement that is needed for academic achievement.

Research Question 2: How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools?

According to parents’ perceptions, School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load more on high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools when compared to low achieving African-American students. Low achieving students were perceived as having lower levels of academic emphasis, and these relationships were significant. In this study, the ratings of African-American parents revealed a strong relationship between Children Academic Emphasis and grade point average. This was followed by a significant positive
The correlation between Student Peer Academic Emphasis and grade point average. These results suggest that parents of high achieving students are more likely to perceive that their children receive higher levels of School, Family, Children, and Students Peers Academic Emphasis. These results are supported by previous research (e.g., Siren & Rogers-Siren, 2004). Research reveals that students who are highly engaged in academics are also self-motivated. They obtain higher grade point averages. Moreover, during adolescence peer relationships are one of the most influential support groups (Clark, 1991). Findings similar to Clark appear true for African-American students in predominately white neighborhoods since many of these students were at the age of adolescence at the time of the study.

**Research Question 3: How do School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban school after controlling for significant demographic variables?**

Correlation analysis revealed that there were six demographic variables that had a significant relationship to grade point average. They were the demographic variables indicating that another guardian, besides a mother or father, completed the questionnaire, school happiness, gender of child, parents highest level of education, family income, and years lived in the neighborhood. This analysis revealed that high achieving African-American students were more likely to live with a biological parent that completed the questionnaire, as opposed to a guardian, their parents were happy with the school, obtained a higher level of education, grossed higher family incomes, and lived in the
neighborhood longer. Moreover, high achieving students were more likely to be female students. These demographic variables were removed to indicate how School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis load on achievement for low and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools.

After controlling for significant demographic variables, Family Academic Emphasis, Children Academic Emphasis, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis remained to have a significant positive relationship to grade point average. Surprisingly, School Academic Emphasis did not have a significant relationship. In other words, even after controlling for significant demographic variables, the ratings of African-American parents still revealed that high achieving African-American students were more likely to have high levels of Family Academic Emphasis, Children Academic Emphasis, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis. The same was not true for School Academic Emphasis. School Academic Emphasis may not be related to grade point average because schools in predominately white suburban neighborhoods may be perceived as providing the same level of academic emphasis to all their children no matter if they are low or high achieving students.

Research Question 4: Do African-American students with higher levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis perform better than students with only one and no forms of academic emphasis?

Two subcategories were created based upon the academic emphasis scores of African-American students in response to Research Question 4 – "Do African-American students with higher levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis perform better
than students with only one and no forms of academic emphasis?” These subcategories were: (1) African-American students who did not score high on at least two forms of academic emphasis and (2) African-American students who scored high on two or more forms of academic emphasis. It is unfortunate that more than half of African-American children in this study did not have at least one form of academic emphasis that scored high. On the other hand, 24% of students had high ratings of two or more forms of academic emphasis. Data indicated that African-American students with high levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis were more likely to have higher grade point averages when compared to students that had less forms of academic emphasis.

Research Question 5: How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominantly white suburban schools?

Data also supported that even when analyzing each characteristic of academic emphasis, all characteristics had significant and positive relationships to children with high grade point averages when compared to children with lower grade point averages. According to their parents’ ratings, low achieving African-American students were perceived to have less characteristics of academic emphasis such as Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement. The strongest relationship to student achievement was between the characteristics of people Believing in Children and grade point average – followed by Setting Goals, Acknowledging Achievement, Working Hard, and Setting Environments
conducive to learning. Much research has been conducted detailing the importance of teachers, families, children, and student peers believing in a student’s academic abilities (Brophy, 1983; Catterall, 1998; Copper & Tom, 1984; Good, 1987; Good & Nichols, 2001; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). When teachers do not believe in their students’ abilities, there is a greater likelihood that their students will be at a greater risk of academic failure. Teachers that lack these beliefs provide a less challenging experience at school. They offer less time for students to think when answering a question, give students answers rather than wait for an answer, spend more time on discipline than acknowledging achievement, and provide less homework for their students (Brophy, 1983; Copper & Tom, 1984; Good, 1987; Good & Nichols, 2001).

Much like teachers, when parents, children, and their student peers believe less in children’s abilities they also provide less challenging goals. When parents believe in their children’s abilities, it allows their children to develop confidence (Dryfoos, 1990; Halpern, 1990; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Werner, 1990). On the other hand, when parents fail to promote their children’s confidence, children are left to develop their own confidence without any positive feedback from their parents – making it more acceptable for children to believe in negative stereotypes (Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998). As research indicates, African-American children have more negative stereotypes to overcome than Caucasian children (Barbarin, 1993; Dryfoos, 1990; Halpern, 1990; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Werner, 1990). If their parents do not help them to overcome these stereotypes by helping them develop confidence in their abilities, it may encourage their children to accept these negative stereotypes and behave in manners that would only confirm negative stereotypes. Research has revealed that
negative stereotypes have been linked to the development of low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, as well as, the disliking of school (Freedman, 2002). In Ogbu’s study, many African-American students who did not believe in their own abilities did not challenge themselves in school. They revealed that they did not take advance placement classes because they felt they could not achieve in these types of classes. They felt that the work was “too challenging.” Since they didn’t believe in their own abilities they did not challenge themselves to take advanced placement classes. On the other hand, when children believe in their abilities, they set higher goals for themselves and are more likely to accomplish set goals (Catterall, 1998).

Research Question 6: How do characteristics of academic emphasis (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement) load on achievement for low achieving and high achieving African-American students in predominately white suburban schools after controlling for significant demographic variables?

Again, after removing all six demographic variables that had significant relationships to student achievement, a partial correlation was used to indicate how characteristics of academic emphasis load on achievement for African-American students in predominately white suburban schools after controlling for significant demographic variables. All five characteristics of academic emphasis had significant and positive relationships to grade point average. In other words, even after controlling for demographic variables, the perception of African-American parents still revealed that high achieving African-American students were more likely to have high levels of
characteristics of academic emphasis such as Setting Goals, Setting Environment, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement.

Research Question 7: Do African-American students with higher levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis perform better than students with only two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis?

Similar to Research Question 4, African-American students with high levels of three or more characteristics of academic emphasis were compared to students with only high levels of two, one, and no characteristics of academic emphasis. Unfortunately, 60% percent of parents in this study indicated that their children did not have at least one characteristic of academic emphasis that was rated high. On the other hand, results indicated that students with high levels of three or more characteristics of academics emphasis had higher grade point averages. Again, revealing the more characteristics of academic emphasis a student has the more likely they will perform better in school.

Research Question 8: What do parents of low achieving and high achieving African-American students feel are the causes for achievement gaps in predominately white suburban schools?

Results suggested that African-American parents believe that there are many causes to the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in predominately white suburban schools. Although each response was worded differently, there were eight emerging themes. These themes were: (1) School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity, (2) Lack of Family Involvement, (3)

Results also indicated that parents of high achieving and low achieving African-American were more likely to attribute the achievement gap to different variables. Parents of low achieving African-American students were more likely to state that the achievement gap was a result of African-American children lacking motivation. An example of this theme was revealed in the response, “Black children don’t push themselves hard enough academically. I think black children do just enough to get a good grade and don’t push themselves beyond.” This theme had a significant relationship to lower grade point averages. Another notable but not significant theme that was more likely to be reported by African-American parents of low achieving students was Socioeconomic Issues. On the other hand, responses from parents of high achieving African-American students were more likely to provide themes such as School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity and Lack of Family Involvement. None of these responses were statistically significant. Overall, responses provided by African-American parents of low achieving and high achieving students indicated that parents are attributing the achievement gap to different issues. Whereas parents of low achieving African-American students made statements attributing the achievement gap to issues within children and socioeconomic characteristics, it appears that parents of high achieving students took more responsibility and were more likely to
attribute the achievement gap to Lack of Family Involvement. They were more likely to suggest themes relating to African-American parents not vesting in their children’s education. Perhaps these parents felt as though parents of low achieving African-American were not involved in their children’s education. Moreover, parents of high achieving African-American were more likely to attribute the achievement gap towards a school problem - School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity. Instead of simply stating that schools did not encourage their children, they provided specific solutions on how schools could close the achievement gap by reducing prejudices and racism while also incorporating more diversity in predominately white suburban schools.

*Implications for Helping African-American Students in Suburban Schools*

According to the ratings of African-American parents in this study, Family Academic Emphasis is the most common form of academic emphasis received by African-American students in predominately white suburban schools - followed by School, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis. On the other hand, School Academic Emphasis is the only form of academic emphasis that is not related to student achievement after controlling for demographic variables. This may reflect that after controlling for demographic variables, all African-American students, high and low performing, are perceived as being provided with the same level of School Academic Emphasis. All characteristics of academic emphasis were related to student achievement. Unfortunately, after analyzing open-ended responses collected from African-American parents, there are large percentages of parents who attributed the achievement gap specifically to schools, families, and/or children. Since there is an equal responsibility
for all parties to decrease the achievement gap, the following section will discussed some solutions on how to provide academic emphasis to African-American students in predominately white suburban schools.

Setting challenging goals for African-American children. African-American students in predominately white suburban schools need to be encouraged by their teacher to take more challenging classes. According to results in this study, many African-American parents believed that the achievement gap is attributed to the lack of school encouragement. These results are supported by Ogbu’s study. In Ogbu’s study, data revealed that African-American students in suburban schools were less likely to be encouraged by counselors to take more challenging classes when compared to Caucasian students. If this is true, this hidden form of tracking can not continue in predominately white suburban schools. There is a clear difference in the types of challenges presented in advanced placement classes when compared to basic skills classes. According to College Board (2010), a nonprofit association whose mission is to help students prepare for college, advanced placement classes are unique learning experiences that help students achieve in college. Advanced placement classes challenge students to engage in college level learning. It encourages students to engage in a community of teachers and students who are also committed to student achievement. On the other hand, basic skills classes do not offer the same experiences. Often, they focus on helping students improve developmental skills. If there is disproportionality in the lack of African-American students in advanced placement classes, they are put at a disadvantage when compared to Caucasian students in advanced placement classes.
Understandably, low achieving African-American students may need to be placed in general classes to further improve their skills; however, they still need to be challenged. Results indicated that when schools provide all their students with a challenging curriculum, the achievement gap decreases. For instance, in the Rockville Centre School District, detracting students closed the gap in high school graduation rates (Burris & Welner, 2005). Data revealed that in the academic years 1992-93, students placed in high track classes were graduating at a rate of 58 percent while students placed in low track classes were graduating at a rate of 28 percent. After detracking their students and providing all their students with a challenging education, the gap in graduation rates decreased. By the academic year 1999-2000, 78 percent of all students were graduating. If schools in predominately white suburban neighborhoods are not challenging African-American students, they are putting them at greater risk of failure.

Organizing an environment conducive to learning for African-American children. As indicated by Butler (2003), the achievement gap can be explained by schools failing to provide adequate facilities and resources to African-American students. Research has acknowledged the difference between education provided to African-American students in urban areas when compared to the education provided to Caucasians in suburban neighborhoods (Kozal, 1991). Yet, African-American students may still be placed at a disadvantage in suburban schools where facilities and resources are adequate because classes are not conducive to their ways of learning. Many African-American parents in this study believe that their children’s school lack diversity. Many parents indicated that the achievement gap is attributed to School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and/or Insensitivity to Diversity. For instance, even with the adequate resources and facilities
that are provided in suburban schools, African-American parents in this study believe that their children are not benefiting because Caucasian teachers do not know how to teach to their children. They also believe that Caucasian teachers are not relating to their children. In order to make more African-American students motivated to learn, teachers should attempt to provide more culturally relevant education – teaching which is dedicated to connecting academic experiences with the lives of diverse students. Moreover, classrooms need to be organized in a manner which teaches to different types of learners. For instance, African-American students may rely on visual information when compared to auditory information, respond better to cooperative learning rather than individual learning, or prefer engaging in simultaneous discussion when compared to alternative discussion. Although these suggestions do not apply to all African-American students, it is important that teachers in predominately white suburban schools recognize that African-American students may have a different way of learning and attempt to organize the classroom to meet their needs. If teachers are differentiating their instruction, then they will be addressing the different learning styles that students bring to the classroom. School administrators in predominately white suburban schools can provide teachers with professional development focused on culturally relevant teaching. Also, one of the most common solutions suggested for assisting African-American students is in this study, is the hiring of African-American teachers. Unfortunately, this is a difficult task as many African-Americans are acquiring bachelor’s degrees in other areas rather than education. However, by attempting to provide these solutions, it will help ensure to African-American parents that schools are trying to organize the classroom in a manner that will facilitate their children’s learning.
Surprisingly, children in suburban schools can also help to provide their African-American peers with an organized environment conducive to learning. This can be done by helping African-American students engage in friendships with other students who achieve in school. It is no surprise that children who spend time with peers that engage in behaviors that put them at risk of academic failure are more likely to engage in these types of behaviors (Schoeny, 2000). On the other hand, students that make friends with other students that achieve are more likely to achieve in school. These students are also more likely to engage in school related activities after school. There are strong correlations between the amount of time children engage in school related activities after school and student achievement. For instance, Gaddy (1998) reported that the amount of time students spend reading at home is strongly linked to student achievement. On the other hand, the amount of time spent on nonacademic activities, such as watching television, is related to academic failure (Bowen & Bowen, 1998; Dumais, 2006). Unfortunately, African-American students are less likely to engage in school-related activities after school (Dumais, 2006). According to Dumais, they are more likely to talk on the phone, watch television, or play videogames, when compared to Caucasian students. In order to close the achievement gap in suburban schools, African-American children may need to engage in educational activities outside of school. Ideally, this will help close the achievement gap.

Believing in the abilities of African-American children. It is not surprising that teachers and parents who do not believe in the abilities of African-American children fail to help them achieve in school. There is plenty of research which indicates that student achievement is related to teachers, as well as parents, and their beliefs in their children’s
abilities (Good & Nichols, 2001; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Therefore, teachers and parents of African-American students that do not believe in their abilities or have stereotypes about their ability to be successful may contribute to the achievement gap by leading African-American students toward greater risk of academic failure. Teachers that don’t believe in their African-American students’ abilities, tend to lower their expectations. As previously mentioned, research supports that teachers who do not believe in their students’ abilities are less likely to provide class and homework because they believe it will be inaccurate or incomplete (Tyler & Boelter, 2008). They also offer less time for students to think when answering a question, give students answers rather than wait for an answer, and spend more time on disciplinary issues when compared student achievement (Brophy, 1983; Copper & Tom, 1984; Good, 1987; Good & Nichols, 2001). On the other hand, when parents do not believe in their children’s abilities, they may lower their expectations, become less vested in their children’s education, and fail to make sure that their children perform well in school. By lowering their expectations, African-American children become less challenged in school and perform to meet low expectations. Teachers and parents in predominately white suburban schools need to make certain that they have high expectations for their children. This will help African-American develop stronger confidence in their abilities and become better performers in school.

*Working hard to provide African-American children with an adequate education.*

It is important that teachers work hard to provide African-American students with an adequate education – especially in predominately white suburban neighborhoods where there is a current achievement gap. As previously mentioned, achievement gaps continue
to exist when students fall below their grade level because these students must make up more progress during the academic school year to close the gap. Therefore, teachers may have to provide more effort to increase the performance of African-American students because many may already be behind their classmates (Ferguson, 2002). Data from this study revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between the number of years a family lived in a suburban neighborhood and the grade point average of their children – suggesting that children who recently moved in these types of neighborhoods are more likely to have lower grade point averages. If newly enrolled African-American students are targeted, they can easily be screened for skill deficits in which teachers can gather data and implement an early and effective academic intervention to further develop their skills. Anything less would only continue the achievement gap in suburban schools.

On the other hand, it is equally important for parents to put as much, or more, effort in their children’s education as their children’s teachers. Parents that do not put much effort in their children’s education fail to promote learning for their children. Data from this study indicates that Family Academic Emphasis is the most common form of academic emphasis provided to African-American children. Unfortunately, conflicting data supports that African-American parents in another suburban neighborhood are less engaged in their children’s education when compared to Caucasian children (Ogbu, 2002). The differences in African-American parents and their commitment towards providing their children with an adequate education have been documented. In a study conducted by Jackson (1999), African-American children that were failing in school reported that their parents did not help them at home. Instead, they reported that their
parents engaged in more time watching television than helping them with their education. On the other hand, African-American students that achieved in school revealed that their parents were involved in their education. The more parents engage in their children’s learning and work hard to ensure that they are being provided with an adequate education at home the more likely their children will achieve in school (Kenny, Gallagher, Alverez-Salvat, & Silsby, 2002). African-American parents of low achieving African-American students may need to work harder to help their children achieve in school.

Student peers of African-American children can also work hard to help towards their friends’ education. This may be done by inviting African-Americans to study groups or creating study groups with African-American students. There are many advantages of peer study groups that are beneficial to African-American children. Such benefits are, but not limited to: (1) having a support system – students in a study group support and encourage each other, (2) learning from the strengths and weakness of others – each student in a study group has their own strengths and uses it to help others with their weaknesses, (3) opportunity to teach – each member of the groups is provided with an opportunity to teach other students, (4) understanding the material – students in study groups understand and retain more information when compared to learning by themselves, and (5) develops confidence – as children understand more their confidence in increases (Center for Academic Success, 2009). Moreover, as children engage with study groups, they develop more opportunities to learn new study habits. These benefits may help increase the academic performance of African-American students in suburban schools.
Acknowledging the achievement of African-American children. Finally, teachers that do not acknowledge the achievement of African-American students fail to promote student learning in suburban schools. Unfortunately, African-Americans students in suburban schools revealed that teachers, who acknowledge their achievement, encouraged them to perform better in school when compared to teachers who make teacher demands (Ferguson, 2002). Recognizing achievement increases student performance because it provides students with goals to achieve rather than focusing on behaviors to avoid. When teachers acknowledge achievement, they are noting the behaviors they want repeated in the classroom. Conversely, when they lack acknowledgement, or only acknowledge students’ lack of success, they are only informing students of improper behaviors but not appropriate ones. This may lead students to develop low confidence. Unfortunately, many teachers tend to recognize inappropriate behaviors more often than student achievement. If teachers that fail to acknowledge student achievement want African-American students to increase their performance, they may need to make a stronger attempt to reward positive behaviors.

Similarly, African-American parents that fail to acknowledge their children’s achievement in school may also cause achievement gaps by decreasing their children’s motivation. According to Ogbu (2002), African-American parents in suburban neighborhoods acknowledge their children’s achievement; however, punishment may not be the most effective way to increase motivation for African-American children. In Ogbu’s study, African-American children revealed that their parents encouraged them to perform better in school when they acknowledge their achievement. Acknowledging their accomplishments motivated them more to increase their performance when being
compared to being punished. In fact, it was suggested that punishment decreased their motivation. As previously stated, recognizing achievement helps increase student performance because it provides children with goals to achieve rather than focusing on behaviors to avoid. When parents acknowledge achievement, they are reminding children of the behaviors they want repeated. On the other hand, when they only acknowledge their children’s lack of success, they inform their children of improper behaviors but not reminding them of more appropriate behaviors to repeat. According to this study, many parents indicated that Lack of Children Motivation is the cause for the achievement gap. If African-American parents in suburban neighborhoods want to help increase their children’s motivation to achieve in school, they may need to make a stronger attempt in acknowledging their children’s achievement, reward all positive behaviors, and decrease punishment for misbehaving.

Implications for Future Research

As with all research, the current study has a series of limitations that need to be taken into account when addressing the implications for future research. These limitations, as well as findings from this study, were used to suggest future research. For instance, all questionnaires used in this survey were collected from schools within one Midwestern predominately white suburban neighborhood. Although all participants were provided with a questionnaire in a manner that would allow them to return their surveys randomly, these results may not be generalized to all African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. Future studies should attempt to collect data from more schools within predominately white suburban neighborhoods across different regions of the United States. This will increase generalizability. Secondly, although it
was an objective to collect responses from African-American parents of black students in predominately white suburban schools, there are major drawbacks to using and relying on someone else’s ratings to collect data. Future research may want to collect data of academic emphasis from the direct source. Therefore, future research may want to collect School Academic Emphasis from teachers, Family Academic Emphasis from parents, Children Academic Emphasis from children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis from a child’s best friend. Moreover, student achievement should be observed beyond the limits of grade point average, (e.g., class rank, score obtain on statewide proficiency tests, etc.) and collected from schools. Finally, when provided the opportunity, African-American parents’ ratings revealed that School Academic Emphasis was less provided than Family Academic Emphasis. Unfortunately, it was the only form of academic emphasis that did not have a significant and positive relationship to grade point average, suggesting that both high and low performing African-American students were provided with similar academic emphasis. This should be further explored. If future research collects ratings from the direct source and attempts to control for academic emphasis, each form of academic emphasis could be analyzed to see what form of academic emphasis has the strongest effect on student achievement. Future research can analyze which is most important.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Based on previous discussion of the results, several conclusions were drawn from this study. First, when provided the opportunity to express their opinion, African-American parents’ ratings revealed that Family Academic Emphasis was the most common form of academic emphasis received by their children. Secondly, there were
differences in demographic variables between high performing and low performing African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. High achieving African-American students were more likely to live with a biological parent that completed the questionnaire, as opposed to a guardian; were happy with the school; obtained a higher level of education; grossed higher family incomes; and lived in the neighborhood longer. Moreover, high achieving students were more likely to be female students.

In regards to academic emphasis (i.e., School, Family, Children, and Student Peer Academic Emphasis), as well as characteristics (i.e., Setting Goals, Setting Environments, Believing in Children, Working Hard, and Acknowledging Achievement), they also had significant and positive relationships to grade point averages. Surprisingly, after controlling for demographic variables, all remained to have significant positive relationships to grade point average with the exception of School Academic Emphasis. This may indicate that after controlling for these demographic variables, parents’ ratings revealed that they perceive there to be no difference in the amount of School Academic Emphasis provided to high and low performing African-American students. According to these parents, it appears schools equally provide academic emphasis. Further analyses indicated that when African-American students had high levels of two or more forms of academic emphasis, academic emphasis was significantly related to higher grade point averages. The same was true when African-American students in predominately white suburban neighborhoods had three or more characteristics of academics emphasis.

Finally, when parents where provided the opportunity to give their reasons for the achievement gap, eight themes emerged. Two themes accounted for nearly half of all
responses. These themes were School Prejudices, Racisms, Discrimination, and Insensitivity to Diversity, and Lack of Family Involvement. There was one significant difference for the cause of the achievement gap between parents of high achieving student and low achieving students. After controlling for significant demographic variables, Lack of Children Motivation continued to hold significant relationships with grade point average. This indicated that parents of low achieving African-American students were more likely to attribute the achievement gap to their children’s lack of motivation. On the other hand, parents of achieving students differed. Data collected from this study demonstrates a need to collect the opinions of African-American parents in predominately white suburban schools and further investigate the cause of the achievement gap between low and high performing African-American students.
APPENDIX A

ACADEMIC EMPHASIS SCALES
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<td>1.</td>
<td>My child's school sets high standards for my child.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>I enforce rules that make my home well controlled and serious about school.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>My child believes that he/she can do well in school.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>My child's friends study with my child.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Overall, my child's teachers do not believe in the abilities of my child.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>I believe that my child has the ability to do well in school.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>My child takes on the initiative to seek extra assignment to further prepare for school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>My child's friends respect other students who get good grades.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>My child's classrooms are well structured and organized.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>I help my child as much as I can with school work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>My child respects other students who get good grades.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>My child's friends set high academic goals for themselves.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>The school rewards my child when he/she does well in school.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>My family respects children who do well in school.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>My child challenges themselves to do well in school everyday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>My child's friends hang around other children who are serious about school.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>My child's school has programs available for when children need academic help.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>I expect my child to complete all of his/her homework.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>My child studies in a room with minimal distractions.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>My child's friends think that my child is not smart.</td>
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<td>21. My child's school is not challenging.</td>
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<td>22. I enforce rules at home to make sure school work is completed.</td>
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<td>23. My child dislikes school because he/she does poorly.</td>
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<td>24. My child's friends help each other with homework, especially when it is hard.</td>
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<td>25. Teachers believe that my child has the ability to do well in school.</td>
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<td>26. I believe that my child has the ability to organize and execute their own school work.</td>
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<td>27. My child revisits previous assignments to correct wrong answers.</td>
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<td>28. My child's friends believe that making the honor roll is important.</td>
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<td>29. My child's school is orderly and very serious.</td>
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<td>30. I make sure my child has all supplies necessary to achieve in school.</td>
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<td>31. My child feels that students who do well in school are &quot;nerds&quot;.</td>
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<td>32. My child's friends are not challenged to get good grades.</td>
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<td>33. My child's achievements are acknowledged by the school.</td>
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<td>34. I praise my child when he or she does well in school.</td>
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<td>35. My child sets high, but achievable school goals.</td>
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<td>36. My child's friends frequently study.</td>
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<td>37. Teachers at my child's school work hard to give my child a solid education.</td>
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<td>38. I expect my child to do well in school.</td>
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<td>39. My child studies or completes his/her homework before watching TV.</td>
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<td>40. My child's best friend thinks that my child has strong academic ability.</td>
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**REMINDER:** If you have more than one child, please fill out one survey for each child.
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE QUESTIONS
41. Research shows that there is an achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students in suburban school districts. In other words, White children are doing better academically than Black children in suburban schools. What do you feel causes this achievement gap?

a. Gender of child: Male Female

b. Number of children in household: ________

(If you have more than one child, please remember to fill out one survey for each child.)

c. Name child’s current school: ____________________________

d. What grade is your child in now? ________

e. Are you the child’s legal parent/guardian? Yes No

f. What is your relationship to the child? Father Mother Other: ________

g. Parent’s Race/Ethnicity: If you are multiracial, circle all that apply:

African-American Asian-American Latino/Hispanic

Native-American Caucasian Other: ____________________________

h. Are you happy with your child’s current school? Yes No

i. How many computers does your child have access to at home? ________

j. Child’s Race/Ethnicity: If your child is multiracial, circle all that apply:

African-American Asian-American Latino/Hispanic

Native-American Caucasian Other: ____________________________

k. What is your child’s current grade-point-average? ________

l. On average, what kind of grades does your child get in school?

A+ A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+ D D- F

m. How long have you lived in your neighborhood? ________

n. What was your approximate household income last year (2007)?

Less than $20,000 $41,000 to $60,000 $81,000 to $100,000

$21,000 to $40,000 $61,000 to $80,000 More than $110,000

o. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some High School Associates Degree Masters Degree

High School Diploma or GED Bachelors Degree Doctoral Degree

Some College Some Graduate School

I REALLY APPRECIATE IT. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!!
APPENDIX C

INITIAL POSTCARD
Dear Resident of ___________,

My name is Julio Olivo and I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University. I am in pursuit of my doctorate degree and I need your help. In two days, I will mail you a survey that I would like for you to complete. The survey is very easy and can be completed in approximately five minutes. It is about your children’s education. Please fill out the survey and send it back to me.

I greatly appreciate it,

Julio C. Olivo II, M.A.

P. S. A pre-postage envelop will be provided for you to send back your survey.
APPENDIX D

INITIAL COVER LETTER
Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

My name is Julio C. Olivo II and I am a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University. I am writing to ask for your participation in a research project that will help researchers better understand the achievement of African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. My research project examines the academic emphasis of African-American students in suburban schools. Academic emphasis is a term that expresses the emphasis that teachers, parents, and students place on academics. I am interested in identifying contributing factors that impact your child/children's achievement.

The project in which you have been invited to participate in is expected to take approximately 5 minutes for each child you have in middle school, junior high, and high school. However, the decision to participate is ultimately yours. To help you in your decision, a brief description of the research project is provided. All you have to do is answer each question on the survey and return it to my address. A prepaid envelop is provided so you can easily mail back your answers. By completing the survey and sending it in, you are voluntarily making a decision to participate in this research study. If you do not want to participate, simply ignore this survey.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received clearance through the Office of Responsible Research Practices at The Ohio State University. In addition, it has been approved by your district’s superintendent. However, the final decision about participation is yours. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. Your answers are considered confidential and will not be shared with school staff. Should you have any concerns or comments resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Attached to this letter is the survey I would like you to fill out for each child in your household that is enrolled in grades 7 through 12. Please follow the instructions on the first page. When the survey(s) is complete, slip it in the pre-paid envelop and send it back to me. Please, do not send it back to your child(ren)’s school. Also, as a token of my appreciation, I have attached a dollar to this letter. I know it is not much but I wanted to show you my appreciation. Please fill out my survey(s)☺.

Yours sincerely,

Julio C. Olivo II, M. A.

P. S. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 973-545-6767.
APPENDIX E

FINAL COVER LETTER
Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

My name is Julio C. Olivo II and I am a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University. I am writing to you again to ask for your participation in a research project that will help researchers better understand the achievement of African-American students in predominately white suburban schools. My research project examines the **academic emphasis** of African-American students in suburban schools. **Academic emphasis** is a term that expresses the emphasis that teachers, parents, and students place on academics. I am interested in identifying contributing factors that may impact your child/children's achievement.

The project in which I have invited you to participate is expected to take approximately 5 minutes for each child you have in middle school, junior high, and high school. However, the decision to participate is ultimately yours. To help you in your decision, a brief description of the research project is provided. All you have to do is answer each question on the survey and return it to my address. A prepaid envelop is provided so you can easily mail back your answers. By completing the survey and sending it in, you are voluntarily making a decision to participate in this research study. If you do not want to participate, simply ignore this survey.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received clearance through the Office of Responsible Research Practices at The Ohio State University. In addition, it has been approved by your district’s superintendent. However, the final decision about participation is yours. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study. Your answers are considered confidential and will not be shared with school staff. Should you have any concerns or comments resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Attached to this letter is the survey I would like you to fill out for each child in your household that is enrolled in grades 7 through 12. Please follow the instructions on the first page. When the survey(s) is complete, slip it in the pre-paid envelop and send it back to me. **Please, do not send it back to your child(ren)’s school.**

Yours sincerely,

Julio C. Olivo II, M. A.

P. S. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 973-545-6767.
APPENDIX F

FINAL POSTCARD
THANK YOU

FOR PARTICIPATING IN MY STUDY!

Julio C. Olivo II, M.A.
LIST OF REFERENCES


