

FAMILY, ETHNIC IDENTITY, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT FEMALES:  
UNDERSTANDING FORGOTTEN GIRLS

by

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(Under the direction of Pamela O. Paisley, Ed.D.)

ABSTRACT

This study sought to understand the experiences of African American adolescent females by examining specific variables including family environment, ethnic identity and developmental assets. Researcher attempted to determine a relationship between these variables and academic achievement by utilizing descriptive statistical analyses. Female adolescents who self-identified as African American attending either of two urban high schools located in the southeastern region were selected for the sample population. A battery of instruments was administered including a demographic data sheet, Family Environment Scale, Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, and Survey of Student Resources and Assets. Data collection occurred during the spring semester 2001. This research study was conducted in an attempt to provide additive information within the psychological and educational literature. Findings from this research study will assist in the development of appropriate community programs, school-based interventions, and mental health services for African American female adolescents.

INDEX WORDS: African American adolescents, Female adolescents, African Americans, Ethnic identity, Familial influences, Women's psychology, Adolescent development, Academic achievement, African American psychology

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## DEDICATION

### Women of African Descent

Your courage, determination and perseverance have set an example in which only those women with character can follow. These women, the foremothers of our African heritage, were trailblazers and for their courage they demonstrated in the past and the willingness they exemplify today lies at the cornerstone of my dissertation. I thank you.

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I perceive my academic career as a journey. Along this journey there have been stumbling blocks. Yet, despite these roadblocks, I have always stayed focused on that shining light at the end of this long academic tunnel. This dissertation represents that light. Completion of my dissertation serves as a catalyst for me to seek opportunities where I can continue to make a difference in the lives of women. My own courage and determination have only met half of this challenge. Completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the constant words of encouragement and unconditional support from significant persons in my life.

Foremost, I give praise and thanks to my Heavenly Father who continues to serve as my guiding light. Thank you for allowing the “little light” within me to continue to shine and for this “light” to radiate in the lives of my participants. I ask that my footsteps continue to be led to make a difference in the lives of women.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, research on women within the psychological literature has often utilized comparative studies where the experiences of white, upper-class males were perceived as the standard and women were compared against this standard. The feminist movement served as the catalyst for researchers to take notice of the unique experiences of women living in a patriarchal society. The feminist movement established the foundation on which the psychology of women began to be recognized as its own important area of interest.

While the feminist movement made significant contributions to the literature on women, feminist research tended to focus solely on the experiences of white women. Early feminist writings were shaping the reality of white women which was translated to account for the experiences of all women. The feminist movement operated under the assumption that the experiences of white women could be generalized to all women (Yancy, 2000). There was a dismissal of the identity, experiences and complex nature of non-white women. The silencing of voice for non-white women occurred when the experiences of white women became the norm (Yancy, 2000). The need to understand and hear the voices of women of color became increasingly important. Despite this need, research on the experiences of women of color has been virtually nonexistent (Todd & Worrell, 2000).

The convergence of race and gender, along with a historical context of oppression is unique to the African American woman. Beale (1970) coined this ideology as “double

jeopardy” where African American women must learn to navigate both a racist and sexist society. For the African American woman, survival was contingent upon the development of coping mechanisms used to overcome societal injustices (Richie, 1992). African American women operate within an environment that requires an awareness of racial and sexual discrimination while constantly making active decisions regarding their response to such practices.

Historically, the field of psychology has failed to recognize specific hardships encountered by African American women. Along with the interplay of racism and sexism, the historical context for the African American woman has often been characterized by acts of dehumanization involving rape, family separation, and physical brutalization (Yancy, 2000). Learning how to negotiate the effects of a negative historical context with the psychological hardships of loneliness, illness, self-esteem, death and dysfunctional relationships is an ongoing challenge for African American women (Jackson & Greene, 2000).

The plight of the African American woman is paradoxical. Many African American women continue to experience high rates of unemployment and lower wages resulting in higher incidences of poverty (Brown, 1996). Other women of African descent continue to prevail in spite of societal challenges as evidenced by their presence in various workplace settings as well as their ability to earn post secondary degrees and financial stability. African American women continue to be attracted to the labor force in large numbers (Brown, 1996). Few research studies have attempted to examine the varied experiences among African American women. Previous research has typically concentrated on only one aspect of the identity of African American women, either their

ethnicity or gender (Jackson & Greene, 2000). Concentrating on one identity component may limit understanding of the complexity of this group.

Developing resiliency against historical implications of oppression, societal injustice and racism occurs throughout the lifespan of an African American woman. Specifically, during the developmental stage of adolescence, African American adolescent females learn how to contend with the developmental tasks of adolescence within a society that has historically devalued the African American woman (Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001). During adolescence, the African American female is faced with the challenge of developing a positive sense of self in the midst of combating negative societal portrayals of African American women. It is perceived that negative societal messages and stereotypes may affect the self-esteem and consequently, the academic and emotional development of these young women (Holcomb-McCoy, et.al, 2001). When these challenges are not managed during adolescence they may have harmful implications during adulthood.

According to Pipher (1994) many emotional and psychological challenges that occur during womanhood are a result of unresolved conflict during adolescence. When left unresolved during adolescence, these conflicts may resurface during a later stage of development. While this may be the case, there is minimal information known about the specificity of experiences for female adolescents. Until recently adolescent girls have not been the focus of academic research (Pipher, 1994). According to Gilligan (1982), “the voices of adolescent girls are mute within the psychological literature.”

There is even less information known about adolescent girls of color within the psychological literature. The psychological research has primarily concentrated on

socially maladaptive behaviors of African American male adolescents and virtually neglected the experiences of African American female adolescents (Brown, 1996). Due to the complexity of racism, oppression and sexism, the experiences of African American females require specific attention (Belgrave, Chase-Vaughn, Gray, Addison & Cherry, 2000).

### Statement of the Problem

While there has been little emphasis on the experiences of young African American females, existing research on this population has typically operated from a deficit model. In a study conducted by Males (1997), results indicated that African American adolescent females were eleven times more likely than other adolescent females to be HIV infected. Regarding career aspirations, young African American females typically set lower occupational goals and expect lower career success (Brown, 1996). However, in spite of these disturbing trends, there are some African American adolescent females who continue to excel academically, develop a positive sense of self and a spiritual foundation (Holcomb-McCoy, et al, 2001) and establish a social support system. While there is variation among the experiences of African American female adolescents, there are few research studies that have attempted to examine these varied experiences.

### Significance of Study

There is a growing need to investigate factors that contribute to varying outcomes among African American female adolescents. This research study attempted to examine the variation among African American female adolescents. This study has been developed with the assumption that African American female adolescents constitute a

significant minority population. Research on African American female adolescents will provide additive information in several bodies of psychological literature including adolescent development, female psychology, and African American psychology.

An examination of distinguishing factors among African American female adolescents will further enhance competency in providing more appropriate services and interventions. Furthermore, it is the goal of the researcher to provide useful information on adolescent development in an attempt to better understand the African American woman. Providing useful information regarding the developmental transitions of the young African American female will hopefully inform clinical practice with the African American woman.

#### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study is designed to describe a sample of African American adolescent females and to investigate the following research questions (RQ) and test the following null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ):

RQ 1: What are the differences among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding their family cohesion as measured by the cohesion subscale of the Family Environment Scale?

$H_{01}$ : There are no differences regarding family cohesion among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ 2: What are the differences among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding family expression as measured by the expression subscale of the Family Environment Scale?

H<sub>02</sub>: There are no differences regarding family expression among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ3: What are the differences among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding family conflict as measured by the conflict subscale of the Family Environment Scale?

H<sub>03</sub>: There are no differences regarding family conflict among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ4: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding independence within their family as measured by the independence subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>04</sub>: There are no differences regarding family independence among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ5: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding achievement within the family as measured by the achievement orientation subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>05</sub>: There are no differences regarding achievement within the family among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ 6: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding intellectual-cultural family orientation as measured by the intellectual-orientation subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>06</sub>: There are no differences regarding the intellectual-cultural family orientation within the family of high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.



RQ 7: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding an active-recreational family orientation as measured by the active-recreational orientation subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>07</sub>: There are no differences regarding the active-recreational family orientation within the family of high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ 8: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding a moral-religious emphasis within their family as measured by the moral-religious orientation subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>08</sub>: There are no differences regarding the moral-religious emphasis within the families of high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ 9: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding family organization as measured by the organization subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>09</sub>: There are no differences regarding family organization among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ 10: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding family control as measured by the control subscale of the family environment scale?

H<sub>010</sub>: There are no differences regarding family control among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ 11: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding ethnic identity?

H<sub>011</sub>: There are no differences in ethnic identity among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ12: What are the differences among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents regarding possession of developmental assets?

H<sub>012</sub>: There are no differences in developmental assets among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

RQ13: Is there a relationship between cumulative grade point average and number of disciplinary referrals?

H<sub>013</sub>: There is no significant relationship between cumulative grade point average and number of disciplinary referrals.

### Operational Definitions

To facilitate a better understanding of the various terms used in this study operational definitions are provided below:

African American. Descendants of African heritage. Group of people taken involuntarily from their African countries, transported to the American continent, and against their will forced into slavery in the settlement of the country. The historical context of Africans in America is characterized by racial oppression and incidences of racial discrimination.

Adolescent. For the purpose of this study, the age range of an adolescent is within 14-19 years of age. Each participant must be enrolled in grades 9-12.

Ethnic Identity. Involves a sense of belonging and identification with a specific cultural heritage. Does not emphasize the prevalence of oppression or racism, however may

include the prejudices and cultural pressures experienced when individuals encounter conflict with the dominant culture (Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995).

Racial Identity. The basic premise of racial identity addresses the issue of oppression. It is a socially and politically-constructed term used to assess how individuals abandon the effects of disenfranchisement and develop respect of their own racial group as well as develop an appreciation of other racial groups (Sodowsky, et.al, 1995).

High-academic achievers. During the statistical analysis research participants were divided into 3 groups according to level of academic achievement. Grade point averages were used as a measure of academic achievement. Grade point averages that fell within the top 25<sup>th</sup> percentile were analyzed as high-academic achievers. The GPA range was 95-84 for high-academic achievers.

Average-academic achievers. The GPA range was 83-72 for average-academic achievers.

Low-academic achievers. Grade point averages that fell within the bottom 25<sup>th</sup> percentile were analyzed as low-academic achievers. The GPA range for this group was 71-50.

### Chapter Summary

While there have been attempts to understand the African American female across the developmental lifespan, more research is still required. The convergence of race and gender is unique to the African American woman. These critical identity components can play an important role in the cultural, social and psychological development of the African American woman. When race and gender interplay with adolescence, the challenge of developing a healthy sense of self can become more complicated. The African American female adolescent is faced with the challenge of navigating not only

the developmental tasks of adolescence but also is forced to combat possible negative societal portrayals of African American women. The young African American female struggles to find her place in a society characterized by both societal and racial injustice.

This study attempted to provide additive information regarding the experiences of young African American females. The researcher provided an examination of various dimensions of the African American adolescent female including ethnic identity, family environment and student resources. It was the intention of the researcher to provide additive information within the psychological literature regarding this population as well as provide information that will assist in the development of appropriate services and interventions.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides a framework for understanding the experiences of African American female adolescents. To understand the young African American female is to understand the interplay of race, gender and adolescent development. To facilitate a more in-depth understanding, several bodies of literature were covered. Initially, an overview of the psychology of African American women is provided. This section addressed the convergence of race and gender in the life of the African American woman. Next, a discussion of the interplay of race, gender and adolescent development for the African American female adolescent is presented. Finally, a more in-depth examination of specific identity dimensions including academics, ethnicity and family of the African American female adolescent is reviewed.

#### Psychology of African American Women

Historically, throughout the psychological literature, mental health issues have been defined through the experiences of men. Only in the past twenty years have mental health professionals taken notice of the impact of not only societal conditions but also recognized the significant role of abuse and trauma play in the symptomatology of adult women (Hare-Muslin, 1983 as cited in Titus, Smith 1992). Women continue to be overrepresented in three major categories of the more serious emotional disturbances including depression, eating disorders and dissociative disorders far more frequently than their male counterparts (Titus, et al, 1992). Due to the prevalence of mental health issues among women, recent psychological theories have taken into account the unique

experiences of women and have begun to develop more gender-specific theoretical conceptualizations.

Although the experiences of women in general have been absent until recently within the psychological literature, for women of color, understanding the psychological distress associated with their lived experiences have been even more ignored. The issue of race continues to be dominant in the lives of African Americans. The convergence of race and gender for African American women exacerbates the difficulty in functioning in a society that perpetuates discriminatory practices, ridicules cultural traditions and labels behavior in a deficit manner. Specific concerns of African American women are a critical area for further research.

#### Historical Implications

To understand the experiences of the African American woman is to take into account a history of oppression characterized by acts of racism and dehumanization. The history of African Americans is characterized by years of slavery, absence of cultural identity, destruction of familial units, and a disconnection from a cultural homeland. Being an African American meant acknowledging a history that was defined through conflict, denial and negativity (Jones, 1991). As a means of navigating the effects of oppression, African Americans learned to integrate coping mechanisms as a means for survival. For the African American, survival required the adaptive quality to assess situations where expression of opinions, desires, and beliefs could be valued as opposed to ridiculed. This cultural group developed a coping strategy that facilitated their ability to withstand the punishing and controlling behavior of the dominant group (Jones, 1991).

Specifically for the African American woman, adaptation required assessment of both racial and gender discriminatory practices. According to Davis (1971), the historical characterization of African American women included: (1) Many years in which status as women was demolished, causing their role as women to become virtually indistinguishable from their male slave counterparts (2) Lack of protection from slave masters (3) Construction of a new definition of what it meant to be female and (4) Years of hard work, perseverance and self-reliance. Throughout the history of African Americans, the distinction between males and females became blurred as a result of both entities diligently working to combat acts of oppression (Fordham, 1993).

#### Racism and African Americans

The prevalence of racism continues to be salient in the current experiences of African Americans. Racism has been defined as beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to minimize individuals or groups due to phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group membership (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999). Racial discrimination remains as a major quality of life issue for contemporary African Americans (Feagin & Vera, 1995). Encountering situations plagued by racial injustice can be a daily occurrence for some African Americans. To combat such racially charged situations, African Americans have learned to develop coping behaviors. Several research studies have attempted to evaluate these coping behaviors. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed a theoretical framework that defined coping as an attempt to manage external or internal demands that often exceeds a person's resources. During this process the individual makes an assessment of a situation as either (1) posing a threat (2) potentially resulting in harm or loss (3) judge the importance of situation or (4) determining whether

the situation presents a challenge. Plummer and Slane (1996) conducted an empirically based study using the Lazarus and Folkman model of coping to examine the behaviors of African Americans in racially stressful situations. Results of this study indicated that (1) African Americans engage in less active coping efforts in racially stressful situations (2) racially stressful situations generally demand confrontative coping strategies and (3) racially stressful situations tend to restrict the coping options available to African Americans.

Racial discrimination is multidimensional and occurs at three different levels including individual, institutional and cultural racism (Jones, 1997). Individual racism occurs at the personal level. Institutional racism is experienced as a result of social and institutional policies that exclude racial/ethnic members from participating in beneficial services. Cultural racism occurs when the cultural practices of the dominant group are regarded by society as superior (Jones, 1997). Utsey and Ponterotto (2000) conducted a study to determine whether African Americans utilize different coping strategies when encountering different types of racism. Research findings indicated that during occurrences of individual racism avoidance coping strategies were preferred by African American women more than problem-solving coping strategies. Findings also demonstrated that avoidance coping strategies were predictors of both self-esteem and life satisfaction among African Americans experiencing race-related stress. Consistent with these findings, it is perceived that African Americans who have attained a positive sense of self in the face of perceived racial discrimination maintain better mental health (Fischer & Shaw, 1999).



### Psychological Effects of Racism

Implementing various coping strategies to combat racism can be a source of psychological distress for African Americans (Clark, et al. 1999). Numerous psychological stress responses may follow perceptions of racism including anger, paranoia, anxiety and helplessness (Bullock & Houston, 1987). Anger resulting from racial encounters may be manifested through hostility, aggression, or the use of alcohol or other substances to dull angry feelings (Harris, 1992). Hopelessness may evoke feelings of frustration, depression, resentment or distrust (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993).

While the psychological implications of racism for African Americans seem clear, few empirical studies have examined the interrelation between racism and mental health. Fisher and Shaw (1999) attempted to provide additive information regarding this issue. Their study investigated potential moderators of the link between perceived racism and mental health for African Americans. Results suggested that both racial socialization (defined as preparedness against racial conflict) experiences and self-esteem moderated the mental health effects of perceived racism (Fisher, et al, 1999).

### Environmental Factors

Exposure to environmentally stressful situations continues to characterize the experiences of African Americans. More than 50% of African Americans still reside in substandard housing, lack employment in managerial jobs, and receive lower wages (Sigelman & Welch, 1991). African Americans continue to dominate nonprofessional and non-managerial occupations (Brown, 1996). Unemployment for African Americans is dramatically higher and earnings are noticeably lower (Brown, 1996). Many African

American families and communities are in a crisis state confronting poverty, crime, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and single motherhood (Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona & Simons, 2001). These environmental stressors coupled with racial tension can perpetuate mental health disturbances among African Americans resulting in emotional exhaustion, psychological and physiological distress (Clark, et al, 1999). In a study conducted by Pryor-Brown, Powell, and Earls (1989), results indicated that African American females who have encountered a higher frequency of stressful events were also found to have higher rates of depression and a higher number of symptoms involving posttraumatic stress, somatic complaints and substance use.

### Psychological Distress

The historical and contemporary implications of racism may be contributing factors in the psychological distress among African American women. For the African American woman it is often a challenge to find supporting and affirming images of black femaleness (bell-hooks, 1993). Regarding physical attractiveness, the African American woman experiences both intergroup and intragroup misconceptions of beauty. While most women, regardless of ethnicity, encounter unattainable standards of physical beauty, the struggle for women of color is exacerbated by the constant idolization of European beauty. Furthermore, within the African American culture, the importance of skin color continues to be a salient issue. The issue of skin color has important implications for the psychological health of African Americans. Skin color is an identifying feature that represents membership to an oppressed and exploited group of people and is an important factor in the development of problems affecting the psyche of African American people (Harvey, 1995). Value is placed upon lighter skin because it is perceived that White

America is more accepting of African Americans whose skin color closely resembles European standards (Harvey, 1995). An internalization of White standards of skin color leads many African Americans to believe that light skin represents beauty and intelligence (Harvey, 1995). For a fair-skinned African American female her self-perception may be defined through her physical appearance thereby possibly hindering the development of other components of her self-worth (bell-hooks, 1993). Contrary, for the darker skinned African American woman, the continuous devaluing of her physical appearance may result in a negative self-perception (bell-hooks, 1993). Therefore the African American woman is forced to develop a sense of self-worth in the midst of combating both the influences of intergroup and intragroup racism.

### Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to better understand the psychological health of African American women some theorists have proposed various theoretical frameworks. According to the relational model, women's sense of self is defined through the maintenance and affiliation associated with relationships (Surrey, 1991). The basic tenets of the relational model state that: (1) an interest in others establishes the foundation for emotional connection and the ability to empathize with others, (2) sharing of experiences contributes to a heightened development of self and others and (3) relationships are interpreted as a mutual process of sensitivity and responsibility that serves as the foundation for growth and enhancement (Surrey, 1991). In part, it appears to be critical to the development of women to establish meaningful relationships and to gain an understanding of others. Central to this theory are the unique gender differences regarding psychological development. While men are socialized to develop the qualities

of, individuality, achievement, and aggression, women are socialized to build qualities of connection, caring, and accommodation (Miller, 1976).

While women aspire to gain understanding of others and to build connections with others this does not occur without some incidences of conflict. Miller (1976) states that conflict is a necessary component of relationships where the essential changes must occur in order for growth to occur. The relational model states that the moral conflict of women often stems from the strong desire of serving as a caretaker for others without hurting anyone in the process (Gilligan, 1982). This conflict may develop into psychological disturbances for some women.

For African American women, the relational model may pose specific challenges in providing an appropriate explanation to their unique experiences. While the relational dimension may be critical to the development of African American women, the ability to establish relationships may be negatively affected by one's cultural context. The sense of connection or disconnection from the African American cultural heritage may affect her perception of reality. Intuitively, the African identity of African American women may impact her position in the larger societal context, her ability to cope with societal injustices, and her ability to progress in society (Jenkins, 2000). A disconnection from one's cultural heritage may result in an internalization of oppression that impedes her ability to establish connection with self and others. Additionally, these African American women may experience a lowered social esteem and minimum respect and pride in one's own racial group (Jenkins, 2000).

For African American women, there is a moral dichotomy in which most strive towards finding a balance between a sense of self and ethnic pride, in conjunction with an

internalized connection to both family and community (Turner, 1997). Both entities emphasize the importance of establishing a deeper sense of self while adhering to the cultural influence of communalism. Maintaining a connectedness to family and ethnic identity has served as a source of strength and coping that is vital and necessary for the psychological survival and health of African Americans (Turner, 1997). Through the developmental process, African American women gain a sense of self and learn to differentiate their sense of self in relation to their concerns and feelings for others.

While the relational model has provided a theoretical framework for understanding the psychological development of women, it has not been evaluated without some criticisms. The relational model attempts to describe a woman's way of being (Surrey, 1991). According to this model, a woman's way of being involved relational aspects and described women as empathic, nurturing and emotional. Critics of this model have stated that this model acknowledged traditional "women's traits" (Williams, 1999) and failed to recognize the various experiences among women (Pollitt, 1992).

In addition to the relational model other theoretical models have been scrutinized for its appropriateness for women of color. The Afrocentric psychology model is based on traditional African values of spirituality, communalism and interdependence (Mbiti, 1990). Its basic premise suggests that adherence to traditional African cultural patterns promotes psychological health and instills a sense of self-worth to better combat the effects of racism (Mbiti, 1990).

According to Williams (1999) while both models provide theoretical frameworks, they both operate under universalizing assumptions suggesting that the African American

woman should be understood through either her racial or gender identity. The Black feminist/womanist model attempts to understand the African American woman through the interaction of race, class and gender (Williams, 1999). The emphasis on emotional wholeness, psychological strength and resilience and their centrality to Black women's historical struggles is at the core of the Black feminist/womanist theory (Williams, 1999). The Black feminist/womanist therapeutic model conceptualizes the emotional distress through an understanding of the interrelation between the client's difficulties and the historical experiences of African American women (Williams, 1999).

#### Convergence of Race, Gender and Adolescence

In an attempt to gain more understanding of the psychological development of adult African American women, perhaps an examination of the psychological disturbances of adolescent females is warranted. While there has been a sufficient amount of research conducted on general adolescent development, few research studies have focused on the developmental transitions of adolescent girls. Until recently the experiences of adolescent girls have been underrepresented in the psychological literature.

#### Female Adolescent Development

Relational aspects seem to characterize the lives of most females. This relational aspect of development appears to be most apparent during adolescence where a sense of character and resiliency becomes lost (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). According to the relational model, interpersonal connections and relationships are central to the psychological development of women (Gilligan, 1982). The young female struggles with the conflict of not wanting to hurt others or by the fear, that, in speaking, her voice will

go unheard, ridiculed or misunderstood (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) resulting in a lowered self-confidence. Additionally, often during this stage of development adolescent females become secretive with adults and full of contradictions (Pipher, 1994). These contradictions may stem from the conflict associated with their status as human beings and their status as females (Pipher, 1994). Research suggests that the silencing of both adolescent and adult women is influenced by the fear of possibly damaging interpersonal relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Adolescent females experience personal doubt in their capabilities and begin to question their own decision-making abilities. The voice of girls becomes anonymous.

A solid sense of self, confidence and independence are considered typical characteristics of pre-adolescent girls (Stern, 1991). However, a dramatic change occurs during adolescence where these same young women begin to devalue their perceptions and question their ability to make appropriate decisions. Their sense of self is defined through interpersonal relationships. It appears as if adolescent girls go underground or appear to give up their own authority (Brown, 1989).

In many instances, the developmental transitions of adolescence serve as a catalyst for the onset of psychological distress (Petersen, 1988). Adolescent girls demonstrate more depressive-like symptoms and have poorer emotional well being than experienced during pre-adolescence. Additionally, they exhibit more negative self-appraisal and are more likely to encounter their first experience with psychological disturbances (Stern, 1991). In a study conducted by *Mental Health Weekly* (1994), adolescent girls are more at risk for depression than adolescent boys.

The developmental trauma associated with adolescence appears to be evident in the lives of most adult women (Pipher, 1994). Questions that were paramount to their adolescent experience continue to be dominant in their lives during adulthood. Questions such as, “How important are looks and popularity? How do I care for myself and not be selfish? Or how can I be honest and still be loved?” It appears that if these questions are left unresolved during adolescence, it may be more likely for insecurities to resurface during adulthood leading to the possibility of emotional and psychological distress (Pipher, 1994).

Many of the issues encountered by adolescent females today are also influenced by contemporary cultural changes. Today adolescence is complicated by media images of beauty, acts of violence in school settings, societal and peer pressure to engage in sexual intercourse, as well as societal influences in the breakdown of family structure. Societal standards of adolescence coupled with the individual standards of adolescence may eventually lead to false selves, a term coined by Pipher (1994). The term “false selves” refers to the dilemma encountered by adolescent women when they are faced with the difficulty of adhering to cultural pressures and adhering to personal standards (Pipher, 1994).

#### African American female adolescents

Developing a sense of self in the midst of navigating societal and cultural pressures is an ongoing struggle for female adolescents. How this struggle plays out in the lives of African American female adolescents is an underrepresented area of psychological research. The reality of both racism and sexism may profoundly interfere with the autonomy and individuation that is presumably associated with adolescence



thereby possibly interfering with appropriate adolescent development (Leadbeater & Way, 1998).

The educational and socialization problems of female adolescents have generally been understood through existing knowledge of White females. While this research has been additive to the psychological literature, it does not take into account specific dimensions, specifically the historical context, societal injustices, and cultural influences that characterize the lives of African American female adolescents. During the transition from adolescence to adulthood, critical attitudes are developed, behaviors are adopted and lifestyle choices are made (Robinson & Ward, 1991). A developmental counseling model used to assess the growth and changes of the African American female from childhood to adulthood has not emerged (Harris, 1992). Providing more research on adolescent developmental transitions will provide important information on the link between childhood and womanhood that will enhance understanding of the African American woman.

#### African American female adolescent

For African American female adolescents, the developmental passage of adolescence is most often characterized through the interplay of race, gender and economic oppression (Robinson & Ward, 1991). The reality of living in a world that continues to marginalize the cultural experiences of African Americans in general, specifically the African American woman, and the powerful influences of a white-male dominated society, may serve as the catalyst to promote and protect their own interest (Way, 1998).

Verbalizing thoughts and defending one's position serves as a critical component of survival for African American adolescent females. While some may perceive the verbal assertiveness of African American adolescent females as inappropriate, ineffective, or rude, it also conveys a message of confidence and forces others to listen and adhere to their thoughts and feelings seriously (Way, 1998). Without the verbal assertiveness, adolescent girls of color may realize that their needs and request will be ignored. Sigler (1999) reported that adolescent females use confrontation due to feeling challenged or threatened. In a research study conducted by Haynie, Walters & Alexander (as cited in Sigler, 1999) found that the contributing reasons for fighting behavior of female students were embarrassment, threats to relationships with boyfriends, or betrayal of peers.

The assertive demeanor of African American adolescent females may also be explained by cultural and societal influences. Adolescent females growing up in urban communities may not be raised as passive or quiet as those females growing up in suburban, white-middle upper class environments (Way, 1998). Wade-Gayles (1997) suggests that African American mothers do not socialize their daughters to be passive. Quite the contrary, they teach their daughters the necessary skills to be independent, strong, and self-confident. In some instances, the protective nature and dominant personality of African American mothers may be utilized as a vehicle to facilitate the appropriate growth and development of African American girls. A mother's protection may provide a context where self-actualization can occur in a society that typically devalues and minimizes the experiences of African American women (Wade-Gayles, 1997). The mother/daughter relationship plays a significant role in the psychological

development of African American female adolescents. According to Jenkins (1996) the bond between mother and daughter is the primary psychological relationship in which other relationships are built upon. It is within the context of the mother/daughter dyad that women develop a self-in relation sense of self (Jenkins, 1996).

It is perceived that verbal assertiveness is a necessary tool to combat societal injustices. Although verbal assertiveness appears to be apparent among some African American adolescent females, this ability does not occur without some challenges. Because of their marginalized societal position, the African American female must learn to decipher situations where verbal assertiveness is appropriate and necessary. According to bell-hooks (1993) she states, “For African American women, our struggle has not involved silencing rather our struggle has involved changing the nature and direction of our assertiveness, in an effort to be heard.”

### School Experience

In a report presented by the American Association of University Women (1992), *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, it discussed the difficulties experienced by many adolescent girls have in maintaining a level of competence in schools. This study found more incidences of sexual harassment for females that in many instances impedes their academic participation and performance and may have a negative effect on girls’ self-confidence. More specifically, in a study conducted by Harris (1993) findings suggested that 33% of girls who reported being sexually harassed preferred not to attend school, 32% reported less class participation and 29% reported feeling less confident.

While these statistics are startling, these findings make no mention of racial differences. Until recently, much of the educational research conducted on African

American students emphasized the experiences of African American males, while the schooling experiences of African American females received minimal attention (Wright, Weekes, & McGlaughlin, 1999). Despite the perceived strides towards academic excellence of some African American girls, obstacles encountered by this group result in a difficult educational experience. The convergence of sexism and racism characterizes the lives of African American females. For African American school-aged girls, sexism continues to play an important role (Wright, et. al, 1999). While it appears that their female status may affect the attainment of possible career choices, it has been the saliency of racism that has served as the determinant of a quality education (Wright, et.al, 1999).

Irvine (1986 as cited in Pollard 1993) suggests that African American girls received less positive feedback from teachers as they progressed in grade levels. For some adolescent females adherence to specific gender roles of passivity may interfere with their ability to pursue academic work with any vigor. Support and encouragement of others in the school, especially teachers, may be important in sustaining academic motivation. Furthermore, developing a sense of self-esteem while combating subtle discriminatory acts, such as rarely being selected to participate in school activities, may negatively the academic self-concept of the African American woman (Jenkins, 1996). At the collegiate level, Chester (1983) found that African American women have lower aspirations and lower self-esteem than African American men. African American female adolescents tend to set lower occupational goals and expect lower occupational success (Brown, 1996). In an effort to maneuver through the ranks of higher education as well as

the workplace, African American females have developed various coping strategies that facilitate their educational experience.

In a study conducted by Fordham (1993), there was an attempt made to understand characteristics associated with both high and underachieving African American female adolescents. Results of this qualitative study suggested that the high-achieving females were: (1) silently compliant with the academic standards of the school (2) rewarded by their teachers and parents for their silence and obedience with good grades (3) alienated and isolated from the Black kinship systems and (4) worked diligently to maintain an academic successful and “nice girl” persona. In contrast, results regarding the underachieving females were: (1) highly visible and maintained a strong presence in prospective school (2) inconsistency between ability and achievement as measured by grades and standardized test scores (3) received unconditional support for academic plans and espoused goals and (4) maintained support and nurturance from peers and significant adults in their lives (Fordham, 1993). These findings seem to suggest that while the high achieving African American females were academically successful it was at a significant cost of silence. Socialization to silence and invisibility can be distressful for the African American female because it involves a social isolation as well as a disavowing of self (Fordham, 1993).

#### Coping Resources of African American Adolescents

Whether there is a silencing of voice or whether there is a determination to be verbally outspoken against discriminatory acts, African American adolescents have had to learn to navigate in a society that has typically been mishandled by the juvenile justice system, mistreated by the social welfare system and miseducated by the educational

system (Gibbs, 1990). African American adolescents have incorporated the necessary tools needed to combat societal injustices and prevail over environmental barriers.

### Academic Performance

Several studies have examined contributing factors that attempt to explain the variation in academic performance among African American adolescents. According to Ogbu (1988) one form of adaptation to the discriminatory educational and employment policies is to become disengaged from the schooling process. For these students the educational experience represents “learning the cultural aspects of White America which is perceived as having negative effects on their own cultural and identity integrity” (p.182). Consistent with this argument, it is perceived that discriminatory practices in education and in the work force creates an environment of underachievement among African American adolescents (Sanders, 1997). Steele (1992) argues that students who have been marginalized by the dominant society may experience an increased anxiety that stems from either confirming or negating group stereotypes. If the group stereotype is defined through negative attributes (i.e. laziness, lack of motivation), then adherence to the group stereotype may result in academic failure. For those students who experience anxiety due to the confirmation of negative group stereotypes may view disidentification as a defense mechanism (Steele, 1992). Steele and Aronson (1995) found that African American students decrease effort and academic performance in situations where their performance is threatening to confirm the negative racial stereotypes. In contrast, this discrepancy in academic performance does not occur when identical tasks are performed in a nonevaluative environment (Steele, 1992).

Steele (1992) conducted a study to examine the relationship between race/ethnicity and the process of disidentification. Findings of this study suggest that the self-esteem of African American students increased from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, then decreased by 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Interestingly, although the self-esteem of the African American students remained much higher than that of Whites, their grades and achievement scores declined over a period of time. According to Steele (1992) these specific findings demonstrate a possible disconnection between the academic self and personal identity. When gender was taken into account, the correlation between self-esteem and achievement scores for African American girls only slightly decreased. This may be indicative that African American females are less susceptible to academic disidentification than African American males.

Ogbu (1988) also provides an argument for the disengagement process of African American students. His argument suggests that the historical context of oppression has played a role in the development of school perceptions by African American adolescents. The involuntary nature of the way African Americans came to America established a certain level of distrust of outside institutions. Although African American students associate success with an acquisition of education, there is a pattern of rejecting the educational path in fear of being perceived as operating similarly to the mainstream culture (i.e. “acting White”) and feeling isolated from own group membership.

Instead of disengagement as a coping mechanism, other research suggests that it is necessary to integrate the cultural aspects of the dominant society with the African American community (Fordham 1988). Academic excellence requires African American adolescents to combat societal pressures. For some academically achieving adolescents, a

realization that academic success includes a certain level of adherence to the values and beliefs of the dominant society becomes clearly apparent (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). While students of color often adhere to the cultural aspects of the mainstream population, one must also develop a sense of self and connection within the cultural community to serve as protection against the negative conditions associated with racial status (Miller, et al., 1999).

However, for other academically achieving adolescents, Fordham (1988) suggests that they develop a “raceless persona,” which has been defined as a disconnection or lack of identification to the African American community. This cultural disconnection may have harmful implications for the psychological development of African American adolescents. While racelessness does not typically result in academic failure it may contribute to difficulty in social development (Clark, 1991). Some African American students who want success may seek social distance from the culture with which they identify racially; rather than maintain their affiliation with their own culture, they weaken their attachment to the African American community (Ford, Harris, Webb & Jones, 1994). Because of this dual identity conflict, some gifted and high-achieving African American students may feel guilty, alienated, and unsure of where and if they fit in (Ford et al., 1994). Gifted African American students are especially vulnerable to problems because they may experience intragroup isolation. Specifically, for gifted African American students, the preoccupation with racial problems becomes exacerbated resulting in feelings of cultural alienation. Due to the importance of establishment and maintenance of peer relationships characterizing adolescence, alienation from other



African American students may be perceived as psychologically harmful (Ford et al., 1993).

In contrast to the raceless persona ideology, other research attributes the success of African Americans to several other factors. Other authors argue that the price for educational attainment and academic excellence does not require a disconnection with one's own cultural heritage (Sanders, 1997). Historically, it has been perceived that African Americans have possessed a strong inclination towards academically excelling as is evident in their multifaceted and continuous struggle for equal educational opportunity and educational attainment (Perry, 1993). The common thread among some successful African Americans is the affirmation and empowerment resulting from a positive sense of racial identity (Edwards & Polite, 1992 as cited in Sanders, 1997).

Racial socialization and racial identity have been perceived as cultural factors that serve as protection against adverse environmental circumstances as racism, poverty, and limited access to resources (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995). According to Peters (1985) racial socialization is defined as the open communication which occurs between African American parents and children in an effort to discuss the importance of maintaining a strong foundation in the African American culture while acknowledging the implications of living in a society that provides minimal support of the experiences of African American people. Racial socialization may be perceived as protection against the hostilities of a harsh environment.

Helms (1990) defined racial identity as the interpretation an individual gives to his/her racial heritage within a particular group. According to the racial identity model, the ideal stage of racial identity is achieved when an individual acquires genuine

acceptance and appreciation of one's own cultural group along with the contributions of other cultural groups (Helms, 1990). Therefore it is perceived that a healthy racial identity will help navigate the challenges associated with minority status. Poverty, unemployment and institutional racism may serve as sources of stress in the lives of African American adolescents. Thus, the response to stressful situations may vary based on the levels of social support or racial identity (McCreary, Slavin & Berry, 1996). Further, ethnic identity has been defined as that component of a person's self-concept that derives from knowledge of ethnic group as well as the value placed upon group membership (Tajfel, 1981). According to a study conducted by Pellebon (2000) results suggested that ethnic identity serves as a buffer against interracial group conflict, thereby indicating that intergroup relations could affect have an impact on ethnic identity. Additional results indicated that a negative relationship exists between intergroup association and ethnic identity suggesting that as ethnic identity develops, there is a reduction in contact with other racial groups (Pellebon, 2000).

Some researchers suggest that the academic discrepancy can be explained by individual attributes of African American students such as poor self-concept (Powell, 1989) or lack of motivation (Graham, 1989). Others suggest that African American student's school failure is related to the discrepancy in the allocation of school resources where students of color, specifically in lower socioeconomic communities, receive less favorable resources. Furthermore, research proposes that these students are subjected to lower teacher expectations and are victims of discriminatory practices such as tracking or exclusion from school (Fine, 1991). An absence of a culturally-sensitive curriculum that

promotes and acknowledges the contributions of people of African descent may also contribute to discrepancy in academic performance (Boateng, 1990).

Other research suggests that poor school performance for African American students can be further explained by the societal injustices of the American society. The continuation of racial inferiority and infusion of societal policies that challenge the participation of African Americans in social and economic institutions continues to be apparent in American society (Mickelson & Smith, 1989). Ogbu (1990) argues that the structure of the educational system perpetuates a less desirable education for African American students. The perpetuation of low status in society suggests that specific factors, negative self-perceptions, decreased motivation and lowered levels of academic achievement are the result of society's perpetuation of inferior status (Ogbu, 1990).

### Sense of Belonging

The school is perceived as a primary socialization agent in American society. Schools provide the context where students learn about society's values, appropriate behaviors, and expectations. When considering the tremendous impact of schools on the developing adolescent's personal, intellectual, physical and social development, it is important for African American adolescents to feel accepted in the school environment.

An important element in the academic performance is the student's sense of belonging in the school or classroom. School belonging refers to the extent in which a student experiences a personal connection and feels supported by their school environment. (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). While the extent to which a student appears to be both personally and academically connected with the school environment is an important factor, it remains questionable as to how this can characterize the experiences

of at-risk students, who are often identified as troublesome in the school environment. Finn (1989) developed an identification-participation model to examine the school withdrawal among at-risk students. An underlying premise of this model states that unless students identify a connection with the school system to a minimum degree, or perceives themselves to be valuable contributing entities in this school setting, they may begin the gradual disengagement process whereby dropping out becomes an inevitable option.

In the research study conducted by Goodenow & Grady (1993) the focus was to examine the psychological sense of school (i.e. sense of belonging). Findings of this study indicate specific gender differences where girls were more likely than boys to express a high sense of belonging and school motivation. Additionally, findings indicated that students who do have a high sense of belonging in school are also more likely to be motivated and academically engaged than those whose sense of belonging is low. Researchers concluded that expecting to be academically successful not only results from students' individual beliefs regarding their academic abilities but also from their belief in their supportive resources- the help and encouragement from others.

The ability to establish genuine contact with others appears to be a critical component in the facilitation process of academics (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Typically, students identify or emulate the practices of those whom they feel most attached. Particularly, for those who may reside in a neighborhood that does not foster academic excellence, a sense of personal connection to teachers and others in school may be essential for the development and maintenance of academic motivation. However, in a study conducted by Boykin (1986), results indicated some African American students

perceive their school environment as hostile and teachers as agents of oppression. In an effort to protect their self-esteem, these adolescents may develop coping strategies that lead to alienation from the school. Specifically, these students may outwardly be perceived as cooperative while they are working diligently to undermine the teacher's efforts (Clark, 1991) resulting in possible negative ramifications to the academic success of African American students.

### Family Environment

The complexity of developing an individual identity while maintaining collective sense of self, while also functioning within White cultural institutions, can become a continuous struggle for the young African American woman (Jenkins, 1996). The importance of family relationships cannot be minimized as a source of support for students. It is perceived that the family and peer relationships of African American adolescents provide cultural safety against societal injustices. Research conducted by Giordano & Cernkovich (1993) suggested that for African American youth living in a hostile majority environment, families are perceived as a source of strength or anchor. While the familial influence may serve as a positive outlet, some research studies have suggested that these findings may differ according to gender. Previous research suggests that females are more likely to maintain close relationships with family members throughout all developmental stages (Giordano & Cernkovich, 1993).

A home environment can provide a context that reinforces the academic achievement of adolescents. Clark (1991) conducted a study of the family socialization process of both low-achieving and high-achieving high school students. Results of this study indicated that in the homes of high achievers there was frequent dialogue between

parents and children; parents provided a nurturing environment that was supportive of academic pursuits by monitoring their child's achievement and reinforced appropriate achievement behaviors. Discussion of problem solving strategies and social skill development were perceived as critical to their academic success. Contrary, for low-achieving students, results indicated that there was minimum family socialization. Additionally, the family environment provided a context that was characterized by hopelessness and powerlessness. While for some students family can serve as a protective mechanism from the harsh realities of society, family may also be detrimental if the appropriate skills to be successful in school are not reinforced.

#### Chapter Summary

Previous research has indicated that the historical implications of oppression as well as the current status of African Americans continues to have an impact on the psychological, social and academic development. For some African American adolescents, the ramifications of a cultural history characterized by oppression have often resulted in verbal aggression, academic disidentification, or cultural disengagement or cultural shame. Despite historical implications, many African American adolescents have risen above societal forces and continue to prevail. Particularly, when focusing on gender differences, in the case of African American female adolescents, previous research suggested that this group was less likely to participate in academic disengagement and more likely to experience a sense of school belonging. However, the information provided does not provide an explanation of the with-in group differences among African American female adolescents. The need for further examination continues to be paramount.

The convergence of race, gender and adolescence is unique to the experiences of an African American female adolescent. Although the historical implications of oppression and racism continue to be salient in the lives of contemporary African Americans, there is evidence that African Americans continue to prevail above societal injustices. Despite this progress much is left unknown regarding possible explanations for the varied experiences of African Americans.

For the African American woman, battling both intergroup and intragroup racism complicates developing a positive sense of self. Within the mainstream population she is constantly bombarded with societal images that contradict and negate her African culture. Within the African American community the issue of skin color is salient, therefore she struggles to find her own place in both the larger societal context as well as within her own cultural group. Often this struggle may lead to emotional and psychological distress.

The African American adolescent female must endure these struggles while also managing the developmental transitions of adolescence. Much of the research on female adolescent development suggests that their voices are lost and their personal identities are intertwined with interpersonal relationships. Research on African American female adolescents seems to contradict these findings. These young women appear to be extremely verbal and assertive. Perhaps both types of behavior are manifestations of deeper psychological distress and are closeted in cultural underpinnings. Regardless of the explanation, what is apparent is the need for further research on this particular age group. Researching the various dimensions that comprise the developmental transitions of African American female students can only prove to be beneficial as we move into a society where the understanding of multiculturalism is critical.

## Chapter III

### METHOD

The following components of the research methodology are discussed in this section: (1) research participants (2) research procedure (3) sample selection and description, (4) instrumentation, (5) data collection and (6) data analysis.

#### Participants

Participants in this study were African American female adolescents (i.e., ages 14 through 19 years old) who attended high school in a public school district located in the southeastern region of the United States. This school district consists of 19 schools with a total enrollment of 12, 228 students. The total racial/ethnic composition of this school district is as follows: 57% African American, 27% White American, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian American and 3% Other (i.e. Multiracial). The two local high schools were selected as the designated research sites. One high school has a total enrollment of 1,639 students. The racial/ethnic composition of this school was 53% African American, 33% White American, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian American and 1% Other. The total enrollment of the other school consists of 1,730 students consisting of 57% African American, 34% White American, 4% Hispanic, 3% Asian American and 2% Other. Research participants consisted of female adolescents who self-identified as an African American.

#### Data Collection

This research study utilized a descriptive design in an effort to obtain information on the following characteristics: (1) ethnic identity, (2) family environment, and (3) student resources and assets. The research objective was to gather information on



traditionally-aged (14-19) female high school students who self-identified as African American in an effort to better understand their experiences and provide additive information in the psychological literature. In an attempt to provide a more in-depth understanding of these young women, the researcher examined the differences among levels of academic achievement.

Preceding data collection, informed consent was obtained from all research participants, their parents, and school administrators. The investigation adhered to the guidelines enforced by the school district and the Institutional Review Board of the university. Data collection occurred over a two-month period from May to June of 2001. Collaboration with local principals, school counselors and teachers facilitated the researcher's ability to gain access to the female students at two public high school settings. During the initial stages of data collection the researcher met with the school counselors at each participating site to discuss the purpose and goals/objectives of the research study. During this meeting the school counselors of one high school provided contact information for all ninth grade teachers. The ninth grade academy of this school was selected because the principal of this school had identified the ninth grade as a critical year for student development. The goals/objectives of this proposed research study were consistent with the critical area identified by the principal. Therefore all ninth grade teachers of this school were sent a letter explicitly stating the objectives of the study. Also, within this letter, teachers were asked to allow all ninth-grade African American female adolescents to attend a 20-minute presentation regarding the study.

This presentation occurred at 8:30 a.m. First period was selected as the most opportune time in which there would be minimal disruption to instruction. An

announcement was made via intercom stating that all designated students should report to the auditorium for a brief presentation. A total of 88 ninth-grade African American female students attended this presentation. During the presentation, students received information regarding: (1) the nature and purpose of the research study (2) risks and benefits, (3) an explanation of anonymity and voluntary participation (4) letters of parental consent and assent were distributed, and (5) procedures to return consent forms were explained. Students were given three days to return consent forms. A total of 13 (15%) consent forms were signed and returned to the counseling department of the participating school.

At the second data collection site, the researcher met with a teacher to discuss the proposed objectives of research study. Collaboration with two science teachers afforded the researcher with the opportunity to utilize female students in both classes as prospective research participants. The teacher agreed to provide a brief overview of the research study to all female students in both science classes. These science classes were comprised of a heterogeneous group including both regular and college preparatory students. All male students were told they would be able to participate in a study for males at a later date and would receive the same incentive as the female students. As an incentive, the teachers offered a free homework grade to every female student who returned the consent form, regardless of whether the student chose to refuse or accept participation. To eliminate the possibility of racial exclusion, all female students, regardless of race/ethnicity, were allowed to participate in the research study. However, only the data from the African American participants was used for the data analysis. Other data will be used in future comparative research studies. Students were given two

days to return signed consent forms. A total of 80 consent forms were distributed and 68 were returned.

Data collection was conducted during school hours at both high schools. Due to the amount of time (approximately one hour and a half) required to complete the battery of instruments, two separate days were required to complete instruments. At one school site the researcher obtained permission to utilize a room in the media center for participants to complete a battery of instruments. At the second site the researcher used the teachers' classrooms to conduct the data collection. Because two science teachers agreed to allow their students to participate in this study, all participating female students remained in one classroom while nonparticipating female students along with the male students were sent to the other science classroom. Nonparticipating students were given this time as a study hour. During two different 45-minute time-blocks, the researcher personally administered the battery of instruments.

Of the 168 consent forms distributed at both schools, 81 were returned (Clarke Central (High School 1)–  $n = 13$  and Cedar Shoals (High School 2)–  $n = 68$ ), thereby constituting a 48.2% response rate. Of these 81 participants, nine self-identified as a member of another racial/ethnic group other than African American. While these participants were allowed to complete the battery of instruments, due to the nature of this study their responses will not be used in data analysis.

### Sample

The target population for this study consisted of African American female students (ages 14-19) attending either of two public high schools in the southeastern region of the United States. The participants of this study included 68 female students

from one site and 13 females from the other. The remaining population of 81 included 69 (85%) who self-identified as African American and 3 (4%) self-identified as bi-racial (i.e. African American mixed with another ethnic group). These 72 participants comprise the sample population. Table1 displays the demographic characteristics of research participants.

## Instrumentation

### Demographic Questionnaire

The initial Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed by the researcher in an attempt to gather more informative data regarding the research sample. It consisted of ten demographic items that included age, grade, ethnicity, education attainment of parent(s)/legal guardian(s), number of people in household, persons in household and involvement in extracurricular activities.

### Survey of Student Resources and Assets

The Survey of Student Resources and Assets (Appendix B) was developed by the Search Institute (1996) to identify intricate variables that affect adolescent development. Through nationwide research on over 250,000 adolescents in grades 6-12, the Search Institute developed the survey based on four categories: (1) developmental assets (2) thriving indicators (3) deficits and (4) risk behaviors and high-risk behavior patterns.

The Developmental Assets represent the positive relationships, opportunities, skills and values that promote adolescent development. The 40 developmental assets are divided into 2 categorical groups including external and internal assets.

The external assets are defined as those experiences and support received from established connections within the community. The 20 external assets are divided

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable	<u>n</u>	Percent
<b>High School</b>		
Clarke Central (HS 1)	13	16
Cedar Shoals (HS 2)	59	84
<b>Age</b>		
14	4	4.9%
15	29	35.8%
16	18	22.2%
17	20	24.7%
18	8	9.9%
19	2	2.5%
<b>Grade Level</b>		
Freshman	18	22.2%
Sophomore	28	34.6%
Junior	21	25.9%
Senior	14	17.3%

into 4 categories: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Support assets refer to the love, affirmation, and acceptance experienced by adolescents. Empowerment assets refer to the need for youth to be valued and how the community perceives the importance of youth. Boundaries and expectations assets refer to the need for youth to have clear and enforced boundaries to complement support and empowerment. The constructive use of time refers to how much time adolescents spend in structured activities sponsored through schools, community or religious organizations. The internal assets refer to the components a community and family nurture within youth in an effort to contribute to healthy development.

The 20 internal assets are divided into 4 categories including (1) commitment to learning, (2) positive values, (3) social competencies and (4) positive identity. Commitment to learning addresses the intellectual curiosity possessed by adolescents in order to survive in a rapidly changing society. Positive values refer to values known to both help prevent high-risk behaviors and promote caring for others. Social competencies denote the personal skills needed to negotiate through various options and choices. Positive identity refers to self-identity – sense of power, purpose, worth and promise.

The thriving indicators component represents life-enhancing attitudes and behaviors. The 8 thriving indicators within the survey include success in school, helping others, embracing diversity, maintaining good health, exhibiting leadership, resisting danger, delaying gratification and overcoming adversity.

The deficits component includes negative societal influences that interfere in the healthy, caring and productive ways of young adolescents. The five deficits measured by

the survey include: alcoholism, alone at home, victim of violence, overexposure to media and physical abuse.

The risk-taking behaviors and high-risk behavior patterns included 37 questions regarding substance abuse, anti-social behavior, violence, school truancy, gambling, eating disorder, depression and attempted suicide.

### Family Environment Scale

The Family Environment Scale – Form R (Moos & Moos, 1994) (Appendix C) is a 90-item self-report instrument that measures the perception of individuals regarding the social environment of families. Normative data of this scale was taken from 1,432 normal and 788 distressed families (Moos & Moos, 1994). These normal families include families from all geographic regions of the country, single parent and multigenerational families, racial minority groups and all age groups while the distressed families include family members in a correctional facility, alcohol abuse and/or psychiatric family history. Scoring of the FES involves conversion of raw scores into standard scores. The FES items are arranged so that each column of responses on the answer sheet constitutes one subscale. Thus, these scores are converted into standard scores (Moos & Moos, 1994).

Normative data have been established for the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1994). The instrument has acceptable levels of reliability and validity. For example, the internal consistencies vary from moderate to substantial; and test-retest reliabilities on the ten sub-scales at different intervals are all in an acceptable range, varying from .68 to .86 (Moos & Moos, 1994).

Three dimensions comprise the family environment scale including relationship, personal growth and systems maintenance. Each dimension is comprised of subscales that consist of 9 items. The relationship dimension measures family involvement and expression of feelings. Three subscales comprise this dimension including: (1) cohesion – measures level of commitment, help and support among family members (items 1, 11, 21, 31, 41, 51, 61, 71, 81) (2) expressiveness – measures the extent to which family members are encouraged to express feelings directly (items 2, 12, 22, 32, 42, 52, 62, 72, 82) and (3) conflict – assesses level of open conflict and anger among family members (items 3, 13, 23, 33, 43, 53, 63, 73, 83).

The personal growth dimension examines the extent to which a family encourages or inhibits personal growth. Five subscales comprise the personal growth dimension: (1) independence – measures the assertiveness and self-sufficiency within families (items 4, 14, 24, 34, 44, 54, 64, 74, 84) (2) achievement orientation – measures the number of activities categorized into an achievement-oriented or competitive framework (items 5, 15, 25, 35, 45, 55, 65, 75, 85) (3) intellectual-cultural orientation – measures the level of interest in political, intellectual and cultural activities (items 6, 16, 26, 36, 46, 56, 66, 76, 86) (4) active-recreational orientation – examines amount of participation in social and recreational activities (items 7, 17, 27, 37, 47, 57, 67, 77, 87) and (5) moral-religious emphasis – measures the importance of ethical and religious issues and values (items 8, 18, 28, 38, 48, 58, 68, 78, 88).

The systems maintenance dimension examines the family's emphasis on clear organization, structure, rules and procedures among family members. This subscale consists of two subscales: (1) organization – measures the degree of organization and



structure in making family plans (items 9, 19, 29, 39, 49, 59, 69, 79, 89) and (2) control – measures how rules and procedures govern family life (items 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90).

### Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity

The Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM) (Phinney 1992) (Appendix D) consists of 15-items that measure aspects of ethnic identity: (1) ethnic affirmation and sense of belonging – examines ethnic pride, how one perceives historical cultural background, how one feels about group membership as well as feelings regarding attachment to the group (seven items- items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12), (2) ethnic identity search – interprets ethnic identity as a continuous developmental process that varies according to the social and historical context (five items – items 1, 2, 4, 8, 10). Items 13, 14, and 15 are used only for purposes of identification and categorization by ethnicity (Phinney 1992). Items are rated according to a 4-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Scores were derived by reversing negatively worded items, summing across items, and obtaining the mean; scores range from 4 (indicating high ethnic identity) to 1 (indicating low ethnic identity). Additionally there are six items that are used exclusively to measure other-group orientation. The underlying premise of this scale states that gaining an understanding of how one relates to other ethnic groups may be indicative of one's social identity in the larger society.

### Research Design

This quantitative study utilized descriptive statistics in an attempt to provide informative data on the sample population. Because this sample population has been underrepresented in the psychological literature, it was the intention of the researcher to

provide general descriptive information. To determine between-group differences, levels of academic achievement were manipulated as a categorical dependent variable (DV) (i.e. low, average, high academic achievers). The independent variables (IV) are the subscales of the Family Environment Scale (FES) and Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and Survey of Student Resources and Assets.

#### Data Analysis

For the present study, 51 participants were necessary to reach an effect size of .50 and power of .80 with an alpha level of .05. Descriptive statistics were conducted to describe demographic characteristics of the sample population. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to determine differences among levels of academic achievement (DV) based on each subscale of the Family Environment Scale (FES). These subscales were: family cohesion (Research Question 1), family expression (Research Question 2), family conflict (Research Question 3), family independence (Research Question 4), achievement orientation (Research Question 5), intellectual-orientation (Research Question 6), active-recreational orientation (Research Question 7), moral-religious orientation (Research Question 8), family organization (Research Question 9) and family control (Research Question 10). An additional MANOVA was conducted to determine differences based on ethnic identity (Research Question 11). Additional descriptive statistics were conducted to provide information regarding the developmental assets (Research Question 12) of the sample population. A Pearson Correlation was conducted to determine relationship between cumulative grade point average and the number of disciplinary referrals (Research Question 13).

Additional data analyses were conducted that did not relate to specific research questions. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the effect of each independent variable (i.e. family environment and ethnic identity). A step-wise multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the best predictor of academic achievement.

### Chapter Summary

A battery of instruments was administered to a sample population of 81 female research participants. Due to the purpose of this study, 9 participants were eliminated from the data analysis due to their racial/ethnic membership. Only those participants who self-identified as African American were included in the data analysis. Data analysis techniques consisted of descriptive statistics, multivariate analyses of variance, analysis of variance, Pearson correlation and multiple regressions.

The methodology used in this study enabled the researcher to obtain data on African American adolescent females enrolled in either of two public high schools located in the southeastern region of the United States. The data analysis techniques provided information about various characteristics of the African American female adolescent.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents research findings by addressing each research question and hypothesis individually. Research Questions 1 through 10 refer to the results of the Family Environment subscales. Research Question 11 refers to the results of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). Research Question 12 provides descriptive information regarding the Student Resources and Developmental Assets Survey. Research Question 13 refers to the statistical correlations conducted to determine relationship between cumulative grade point average and number of disciplinary referrals. Additionally, other data analyses were conducted to further promote understanding of African American female adolescents.

#### Results of Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic characteristics were determined by calculating descriptive statistics. The target population for this study consisted of African American female adolescents (i.e., ages 14 through 19 years old), who attended high school in the southeastern region of the United States. During the initial data collection procedures, 168 consent forms were distributed. Eighty-one consent forms were returned; thereby constituting a 48.2% response rate.

This study's primary focus was to examine various dimensions that characterize the experiences of African American adolescent females. As stated previously, all 168 students were given an opportunity to participate in the project. From the 81 research participants, data from 12 students who identified themselves as part of other

racial/ethnic groups were not included in the analyses as related to the specific hypotheses. As shown in Table 1, 85.2% ( $n= 69$ ) of the sample self-identified as African Americans.

<b>Ethnicity</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
African American	69	85.2
Caucasian American	7	8.6
Hispanic/Latino	1	1.2
Bi-Racial	3	3.7
Other	<u>1</u>	<u>1.2</u>
TOTAL	81	99.9

Age. The mean age level at the time of the study was 16 years. The median age level was 16, and the mode was 15.

Grade Enrolled. The largest group of research participants (34.6% or  $n= 28$ ) was sophomores in high school. The remaining distribution was as follows: Juniors (25.9% or  $n= 21$ ); Freshmen (22.2% or  $n= 18$ ); and Seniors (17.3% or  $n= 14$ ).

In addition to the information summarized above, the Demographic Data Sheet was also designed to collect information about the family context and activity involvement of each research participant. The information collected from this instrument, regarding the family context and involvement in activities, is subsequently presented.

Level of education of selected parent. When the participants were asked to select one parent to describe his or her educational level, the majority of the research participants

(86.4% or  $n=70$ ) selected their mother to report her educational level. The remaining 10 research participants who responded made the following selections: 6.2% ( $n=5$ ) selected their father, 3.7% ( $n=3$ ) selected their grandmother, 1.2% ( $n=1$ ) said that the question did not apply to her, and 1.2% ( $n=1$ ) selected her legal guardian. In terms of the educational level of the parent or legal guardian, there seems to be an equal number who completed high school or received a GED (30.9% or  $n=25$ ) and those who did not complete high school (30.9% or  $n=25$ ). The remaining 30 research participants who responded stated that their parent or legal guardian graduated from college (27.2% or  $n=22$ ) and 9.9% ( $n=8$ ) attended college but did not finish.

Number of people who live in the household. On the average ( $M=4.10$ ; mode = 4), four people lived in the home of the youngsters. The distribution of the number of family members in the household is shown in Table 2. As can be seen, the range of family members who lived in the household was 1-10.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
1	01	1.2
2	10	12.3
3	22	27.2
4	21	25.9
5	13	16.0
6	07	8.6
7	04	4.9
8	02	2.5
10	<u>01</u>	<u>1.2</u>
Total	81	100

Composition of household. The research participants' family members who lived in the household included parents (or legal guardians), sisters, brothers, cousins, grandparents,

and other relatives (i.e., aunt, uncle, or child). To summarize, it appears as though most of the adolescent females who participated in this investigation lived with their mother/step-mother (86.4%), father/step-father (54.3%), sister/s (43.2%), and brother/s (49.4%). The distribution for the specific relatives who lived in the home is presented in Table 3.

<b>Table 3</b>		
<b>Family Members who Live in the Home</b>		
<b>Yes</b>		
	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>
Mother/Step-Mother	70	86.4
Father/Step-Father	44	54.3
Sister/s	35	43.2
Brother/s	40	49.4
Cousin/s	6	7.4
Grandmother	11	13.6
Grandfather	5	6.2
Other Relatives (i.e., aunt, uncle, child)	16	19.8

Extracurricular activities The last two items on the Demographic Data Sheet asked if participants were involved with any extracurricular activities, and if so, which ones. It appears that the students were just as likely to be involved in extracurricular activities (50.6% or  $n=41$ ) as they were not to be so involved (49.4% or  $n=40$ ). The type of activities in which the participants were involved is presented in Table 4. The more popular extracurricular activities (that is, those in which ten or more participants were involved) would be sports, band clubs (i.e., drill or marching band), and academic clubs.

**Table 4**

**Extracurricular Activities**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Dance Clubs	6	7.4
Academic Clubs	12	14.8
Band Clubs	14	17.3
Community Organizations	6	7.4
Sports Activities	18	22.2
Student Government	3	3.7
Cultural/Ethnic Based Activities	1	1.2
Work	2	2.5

Summary The Research Participants whose life experiences were assessed further are African American adolescents. These youngsters are most likely to be 16 years old, enrolled in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school, and had a parent or legal guardian who had either completed high school (30.9%), graduated from college (27.2%) or did not complete high school (30.9%). The pattern of responses from the participants suggests that they were more likely to live in a household of four members, consisting of a mother, father, sister and brother. Additionally, approximately half of the participants participated in extracurricular activities such as sports, band and academic clubs.

**Results of the Family Environment Scale**

Hypotheses one through ten involve the pattern of responses observed between academic achievement (independent variable) and the sub-scales of the Family



Environment Scale (dependent variable). In order to determine the nature of that relationship, the research participant's academic achievement level was measured by the cumulative grade point averages (GPAs). The GPAs of research participants were obtained from school records. The results showed that the range of GPAs was from 50 to 95, on a 100-point scale ( $M=76.7$ ).

The participants' GPAs were then categorized based on the level of academic performance of the group, that is, the scale used for High Achievers (i.e., the top 25%) was 95-84 ( $n=19$ , 28.3%); Average Achievers (83-72) ( $n=30$ , 44.7%) and Low Achievers (71-50) ( $n=18$ , 27%); for analyses purposes, this information was coded as, respectively, one, two and three. Twelve of the participants' data are not included in further analyses because of this study's focus on African Americans. Additionally, two of the African American participants did not complete the instrument; hence their data are not included in the following analyses. Consequently, further discussions regarding the life experiences of African American adolescents are presented from a total of 67 research participants.

#### Research Question; Null Hypothesis 1

Research question 1 examined differences among levels of academic achievement regarding family cohesion. Responses of research participants indicated that high ( $M=7.16$ ), average ( $M=6.47$ ) and low ( $M=6.06$ ) reported average responses for this measure as compared to the normative standard data of the (FES). Results revealed no statistical significant differences among the high, average and low achievers regarding their perceptions of cohesion (i.e. commitment, help and support) within their families  $F(2,64) = 1.78$ ,  $p$ , not significant (ns). The null hypothesis was not rejected.

### Research Question 2; Null Hypothesis 2

The null hypothesis stated that there were no significant differences regarding family expressiveness among high, average and low academically achieving African American adolescents. This sub-scale of the (FES) measures the extent that the family members are encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly. The responses showed that high ( $M= 4.89$ ), average ( $M= 4.33$ ) and low ( $M= 4.39$ ) academically achieving participants reported their families were below average in terms of expressiveness. These findings indicate that respondents perceived their families as those that did not encourage expressiveness. There were no significant differences revealed among achievement levels and this measure  $F(2,64) = 1.91, p, ns$ . The null hypothesis was not rejected.

### Research Question 3; Null Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis stated that there were no differences regarding family conflict among high, average and low academically achieving African American adolescents. No significant differences were found for this measure,  $F(2,64) = .509, p, ns$ . The participants (i.e., academic achievers who scored high  $M= 2.63$ , average  $M= 3.70$ , and low  $M= 3.72$ ) reported average responses for the perception of openly expressed anger, aggression and conflict among family members. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

### Research Question 4; Null Hypothesis 4

Differences regarding family independence among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents were determined by calculating MANOVAs. As stated previously, as a whole, this group scored below

average on this measure. This means that respondents did not perceive their families as assertive or self-sufficient or made their own decisions. While MANOVA analyses did not reveal any significant effects among the high ( $M= 5.79$ ), average ( $M= 6.80$ ) and low ( $M= 6.44$ ) academic achievers,  $F(2,64) = 1.69$ ,  $p$ , ns, univariate analysis suggested marginally significant effects,  $p < .06$ , between the average academic achievers and the high and low academic achievers. The response pattern of the African American female adolescents who were average academic achievers suggested that they were more likely to perceive their families as assertive, self-sufficient, and made their own decisions than were their high and low achieving counterparts.

#### Research Question 5; Null Hypothesis 5

This hypothesis stated that there were no expected differences regarding achievement orientation within the family among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents. It appears that the average ( $M= 6.50$ ) and low ( $M= 6.50$ ) academically achieving adolescents were more likely to perceive their family as one which cast school and work into an achievement (e.g., important to do your best) and competitive (e.g., may the best "man" win) framework, than were their high academically-achieving counterparts ( $M= 6.21$ ),  $F(2,64) = 2.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . The responses from the high achievers fit the pattern of average family members and the responses of both the average and low achievers fit the pattern of responses that are above average for family members. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

#### Research Question 6; Null Hypothesis 6

According to the null hypothesis, no differences were expected regarding intellectual-cultural family orientation within the family of high, average and low

academically achieving African American female adolescents. No analyses indicated any significant results for this measure,  $F(2,64) = .842$ ,  $p$ , ns. Results suggest that high ( $M=6.05$ ), average ( $M=5.43$ ), and low ( $M=5.17$ ) academically achieving African American adolescents exhibited average responses on the Intellectual-Cultural Orientation sub-scale. This means that at each level of academic achievement, the respondents perceived their families' just as other families did in terms of their interest in social, political, intellectual and cultural activities. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

#### Research Question 7; Null Hypothesis 7

There were no statistical significant differences revealed regarding the Active-Recreational Orientation within the family of high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents,  $F(2,64) = 1.44$ ,  $p$ , ns. The Active-Recreational Orientation sub-scale assesses the extent of participation in social and recreational activities, e.g., how often friends visit in the home, family members go out, movies, sports events, camping, etc. The participants' responses showed that the high academic achievers ( $M=5.74$ ) and the low academic achievers ( $M=5.28$ ) perceived their families as average in terms of their active-recreational activities, whereas the average academic achiever ( $M=4.73$ ) perceived their families as below average in terms of their active-recreational activities.

#### Research Question 8; Null Hypothesis 8

This hypothesis stated that there were no differences expected regarding the moral-religious emphasis within the families of high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents. The Moral-Religious Orientation sub-scale measures the degree of emphasis in the family on ethical and religious issues and values.

The African American female adolescents scored well above average (high academic achievers,  $M= 7.00$ ) and above average (academic achievers at the average,  $M= 6.93$ , and low,  $M= 6.22$ , levels) on this measure. These findings indicate that participants perceived their families as those which regularly attended church and/or Sunday school, have strict ideas about what is right and wrong, and believe there are some things that just must be taken on faith. In terms of the hypothesis, no significant effects were observed among academic achievement levels on the Moral-Religious Emphasis sub-scale,  $F(2,64) = .424$ ,  $p$ , ns. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

#### Research Question 9; Null Hypothesis 9

This hypothesis stated that there were no significant differences regarding family organization among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents. This sub-scale determined the importance of clear organization and structure in planning family activities and responsibilities. All of the participants scored within the average range for this measure, that is, those who were high ( $M= 6.26$ ), average ( $M= 5.43$ ) and low ( $M= 6.22$ ) academic achievers. No significant results were revealed,  $F(2,64) = 1.03$ ,  $p$ , ns. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

#### Research Question 10; Null Hypothesis 10

This hypothesis stated that there would be no differences regarding family control among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents. The Control sub-scale measured the extent that set rules and procedures are used to run family life. The participants who scored on the high ( $M= 4.58$ ) and low ( $M= 4.78$ ) academic achievement levels reported scores in the average range, while their average academic achievement counterparts reported scores in the above average range

( $M = 5.57$ ). However, this difference did not reach significance,  $F(2,64) = 1.87$ ,  $p$ , ns, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

#### Summary of FES

As a group, African American female adolescents expressed perceptions that were: well above and above average on the moral religious emphasis sub-scale; average on the sub-scales of cohesion, conflict, achievement-orientation, intellectual-cultural orientation, active-recreational orientation, and organization; and below average on the sub-scales of expressiveness and independence (see Table 5). When comparing research results with other African American adolescents who were a part of the normative sample population, their results were consistent with the normed population of African American adolescents (see Table 6). Interactions were expected with the level of academic achievement and the sub-scales on the Family Environment Scale (see Table 7). However, the only significant result found was the level of academic achievement and the achievement orientation sub-scale. The effect was such that the patterns of the high academic achievers suggested that they were less likely to perceive their families as holding an achievement orientation and competitive framework than were the average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents,  $p < .05$ .

Table 5

Differences between Normative Data and Research Participants on the FES

Sub-scale	<u>Normative Sample</u>		<u>Participants</u>			N=67 > or <
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>p</u>	
Cohesion	6.73	1.47	6.55	1.99	ns	N>P
Expressiveness	5.54	1.61	4.51	1.66	ns	N>P
Conflict	3.18	1.91	3.40	2.28	ns	N<P
Independence	6.66	1.26	6.42	1.49	ns	N>P
Achievement Orientation	5.47	1.62	6.42	1.02	.05	N<P
Intellectual-Cultural Orien.	5.56	1.82	5.54	2.10	ns	N>P
Active-Recreational Orien.	5.33	1.96	5.16	1.94	ns	N>P
Moral-Religious	4.75	2.03	6.76	1.49	ns	N<P
Organization	5.47	1.90	5.81	2.03	ns	N<P
Control	4.26	1.84	5.07	1.93	ns	N<P

Note: N = Normative Data (i.e. normal families)

P = Research Participants

Information regarding normative data was taken from Moos & Moos (1994), p.19

Table 6

Differences between Normative Sample of African American adolescents and research participants

Subscale	<u>Normative Sample</u>		<u>Research Participants</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Cohesion	6.27	2.14	6.55	1.99
Expressiveness	4.13	1.58	4.51	1.66
Conflict	3.53	2.11	3.40	2.28
Independence	5.59	1.66	6.42	1.49
Achievement-Orientation	6.44	1.47	6.42	1.02
Intellectual-Cultural Orien.	5.17	1.90	5.54	2.10
Active-Recreational	5.49	1.90	5.16	1.94
Moral-Religious	6.35	1.52	6.76	1.49
Organization	5.84	1.94	5.81	2.03
Control	5.23	1.64	5.07	1.93



Table 7

Academic Achievement Levels \* Subscale Means of FES

Subscale	High n=19	Average n=30	Low n=18
Cohesion	7.16	6.47	6.06
Expressiveness	4.89	4.33	4.39
Conflict	2.63	3.70	3.72
Independence	5.79	6.80	6.44
Achievement-Orien.	6.21	6.50	6.50
Intellectual-Cultural	6.05	5.43	5.17
Active-Recreational	5.74	4.73	5.28
Moral-Religious	7.00	6.93	6.22
Organization	6.26	5.43	5.94
Control	4.58	5.57	4.78

## Results of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

### Research Question 11; Null Hypothesis 11

Multivariate analyses of variance were calculated to examine differences among academic achievement levels regarding ethnic identity. Results indicated that regardless of achievement level, participants demonstrated a moderate sense of their cultures' history, traditions and customs,  $\underline{M} = 2.78$ . It was presumed that there would be significant differences between the academic achievement levels and ethnic identity, however no significant results were revealed,  $\underline{F} (2, 64) = .801, p, ns$ . The responses of the high ( $\underline{M}=2.81$ ), average ( $\underline{M}=2.86$ ) and low ( $\underline{M}=2.61$ ) academic achievers were at the moderate level.

Furthermore, results of the MEIM suggest that research participants had positive feelings about their ethnic background (i.e. group belonging and commitment),  $\underline{M}=3.46$ . The patterns of responses from the high ( $M=3.49$ ), average ( $M=3.53$ ) and low ( $M=3.32$ ) academic achievers were approximately the same. No significant results were revealed for this measure,  $\underline{F} (2, 64) = .610, p, ns$ .

## Results of the Survey of Student Resources and Assets

### Research Question 12

The summary report of the Survey of Student Resources and Assets was developed by the Search Institute. The following results were not delineated by race/ethnicity. The racial composition of this survey included: 66 African American females (89%), 1 Hispanic female (1%), and 7 White females (9%). In the case of fewer than 30 students per grade, the Search Institute combined grades, therefore results indicated there were 41 10<sup>th</sup> grade females (55%) and 34 12<sup>th</sup> grade females (45%).

Results of the Survey of Student Resources and Assets as provided by the Search Institute are displayed in the following tables: external assets (see table 8), internal assets (see table 9), risk-taking behaviors and thriving indicators (see table 10), and risk-taking behaviors and thriving indicators by asset level (see table 11).

While the Search Institute provided useful information within the summary report, these results were not delineated by race/ethnicity. Therefore, the researcher conducted further analyses in an attempt to provide more specific information regarding the experiences of African American female adolescents. Regarding Hypothesis 12, further analyses were conducted to test for the effects of achievement level on Developmental Assets. The results for the African American adolescents showed that there were no significant differences between achievement level and developmental assets, neither External nor Internal Assets (See Table 12).

However, univariate analyses of the External Assets component revealed a significant effect regarding the Support component: "Parental involvement in schooling,"  $F(2, 62) = 3.775, p < .029$ . The pattern of responses suggests that the parents of the adolescents who have low and average academic achievement levels go to meetings or events at the school less often (respectively,  $M = 3.95$  and  $M = 3.52$ ) than do parents ( $M = 2.67$ ) of adolescents with high academic achievement levels.

Marginal effects were suggested for achievement level and two items of the Support component, that is, "family support" ( $F(2, 62) = 2.827, p < .067$ ) and "caring school climate,"  $F(2, 62) = 2.826, p < .067$ . It appears that students with high achievement levels feel as though they get along with their parents more so ( $M = 1.67$ ) than do low

Table 8

EXTERNAL ASSETS

External Assets	Total Sample %	Grade %	
		10 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
<u>Support</u>			
1. Family Support	64	66	62
2. Positive family communication	59	59	59
3. Other adult relationships	41	51	29
4. Caring neighborhood	23	17	29
4. Caring neighborhood	23	17	29
5. Caring school climate	24	34	12
6. Parent involvement in schooling	21	24	18
<u>Empowerment</u>			
7. Community values youth	23	17	29
8. Youth as resources	19	27	9
9. Service to others	53	54	53
10. Safety	51	51	50
<u>Boundaries and Expectations</u>			
11. Family Boundaries	53	61	44
12. School Boundaries	68	73	62
13. Neighborhood Boundaries	55	51	59
14. Adult role models	41	41	41

(Table 8 continues)

15. Positive peer influence	70	73	67
16. High expectations	64	73	53
<u>Constructive Use of Time</u>			
17. Creative activities	15	15	15
18. Youth programs	31	34	26
19. Religious community	67	71	62
20. Time at home	59	63	53

*Information presented in Table 8 was taken from the summary report provided by the Search Institute.*

TABLE 9

INTERNAL ASSETS


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Internal Asset	Total Sample %	Grade %	
		10 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Commitment to Learning</b>			
21. Achievement motivation	81	80	82
22. School engagement	63	73	50
23. Homework	33	37	29
24. Bonding to school	49	59	38
25. Reading for pleasure	17	22	12
<b>Positive Values</b>			
26. Caring	60	51	71
27. Equality and social justice	69	63	76
28. Integrity	81	76	88
29. Honesty	77	78	76
30. Responsibility	76	71	82
31. Restraint	49	56	41
<b>Social Competencies</b>			
32. Planning/decision making	47	44	50
33. Interpersonal competence	71	71	71
34. Cultural competence	60	54	68
35. Resistance skills	60	56	65

(Table 10 continues)

36. Peaceful conflict resolution	28	32	24
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**Positive Identity**

37. Personal power	47	44	50
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38. Self-esteem	65	68	62
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39. Sense of purpose	60	63	56
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40. Positive view of personal failure	81	83	79
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*Information taken from the Summary Report provided by the Search Institute.*

Table 10

TABLE 10: RISK-TAKING BEHAVIORS AND THRIVING INDICATORS

<b>Risk-Taking Behavior</b>	<b>Total Sample%</b>	<b>Grade%</b>	
<b>Alcohol</b> -Used 1 or more Xs in last 30 days	35	34	36
<b>Tobacco</b> -Smoked cigarettes 1 or more Xs in last 30 days	16	18	15
<b>Marijuana</b> -Used marijuana 1 or more Xs in the last 12 months	20	22	18
<b>School Truancy</b> -Skipped school 1 or more Xs in the last 4 weeks	40	41	38
<b>Eating Disorder</b> -Has engaged in bulimic behavior	9	12	6
<b>Thriving Indicator</b>			
<b>Succeeds in school</b> -Mostly As on report card	11	15	6
<b>Maintains good health</b> -Pays attention to healthy nutrition and exercise	60	61	59

*Information taken from the summary report provided by the Search Institute.*



Table 11

TABLE 11: RISK-TAKING BEHAVIORS & THRIVING INDICATORS,  
BY ASSET LEVEL

<b>Risk-Taking Behavior</b>	<b>Total Sample%</b>	<b>Number of Assets%</b>			
		<b>0-10</b>	<b>11-20</b>	<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>
<b>Alcohol</b> -Used alcohol 1 or more Xs in last 30 days	35		46	26	
<b>Tobacco</b> -Smoked cigarettes 1 or more Xs in last 30 days	16		36	6	
<b>Marijuana</b> -Used marijuana 1 or more Xs in the last 12 months	20		33	9	
<b>School Truancy</b> -Skipped school once or more in last 4 weeks	40		48	34	
<b>Eating Disorder</b> -Has engaged in Bulimic behavior	9		12	9	
<b>Thriving Indicator</b>					
<b>Succeeds in school</b> -Gets mostly As on report card	11		8	11	
<b>Maintains good health</b> -Pays attention to healthy nutrition and exercise	60		36	77	

*Information taken from the summary report provided by the Search Institute.*

**Table 12**  
**Achievement Level X Developmental Assets (ANOVA)**

<b>Developmental Assets</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>External Assets</i>			
Support	2, 60	2.061	.137
Empowerment	2, 61	2.192	.121
Boundaries and Expectations	2, 61	.911	.408
Constructive Use of Time	2, 62	1.256	.292
<i>Internal Assets</i>			
Commitment to Learning	2, 62	.039	.962
Positive Values	2, 61	.985	.379
Social Competencies	2, 58	1.454	.242
Positive Identity	2, 60	.089	.915

( $\underline{M}$  = 2.32) and average ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.45) academic achievers. The other marginally significant effect suggests that high achievers feel as though their "teachers really care" ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.00) more so than the low ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.21) and average ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.62) academic achievers.

It was concluded that the null hypothesis must be accepted. There were no significant differences between the responses of the African American female adolescents who were low, average and high academic achievers and their responses on the Developmental Assets measure.

Further analyses were conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between academic achievement levels regarding developmental assets. Results of the one-way ANOVAs indicated that there were only 3 significant developmental assets including Time at Home,  $F(2, 59) = 5.08, p = .01$ ; Homework,  $F(2, 59) = 5.41, p = .01$ ; and Succeeds in School,  $F(2, 59) = 12.66, p = .00$ . Where statistically significant  $F$  statistics were found, post hoc Bonferroni tests were conducted to determine where the differences occurred. Regarding the Time at Home developmental asset, there was a statistically significant difference between average ( $\underline{M}$  = 1.86) and low ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.86) achievement levels while results of the Homework developmental asset indicated a statistically significant difference between high ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.13) and average ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.86) as well as a significant difference between high ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.13) and low ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.86) achievers (See table 13). Also, for the Succeeds at School developmental asset, there was a statistically significant difference between high ( $\underline{M}$  = 1.73) and average ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.16) achievement levels as well as between high ( $\underline{M}$  = 1.73) and low ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.80).

Table 13

Differences in Developmental Assets by Levels of Academic Achievement

	High <u>n=15</u>		Average <u>n=30</u>		Low <u>n=15</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Time at Home	2.06	1.53	1.86	2.09	3.86	2.35
Homework	4.13	1.30	2.86	1.22	2.86	1.41
Success at School	1.73	.79	3.16	1.26	3.80	1.26

## Results of School Records

### Research Question 13; Null Hypothesis 13

The relationship between cumulative grade point average and number of disciplinary referrals was determined by calculating Pearson Product Correlation. Results demonstrated a significant ( $p < .01$ ) negative relationship ( $r = -.599$ ) between grade point average and discipline referrals (see figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Correlation Matrix for Cumulative Grade Point Average and Number of Disciplinary Referrals**

	Cumulative Grade Point Average	Number of Behavioral Referrals
Cumulative Grade Point Average	1.00	-.599**
Number of Behavioral Referrals	-.599	1.00

\*\*PPM Correlation Significant  
 $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

The pattern of this relationship suggested that, as cumulative Grade Point Averages decreased, the number of disciplinary referrals increased, respectively, (GPAs 85-98,  $M = .89$ ; GPAs 83-72,  $M = 2.45$ ; and GPAs 71-50,  $M = 4.95$ ), See Figure 2. These results seem to suggest that the academic performance of these young women is directly related to disciplinarian problems.

### Serendipitous Findings

Two other related data analyses were conducted from this study. The first serendipitous analysis was related to the relationship between the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and levels of academic achievement. A regression utilizing the enter method was run to determine the predictability of the MEIM. After conducting a

correlation analysis between the subscales of the MEIM and academic achievement levels, there were no statistically significant relationships. Therefore, no further analyses were warranted. Regarding the Family Environment Scale, results suggested that the Personal Growth Dimension ( $R^2=.18$ ) provided the best predictive value regarding academic achievement.

### Chapter Summary

The primary focus of the current investigation was to describe various characteristics of African American female adolescents. The information obtained from the measures utilized, that is, the Demographic Data Sheet, Family Environment Scale (FES), Survey of Students Resources and Assets, and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) were presented.

The African American female adolescents in the current investigation were most likely to be 16 years old, enrolled in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school, and had a parent or legal guardian who had either completed high school (30.9%), graduated from college (27.2%) or did not complete high school (30.9%). The pattern of responses from the participants further suggested that they were more likely to live in a household of four members, consisting of a mother, father, sister and brother. Additionally, approximately half of the participants participated in extracurricular activities such as sports, band and academic clubs.

Data from the FES showed that the African American female adolescents expressed perceptions that were: well above and above average on the Moral-Religious Emphasis sub-scale; average on the sub-scales of Cohesion, Conflict, Achievement Orientation, Intellectual-Cultural Orientation, Active-Recreational Orientation, and Organization; and

below average on the sub-scales of Expressiveness and Independence. The only significant result indicated was the level of academic achievement and the Achievement Orientation sub-scale. The effect was such that the patterns of the high academic achievers suggested that they were less likely to perceive their families as holding an achievement orientation and competitive framework than were the average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents.

An opportunity to measure the participants' cognitive and affective components of their attitudes towards their ethnic identity was also provided. Interestingly, the MEIM showed that while the participants reported that they felt positively about their ethnic identity, they could not be classified as highly cognizant of their ethnic identity.

Research conducted by the Search Institute shows that young people who possess more developmental assets engage in fewer risk-taking behaviors and are more likely to report thriving indicators. Table 8 demonstrates the summary of external assets while Table 9 presents the internal assets as represented by research participants. Table 10 represents findings of risk-taking behaviors and thriving indicators while Table 11 displays risk-taking behaviors and thriving indicators as evidenced by asset level. Summary indicated that 8% of the total sample possessed 31-40 developmental assets, 47% reported 21-30 assets, 34% of total sample reported 11-20 developmental assets and 11% reported 0-10 developmental assets. Specifically, for the African American female respondents, results of the Survey of Student Resources and Assets indicated that there are significant differences between the high achievers and the average and low achievers regarding the amount of time spent at home focused on completing homework

assignments. Further, results suggested that the high achievers have a more positive ideology regarding their success in school as opposed to the average and low achievers.

Finally, an assessment of the relationship between the students' cumulative Grade Point Average and the number of disciplinary referrals that occurred during the school year was also made. It seemed that students who were high academic achievers (i.e., GPA 84% and higher on a 100 point scale) were less likely to misbehave than were those with grade point averages below 84%. This would mean that plans for the improvement of academic performance for African American female adolescents must be an integral part of any effective counseling strategy, regardless of the presenting disciplinary problem.



## Chapter V

### CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter provides a summarization of the research study and a discussion of findings. Additionally, implications for youth care providers, including mental health professionals, school systems, parents and community-based organizations are presented in an effort to provide appropriate services for African American female adolescents. Furthermore, recommended topics for related future research will be presented.

#### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide descriptive information on factors that characterize the experiences of high-school African American female adolescents. Specifically, this research study examined various characteristics of these young girls including family environment, ethnic identity and availability of school and community resources according to levels of academic achievement. Thirteen research questions were developed and the corresponding null hypotheses for each research question were tested.

This study attempted to make significant contributions to existing educational and psychological literature on African American female adolescents. Much of the previous literature had utilized a comparative framework. This study sought to understand the variation that exists among these young women. The primary goal was to provide important information that will assist youth care providers in the development of appropriate services for this group.

## Summary of Findings

### Demographic Questionnaire

The researcher developed the demographic questionnaire to provide more in-depth background information on research participants. This instrument consisted of questions regarding the educational level of the parent or legal guardian, the home environment (i.e. family members in household), and the level of involvement in extracurricular activities. Results of the demographic questionnaire indicated that most of the research participants (86.4%) opted to provide information on their mother when asked to discuss the educational level of a parent/legal guardian. This finding may be indicative of the level of comfort or familiarity with the experiences of their mothers as well as the intimate relationship established between a mother and daughter. Mothers provide daughters with survival tools to resist the continual assaults of American society (Ward, 1996). The relationship between a mother and daughter is an essential component for the development of the young African American female. Other information obtained from the demographic questionnaire indicated that there appeared to be an equal distribution of parents who completed high school/GED (30.9%) with those parents who did not complete high school/GED (30.9%). Twenty-two percent of the research participants reported that their parents/legal guardians graduated from college. These results indicate that there is significant variation in the educational attainment of parents. Because of these varying levels of education, it can be assumed that the perceptions and importance placed upon education may vary among research participants. Perhaps the variation in education attainment of parents may affect how one perceives the importance of an education.

Regarding family household, over half of the respondents (54.3%) resided with both mother/stepmother and father/stepfather. These results seem to slightly contradict previous research suggests that most African Americans adolescents are more likely to reside in a mother-only household (Giordano, et al, 1993). Adolescents who reside in two-parent households have fewer opportunities to engage in harmful activities due to more parental supervision and monitoring compared with single-parent families (Thompson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). Therefore it is perceived that the presence of two-parents may have important implications on the psychological, social and academic development of these young women. It is perceived that the presence of both parents may provide higher degrees of boundary setting, enforcement of rules and regulations and monitoring of behavior. These factors may prove to be critical in the appropriate growth and development of young girls.

Additional findings from the demographic data sheet suggest that these youngsters were just as likely to be involved in extracurricular activities (50.6%) as those who were not involved (49.4%). Specifically, sports, band and academic clubs were the preferred extracurricular activities of the research respondents.

#### Family Environment Scale

Hypothesis one stated that there would be no significant differences among academic achievement levels regarding family cohesion. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences regarding family cohesion. Family cohesion was defined as the degree of commitment, sense of togetherness and level of support family members demonstrate towards each other. These findings seem to suggest that these young women, regardless of achievement level, perceive the amount of togetherness and

support experienced within their families as average. Previous research conducted by Clark (1983) suggested that the family environment of high academic achievers was found to be nurturing; whereas the family environment of low academic achievers was characterized by hopelessness and powerlessness. According to the research study conducted by Clark (1983) there would be a more distinct variation in the level of family cohesion between high and low academic achievers. These results seem to support the notion that families of African American females provide strength and necessary resources to combat societal pressures (Vasquez & de las Fuentes, 1999). Their families may represent a safe environment that serves as armor against harsh societal and racial conditions.

Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be no significant differences regarding family expressiveness among levels of academic achievement. While there were no statistical significant differences found among levels of academic achievement, all research participants perceived family expression as below average. The expressiveness subscale measured the extent to which family members are encouraged to speak directly and possess a willingness to share feelings. According to Wade-Gayles (1997) African American daughters are taught to be independent, strong, and self-confident. While these young ladies may possess the necessary tools of independence and confidence used to navigate against societal injustices encountered, this may alter their ability to discuss openly their personal concerns in fear of being perceived as weak. Another possible explanation of the lowered family expressiveness may be attributed to the negative connotation associated with verbal assertiveness of African American female adolescents. Some individuals have perceived the verbal assertiveness of African American females as

inappropriate, ineffective or rude (Way, 1998). The verbal assertiveness may be negatively reprimanded causing these young girls to suppress the freedom of expression in fear of being punished. Therefore, regardless of academic achievement level, African American female adolescents may not perceive verbal expressiveness as a viable option.

Hypothesis three states that there are no significant differences regarding family conflict among high, average, and low academically achieving African American adolescents. Results of the study indicated no statistically significant differences regarding family conflict among varying academic achievement levels. The conflict subscale measures the amount of overt anger, aggressive behavior and family conflict. As previously stated in Hypothesis one, regardless of level of academic achievement, research participants perceived their families as possessing an appropriate amount of togetherness/cohesion. Hypothesis three, which states that there is an average amount of conflict among family members, seems to support the notion that while there are occurrences of family conflict, it does not appear to alter their ability to maintain a family connection. Despite family conflict, the African American culture and family serve as crucial barriers against racism of the dominant culture (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

Hypothesis four stated that there were no significant differences regarding family independence among high, average, and low academically achieving African American female adolescents. The Independence subscale measures the extent to which family members are encouraged to be independent and self-sufficient. While the results did not reveal any significant differences among levels of academic achievement, there did appear to be a marginal difference between the average academic achievers and the high and low academic achievers. The average academic achievers were more likely to

perceive their families as assertive, self-sufficient, and able to make their own decisions when compared to their high and low achieving counterparts. This difference may be explained partially by the level of autonomy within a family. For instance, the high academic achievers may perceive their level of autonomy as restricted and confined to the parameters of excelling in academics. In a study conducted by Johnson (1992) results indicated that parents of high achieving students were found to have had frequent contact with school regarding their academic progress and upheld strong academic values and expectations. For instances of low academic achievers, independence may be directly intertwined in their daily experiences where there is either an absence or minimal restrictions. Therefore, independence explicitly characterizes much of their experiences. For average academic achievers, their family structure may uphold the ability to facilitate between both the overly restrictive parental style and the overly permissive parental style allowing the daughter to develop a sense of independence.

Hypothesis five stated that there were no statistically significant differences regarding achievement orientation among varying levels of academic achievement. The Achievement Orientation subscale measured the extent to which family members value competition and adhere to the ideology of “may the best person win.” Results of the study indicate that there was a significant difference regarding the average and low academically achieving adolescents were more likely to perceive their family operating from a competitive framework than their high academically achieving peers. A possible explanation for the difference in achievement orientation may be explained through the implicit/explicit messages received regarding academic achievement. Previous research indicated that parents of high achieving students uphold strong academic values and

expectations (Johnson, 1992). Based upon these research findings, it can be perceived that messages regarding academic excellence are embedded within the family ethos. Therefore explicit messages regarding academics may be less obvious. It could almost appear that these messages are not usually verbalized but have become acculturated in the family. Therefore, the high achiever continues to academically excel not because of explicit messages of competition, rather it becomes more of an internal sense of locus of control where explicit messages are no longer necessary. In contrast, for the low and average academically achieving females, messages of “do your best” and “may the best man win” may require more explicitly stated and reinforced messages regarding academics.

Furthermore, the school context may be a contributing factor to the variation in achievement orientation. In many instances, school systems have established academic programs to provide academic assistance to low achieving students. Because of the multiple levels of support and constant messages regarding academic improvement, perhaps this may contribute to a stronger endorsement of an achievement orientation.

Hypothesis six stated there were no differences regarding intellectual-cultural family orientation among high, average, and low academic achievers. The intellectual-cultural subscale measured the degree to which families discuss and participate in political, social, intellectual and cultural activities. Results indicated that regardless of level of academic achievement, the participants exhibited average responses on the Intellectual-Cultural Orientation sub-scale. These results suggest that the families of African American female adolescents may place minimal emphasis on participation in social, political, intellectual and cultural activities. According to Peters (1985) racial

socialization is the open dialogue that occurs between African American parents and children to discuss methods of combating negative societal injustices. Racial socialization serves as a barrier against negative racial conflict. Perhaps more in-depth discussions regarding cultural, societal and political issues within families may prove to be beneficial in the academic development of African American females.

Hypothesis seven stated that there were no significant differences among high, average and low academic achievers regarding the Active-Recreational orientation. The Active-Recreational orientation measured the degree of participation in social and recreational activities. While there were no significant differences, results did indicate that both high and low academic achievers perceived their families as average in terms of recreational activity, while average achievers perceived their families as below average. This finding seems to indicate that African American families place minimal value on recreational activity involvement. Perhaps one explanation for this finding might be related to the busy work schedules of parents. In many cases, African Americans continue to be challenged by contemporary threats to family stability. Such threats include poverty, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and violence (Wilson & Stith, 1991). Such societal concerns may take precedence over involvement in social/recreational activities.

Hypothesis eight stated that there were no significant differences expected regarding the moral-religious emphasis within the families of African American female adolescents. The Moral-Religious subscale measured the degree of emphasis on ethical and religious issues and values. There were no significant differences among academic achievement levels on the Moral-Religious subscale. However, the African American



female adolescents scored above average when compared to the normative sample. These findings seem to indicate that regardless of level of achievement, these girls value the importance of religiously-based activities. Religion and spirituality have historically played an important role in the lives of many African Americans, particularly African American females (Chatters, Taylor & Lincoln, 1999). Historically, spirituality has been identified as a social support system within the African American community. The African American church continues to be the root of social support for the African American family (Comer, 1972 as cited in Wilson, et al., 1991). The church and spirituality provide support used to navigate societal conditions. In a recent study conducted by Sanders (1998) results suggested that church involvement has a positive effect on academic self-concept of African American adolescents. Furthermore, the church plays an influential role in student attitudes and conduct (Sanders, 1998).

Hypothesis nine stated that there were no significant differences regarding family organization among high, average and low academic achievers. The family organization sub-scale measured the level of organization and clear planning in family activities. Regarding family organization, each level of academic achievement scored within the average range. In a study conducted by Bartz & Levine (1978 as cited in Giordano, et al., 1993) found that African American parents engaged in more controlling behaviors over their children than did White Americans. These controlling behaviors may translate into clear boundaries embedded within the family context.

Hypothesis ten stated that there are no significant differences regarding family control among high, average and low academically achieving African American female adolescents. The Control subscale measures the extent to which rules and procedures are

enforced in an effort to run a family effectively. While there was not a significant difference among the various levels of academic achievement, a noteworthy finding indicated that both the high and low achievers scored in the average range, while the average achievers scored in the above average range. In the families of high achievers, it can be assumed that rules and procedures are implicitly stated or embedded within the philosophy that governs the family. The importance of rules and expectations may be interwoven throughout the family context, therefore explicit statements regarding control may not only be expected but they are intertwined in the basic underpinnings of the family. Furthermore, for high achievers, it can be assumed that these students are positively reinforced for their allegiance thereby promoting the continuance of desired behaviors.

In the families of low average, it is perceived that rules and guidelines are less obvious. Additionally, for low achievers, it can be assumed that there is minimum emphasis placed on adherence to rules and regulations. However, in the case of average achievers, these students may be caught between a dichotomy where they toil between the adventure associated with “acting out” behaviors and admire/respect “good or socially acceptable” behaviors. Explicitly stating appropriate rules and regulations may be critical for this group. The continued reinforcement and establishment of rules and procedures may promote good behaviors; while adopting a more permissive parental style (where guidelines are not explicitly stated) may serve as a catalyst for the onset of inappropriate behaviors.

### Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

Results of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) found that the research participants possessed moderate knowledge about the history and customs of the African American culture. There was no statistically significant difference among high, average, and low academic achievers. These findings may speak to the lack of opportunities for African American females to engage in culturally-relevant activities that promote understanding of the African American culture. It can be presumed that more educational, societal and family resources that uphold and celebrate the experiences of African Americans will assist in the development of an ethnic identity. Providing opportunities to enhance level of cultural awareness may prove to be useful during the exploration process of one's ethnic identity.

Regarding the affective component (i.e. affirmation, belonging, and commitment) of the MEIM, results suggested that these young women had positive feelings about their ethnic background. The pattern of responses did not vary according to level of academic achievement. These results seem to suggest that in spite of moderate cultural knowledge, these African American young women experience an adequate sense of ethnic group membership. Perhaps these young ladies feel a sense of connectedness within their African American culture that is maintained through cultural connection.

### Survey of Student Resources and Assets

According to nationwide research conducted by the Search Institute (1998), in order for adolescents to grow and develop into healthy adults forty developmental assets must be obtained. The interpretive summary report provided by the Search Institute indicated that only 8% of students surveyed reported 31 or more of the developmental

assets which indicates that the vast majority (92%) are lacking essential components for healthy development. These findings suggest that all constituents involved in adolescent development are not providing the necessary tools to ensure a promising future for these young women. Although these findings are disturbing, there are specific examples that indicate intact available resources. The Search Institute (1998) has identified five fundamental resources that contribute to youth development and help reduce problems facing America's youth. These fundamental resources include: (1) Ongoing relationships with caring adults, (2) Safe places and structured activities during non-school hours, (3) A healthy start for a healthy future, (4) Marketable skills through effective education, and (5) Opportunities to serve. Over half of the respondents (59%) stated that they experience positive family communication which seems to suggest that the majority of these young women get along well with family members where there is open dialogue and boundaries enforced, forty-percent do not perceive their families as responsive to open conversation. A growing tradition has emphasized the adaptive and supportive features of the African American family (Giordano & Cernkovich, 1993). Often within a hostile majority environment, African American adolescents may perceive their families as an important safe haven. However, only 25% of the respondents indicated that their parents assisted with schoolwork. Further statistical analyses revealed a significant difference regarding parental involvement in schooling across levels of academic achievement. Responses suggested that parents of high achievers are more involved in the schooling process than the low and average achievers. Consistent with these findings, further data analyses suggested a trend where high achievers spend more time at home and are more likely to complete homework assignments than their average and low

counterparts. These results speak to the alarming absence of parental involvement for most of these young women. It is critical that parents must begin to take ownership of their child's educational experience. Without parental support, a child is left to navigate within a society that has historically been unsupportive of her experiences. A more in-depth examination of methods to promote parental involvement requires further consideration.

It is perceived that a supportive school climate aids in the facilitation of the growth, academically, socially, and psychologically, of adolescents. While only 24% of the respondents reported their school as providing a caring climate, 63% agreed that their teachers really care. While teachers may demonstrate a genuine concern, school systems are still lacking pertinent components that support the experiences of African American females. Particularly for average and low achievers, further statistical analyses suggested that these groups do not perceive their school climate as caring as their high achieving counterparts. Therefore, while this is a general concern for African American females, those young women who are not performing well academically this issue is more pronounced. There are possible explanations for these differences. Perhaps due to these young women not academically excelling they may become disengaged in the schooling process resulting in a general negative impression of the entire schooling process. Another possible explanation could be associated with the school's perception of low-achieving students. Perhaps schools become less interested and less invested in those students who do not academically perform. This may send a message to the student that the agents within the school have "given up" or no longer care about their educational development. A sense of school belonging may serve as a catalyst where appropriate

behaviors and expectations can be learned and reinforced. Therefore, in the case where school belonging is absent, this may have detrimental implications for the academic development of these youngsters.

Other findings suggest that 23% of the respondents reported their community values youth. These results suggest that the majority of African American females do not feel valued in school or in their community. Collaboration between the school and community appears to be an essential component in understanding what is important to these young women. However, this collaboration should also involve the participation of African American females thereby giving them a sense of efficacy in making changes. Consistent with this finding, 15% of these young women report involvement in activities that are perceived as constructive utilization of time. Possibly, due to the absence of community and school-based programming, this may serve as a contributing factor to minimal activity involvement.

The academic achievement of African Americans has been studied extensively (Voelkl, 1993). Previous research conducted on African American students suggested a discrepancy that exists between lower levels of academic achievement and higher levels of self-evaluation (Voelkl, 1993). Research findings of this study stated that 81% reported being motivated to do well in school. Contrary to this finding, however, only 33% reported spending at least 1 hour of homework every school day. Perhaps these contradictory findings are consistent with previous research indicating that African Americans may self-describe as being motivated, however may be less likely to engage in activities that promote academic achievement. Helping young adolescents to make the connection between self-evaluation (i.e. motivation) and completing structured activities

may prove to be helpful. Additionally, these findings may speak to the meaning associated with homework. Perhaps these young women along with the school setting place less value on the completion of homework assignments. Emphasizing the importance of homework assignments coupled with achievement motivation may provide the basis for academic achievement.

The Search Institute defines positive values as important “internal compasses” used to guide young people’s priorities and choices. The subcategories of positive values (caring 60%, equality/social justice 69%, integrity 81%, honesty 77%, responsibility 76%, and restraint 49%) indicated that nearly half of the respondents seem to demonstrate a commitment to the promotion of humanity. These results seem to suggest that these young women operate within a framework that supports their ability to make appropriate choices. Although respondents seem to possess a foundation that assists in their decision-making skills, it may be less apparent to apply these skills in confrontational situations. Only 28% reported they attempt to resolve conflict nonviolently. Perhaps their repertoire of skills does not include appropriate conflict resolution skills. According to Sigler (1999), one explanation of aggressive behavior of African American female adolescents suggests that there is a lack of cultural awareness regarding the experiences of African American females. The cultural context of African American females involves verbal expression. Stevens (1997 as cited in Sigler 1999) stated that African American females try to assert themselves through the utilization of violent acts and abusive language. Violent behavior may be perceived as a likely solution for individuals who feel as if their presence has been ignored. Much of their violent behavior may be attributed to a feeling of powerlessness resulting from living in a white-male dominated society. While forty-

seven percent of the respondents felt as if they possess some control over things that happen in their lives. Previous research has suggested that African American women perceive themselves to be victims of fate and possess minimum control over their future (Sigler, 1999). This sense of a lack of control seems to be most apparent for 53% of respondents.

Despite minimum control over societal conditions, over half (65%) of the respondents feel positive about themselves and their futures (81%). While societal conditions may seem harsh and racial, African American female adolescents seemed to have developed appropriate coping mechanisms that protect themselves from societal injustices leaving their sense of self intact.

#### Limitations

Limitations of the study are related to the sample population. Participants were drawn from a small city located in the southeastern region of the United States with a population of approximately 90,000. This demographic factor limits the researcher from making generalizations about other African American female adolescents from other regions of the United States. Regional differences may affect the availability of school resources and perceptions regarding ethnic identity. Furthermore, the racial composition of the selected school district consists of 57% African American, 27% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic and 3% Asian American. Perhaps research findings may differ in a school district that is predominantly Caucasian, all African American or more evenly distributed among all ethnic groups.

While the researcher made several attempts to offer every African American female student the opportunity to participate in the study, a small percentage responded



and returned consent forms. Therefore a small sample population may have implications on statistical analyses as well as generalizability. The generalizability of these findings should be made with caution.

### Implications for Practice

The results of this study can have major implications for the design, development and implementation of services for these African American young women. Results seem to suggest that all constituents involved in adolescent development will need to reexamine current practices in an attempt to provide more appropriate services that best meet the needs of these youngsters.

### School System

Results indicated that only 24% of the respondents perceive their school as providing a caring climate. These findings seem to suggest that there are some missing essential components within the school climate that impact the experiences of African American females. It appears that the majority of these young women do not feel valued or appreciated. Providing opportunities for these youngsters to verbalize their desires, interests and concerns might be extremely useful. Their comments could assist in the development of more appropriate school-based programming. Previous research suggests that it is critical to the development of African American females to create safe spaces that are only for them.

While the majority (63%) of respondents reported perceiving their teachers as caring, approximately one-third of this population has a very different perception of teachers. While these results may be encouraging what is most apparent is the absence of a productive teacher-student relationship for all respondents. These findings raise

important questions such as, “What happens to those African American girls who possess a negative perception of teachers?” “What are the implications for their academic performance?” The relationship between teacher and student is central to their academic success. In many instances, these young women are growing up in very harsh environments characterized by racial discrimination and gender biases. To have a relationship where she experiences support and genuine concern may make the difference as she develops into a healthy adult. It is possible that the more teachers demonstrate a genuine concern about the academic development of their students the more likely students will engage in the educational process. In an attempt to maintain teacher involvement in the schooling process, it seems essential that the school system continue to support initiatives that increase the motivation and commitment of teachers. Listening to their concerns as well as developing incentives to enhance morale may have positive implications for student development.

School truancy seems to be a problem for almost half of the respondents (40%). These findings suggest that several of these young women are opting to skip school. The challenge facing the school system is to determine whether respondents are choosing to miss school due to negative characteristics of the school climate or are they seeking fulfillment in various components outside of the school context. Furthermore, gaining an understanding of how these young women spend their time when they are not in school appears to be extremely important. Non-constructive utilization of time may lead to these African American girls engaging in problematic behaviors.

Another concern that requires further attention is the lack of parent involvement in the schooling process (21%). Several factors may impact the likelihood of parent

involvement. Some contributing factors may include time restraints, child-care concerns, transportation limitations, negative perception of schools, and apathy. Perhaps school systems should conduct assessments/surveys to determine factors that affect parent involvement. To target multiple sectors of a community, these surveys should be distributed in various communities, translated in multiple languages, and developed in different forms to accommodate reading level of parents. Collaboration between the school and community allows the community to become more aware of school initiatives. Community officials may be more influential in persuading parents to become involved in the schooling process. Development and implementation of programs and services that will increase the likelihood of parent involvement is critical.

Results indicated that only 28% resolve conflict peacefully. Results suggest that these African American females have limited resources to resolve conflict. In an investigation conducted by Sigler (1999) findings suggested that the disruptive/aggressive behavior of African American young women is associated with the lack of coping mechanisms to manage stress. It appears that school counselors may play an intricate role in helping these young women to identify the underlying reasons for their aggressive behaviors. Perhaps their aggressive behavior is associated with a sense of powerlessness (53%). For marginalized groups, there is a constant challenge of combating societal injustices that infringe upon their rights. For these African American girls, they may perceive physical confrontation as a method of asserting power in a world where they experience powerlessness. While it seems imperative that school systems provide instruction on more appropriate methods to resolve conflict through classroom

guidance and class discussions, what may be more salient is helping these youngsters to understand underlying reasons for behavior.

Results of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure suggest that these African American young women demonstrate moderate knowledge of the history, traditions and customs of the African American culture. This finding may speak to a more systemic influence where there is minimal information integrated in the curriculum that addresses the contributions of the African American culture. If there is no opportunity afforded to these young women to engage in an intellectual dialogue about African Americans then their knowledge of the Afrocentric culture will remain stagnant. Implementing culturally-sensitive programs as well as infusing the contributions of African Americans into the curriculum will inevitably increase knowledge.

### Community

While 53% of the respondents provide service to others within their communities, only 19% of them perceive themselves as viable resources within their communities and valuable (23%). This seems to suggest that despite their efforts in attending to the needs of others, there is minimal recognition made regarding their service. Perhaps incorporating ceremonies where youth within the community are saluted for their important contributions may provide a sense of belonging. Furthermore, this finding also suggests that the voice of these young women is mute within their communities. Providing safe forums where African American women can share their experiences and concerns seems essential to their development. Including youth in the planning, development and implementation of community programs might give them a sense of belonging.

An integral component within the community is the availability of mentors. Research results suggest that 41% of these respondents have an adult role model which indicates that the majority of these young girls do not have an influential adult in their lives. Having a significant person in their lives who is dedicated to offering their time and talents sends an important message to a developing young woman. An adult role model or mentor sends a message to a young woman that she is special and worthy to be treasured.

Not only is it essential that African American females feel appreciated and valued within their communities, but it is also important that these young ladies feel safe. Based upon research findings, only half (51%) reported their communities as safe. Perhaps feeling appreciated within their communities may increase their assessment of safety. When an individual feels supported and valued, then they are more inclined to think that these same people will be protective over their well-being. However, this does not negate the importance of community representatives and officials to continue to evaluate safety policies and procedures.

### Family

While collaboration between school and community is essential in promoting healthy development of African American female adolescents, what cannot be ignored is the importance of family involvement. Families serve as the cornerstone in which fundamental skills are enhanced in the schooling process. While familial influence is paramount to the educational development of young African American women, results of this study suggest that only 21% of parents are involved in schooling process. What seems apparent is the family support (64%) experienced by respondents. Perhaps what

prevents some parents from being involved in their child's education can be attributed to environmental barriers (i.e. limited resources, financial restraints, etc) or barriers within the school context. Yet, while there is a recognition and awareness of these barriers, it is critical for parents to stay steadfast and committed to ensuring an appropriate educational experience for their children.

Based upon research findings, critical areas that require further attention by parents are completion of homework assignments (33%) and reading for pleasure (17%). It appears that the majority of these youngsters spend minimal time focused on homework and reading. This seems to be a component of the educational experience in which parents can play an active role. While the educational attainment of parents may affect their ability to assist in homework, what all parents can offer is continuous encouragement and motivation. Other areas that require further consideration by families involve participation in recreational and creative activities. Results suggest that only 15% of respondents are involved in activities that utilize their creative expression. Involving African American females in activities that require creativity may encourage them to explore untapped strengths.

What is most apparent throughout this research study is the positive influence of spirituality/religion. Results of the Family Environment Scale indicated that these African American females utilize religion as a coping mechanism as evidenced by scoring above average on this measure. Historically, within the African American culture, religion has served as the cornerstone for emotional and psychological support. As parents, continuing to uphold the importance of religion seems to be an essential ingredient in promoting healthy adolescent development. Religion seems to be an

important developmental aspect as evidenced by subscale scores. Therefore, utilizing the influence of the church to support the academic initiatives seems most appropriate. Along with encouraging religious involvement, it seems imperative that parents teach their children about the historical context and importance of religion in the lives of African Americans. Parents should encourage reading and involvement in culturally-enhancing programs.

### Psychologists

Mental health providers can make significant contributions to the development of African American female adolescents through both research and practice. It is important for psychologists to stay abreast of most prevalent issues in the lives of these young women. Staying abreast of adolescent issues involves psychologists conducting school and community-based research. Relevant findings from this research involve gaining a more in-depth understanding of aggressive behaviors, family dynamics, ethnic identity, spirituality, and academic development.

Regarding aggression African American females involves further exploration of underlying causes for such behavior. Psychologists play an important role in understanding the behaviors of African American female adolescents. To understand the psychological phenomenal of these young women is to understand the various components of their identity. As mental health providers it is imperative that the history, culture, gender, familial and peer influences, and developmental transitions of adolescence be taken into account as psychologists develop an accurate conceptualization.

Along with gaining a deeper understanding of identity-related concerns, it is important for psychologists to utilize basic therapeutic skills such as empathy, listening, and unconditional positive regard. These young women desire a place where their voices can be heard and their experiences understood. Both individual and group counseling can be ideal opportunities where they can begin to share their stories. Specifically, in group counseling, they are not only allowed to engage in stimulating discussions but they will also be granted the opportunity to learn and give feedback to other group members.

In addition to clinical practice it is also imperative that psychologists conduct real-world research on the specific concerns of this population. Establishing alliances between the school-community-university will enhance one's ability in providing additive information within the psychological literature. It is evident that African American females continue to be an underrepresented population within the psychological literature. To provide necessary information on these young women, psychologists have the opportunity to operate as either a researcher or a consultant to school systems and community agencies that provide youth services. Psychologists provide an essential ingredient to understanding the complexity of African American females. Psychologists are trained to understand the complex nature of human behavior. Utilizing this expertise coupled with real-world situations can only enhance knowledge and aid in the development of appropriate services and programs.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to describe characteristics of the experiences of African American female adolescents. Specifically, the researcher attempted to examine the family environment, ethnic identity and student resources of these young women



across levels of academic achievement. While the goal of this research was to provide additive information to the psychological literature on this population, this research study has only touched the surface in understanding these young women. This research study has led to some interesting questions that will require further examination.

To help strengthen the generalizability of the results to more African American females, this battery of instruments should be administered to larger samples and at other high schools. Conducting this research study at high schools with different racial demographics in various geographical locations may offer varying findings. Perhaps this will assist in the development of more appropriate services.

Results of the demographic data form suggested that these young women were just as likely to participate in extracurricular activities (50.6%) to those who did not participate (49.4%). Utilizing correlational statistics to determine the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and grade point average may provide useful information. This will provide informative data for school systems to utilize in an attempt to understand the adolescent development of African American females.

Results of the Family Environment Scale indicated that there was minimal variation across levels of achievement. In terms of family expressiveness and family independence each participant responded below average. Perhaps more research needs to be conducted to determine how African Americans define expressiveness as well as to determine contributing factors that may hinder expression or independence within their families. In contrast, respondents scored above average on the moral-religious orientation subscale. Conducting research to understand the importance of

religion/spirituality in the lives of these young women seems to be an additive component to the psychological literature.

Regarding the ethnic identity of these young women, while results of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure suggests that research participants had positive feelings about their ethnic background, these results do not speak to the development of ethnic identity. How these girls grow and develop into their ethnic identity is not answered with this study. Conducting longitudinal studies may assist in understanding this phenomenon.

While this research study has provided important information on the African American female adolescent, the voices of these young women continue to be unheard. Although this study raises some important questions regarding parental involvement in the schooling process, sense of school belonging, influence of religion and achievement orientation, researcher can only hypothesized possible explanations for these differences. Providing a forum for these young women to share their viewpoints regarding their experiences seems essential. This can only enhance knowledge of this population.

#### Chapter Summary

Findings of this research study seem to suggest that these young ladies are moderately adjusted developing adults. While only 8% possess all forty developmental assets, their sense of school belonging, relationships with important adults (i.e. parents, teachers, etc.), and activity involvement are indicators of healthy adolescent development. Despite these indicators, the lack of parental involvement seems to be consistent for most of the research participants. This is a critical area that requires further examination. What is paramount in the lives of these young women, according to this

research study, are the importance of moral/religious influences as well as meaning associated with achievement. Furthermore, these young women seem to have a healthy sense of group membership and value the cultural experiences of other ethnic groups.

While this study has provided additive information there is still a need for more research on this population. More specifically, further examination of their sense of belongingness within the school system, community and family is critical. Results of this study have implications for school systems, families, community-based organizations and mental health professionals in the development of appropriate programming and services. Additional research will assist in understanding the issues relevant to the experiences of African American female adolescents.

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APPENDIX A  
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

## Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian(s):

I would like to ask your permission for your child to participate in a research study with the African American female students of Clarke Central High School and/or Cedar Shoals High School. This research will describe characteristics of African American female adolescents. I am conducting this research to meet partial requirements of my doctoral degree in counseling psychology at The University of Georgia.

Each participant in the study will be asked to complete three research instruments that examine family issues, ethnic identity and factors that affect the growth and development of adolescents. These questionnaires will provide information on how these areas interact with their academic achievement.

In order to complete the research instruments, I will need to meet with your child for three sessions. The first session will last for 30 minutes. During this initial meeting time, I will provide your child with an overview of the study and answer any questions that may arise. To ensure that your child will not miss any one class more than 45 minutes, the schedule for data collection will follow a rotation of the block schedule. Each meeting will take place in the auditorium of each designated school building. It should take approximately 2 hours to complete all research instruments. Only the participants in the study along with myself will be in the auditorium during the data collection process. I will be available to answer any questions throughout the completion of research instruments. The data collection process should be complete by June 1, 2001.

Some of the risks involved with your child's participation in this study are as follows:

- Regular class time will be used to complete research instruments. Normal classroom activities may be interrupted. However, all teachers will be notified of the study prior to the first meeting and have agreed to allow your child extra time to complete all missed assignments.
- Some of the research questions may evoke certain negative emotions from your child. Some of the instruments ask questions about family relationships, what it means to be African American, and questions regarding specific situations that may impact their growth and development. Your child will be allowed to stop her participation at any time during this study. There will be no penalty imposed upon your child if she chooses to stop her participation. If for any reason your child experiences any emotional or psychological discomfort, she will be allowed to meet with a school counselor at each designated school to discuss her concerns.

A number coding system will be used as a method to protect the privacy of your child's responses. A specific number will be assigned to each research packet, therefore your child's name will not be associated with responses to instrument questions.

Your child will not be allowed to participate in this study without your consent. Your child also has the right to stop her participation in the study at anytime. Results of this



study will be presented without any identifying information, thereby protecting the identity of each participant. The name of the student will not be used in the results.

Please complete the bottom portion of this letter. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Melonie A. Bell  
Principal Investigator

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Please complete and give to your child to be returned to the Counseling Department of Clarke Central/Cedar Shoals High school.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give my child permission to participate in this study.

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Research at The University of Georgia which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions of problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Chris Joseph, Ph.D., Institutional Review Board, Office of V. P. for Research, The University of Georgia, 604A Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602, (706) 542-6514.

APPENDIX B

ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

A Descriptive Study of the Factors  
that affect the Academic Achievement of African American Females

Assent Form for Participation in Research

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this research study that will describe the characteristics of African American female adolescents. The principal investigator, Melonie A. Bell, M.S. of the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services of The University of Georgia will lead this research. The principal investigator is conducting this study to fulfill requirements for doctoral program. I understand that my participation is my choice and I can stop my participation at any time. If I choose I can have the information I provided returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The purpose of this study will focus on the experiences of African American females enrolled in the Clarke County School District.
2. The procedures are as follows: (1) I understand that I will be allowed to miss 45 minutes of 2 different class periods. (2) I understand that my teachers have been made aware of my participation in this study and I will not get in trouble for missing class. I understand that the teacher will allow me to make up any missed class assignments. (3) I understand that I will not be allowed to participate unless my parents/guardian allow me. (4) I understand that even if my parents grant permission for me to participate in this research study, I can still choose not to participate and will not get in trouble. (5) I understand that no one will be able to identify my answers because the principal investigator will use a number to code my information and not use my name. Only the principal investigator may see information that may have my name on it. No school official will know my responses to research items.
3. Answering these questions should cause me no stress or harm. However, I have been made aware that some of the questions may ask me about my family, about African Americans and other ethnic groups and issues that may affect my growth and development. If I start to feel uncomfortable at any time I may choose to either stop my participation at no penalty or I may speak with one of the school counselors to discuss my concerns. I understand that the information I share with the school counselor will be held in confidence and will not be shared with the principal investigator or school officials.
4. The principal investigator will be present to answer any questions that I may have during the course of my participation. If I begin to feel stressed by the reading involved with completing the research instruments, I can ask the principal investigator to read aloud any research items.

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Signature of Investigator    Date

---

Signature of Participant    Date

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Age of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Grade (i.e. 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity (please check one): African American \_\_\_\_\_ Asian American \_\_\_\_\_

Caucasian/White \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino \_\_\_\_\_

Mixed Heritage (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What is the educational level of your parent/legal guardian in your home? (Please place a check by ONE that best fits for you)

Choose one parent/guardian to describe. Please state which parent/guardian you are referring: \_\_\_\_\_ (ex. mother, father, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than a high school diploma (did not finish high school)

\_\_\_\_\_ Graduated from high school/completed GED

\_\_\_\_\_ Attended college but did not finish (if did not finish, how many years did she/he attend? \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ Graduate from college

How many people live in your home? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are the people that live in your home? (ex. mother, father, grandmother, etc.)

---

Are you involved in any extracurricular activities? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes or No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what extracurricular activities are you involved in? Please list them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

APPENDIX D

THE SURVEY OF STUDENT RESOURCES AND ASSETS

## The Survey of Student Resources and Assets

Developed by America's Promise and Search Institute

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ 11 or younger \_\_\_\_\_ 12 \_\_\_\_\_ 13 \_\_\_\_\_ 14  
\_\_\_\_\_ 15 \_\_\_\_\_ 16 \_\_\_\_\_ 17 \_\_\_\_\_ 18 \_\_\_\_\_ 19 or older
2. What is your grade in school? \_\_\_\_\_ 5<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 6<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 7<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 8<sup>th</sup>  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 10<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 11<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 12<sup>th</sup>
3. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
4. How do you describe yourself? If more than one, mark each that applies to you.  
\_\_\_\_\_ American Indian \_\_\_\_\_ Asian or Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_ Black or African  
American \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic, Latino or Latina \_\_\_\_\_ White
5. Which one of the following best describes your family? \_\_\_\_\_ I live with two parents.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I live in a one-parent family with my mother. \_\_\_\_\_ I live in a one-parent family  
with my father. \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes I live with my mother and sometimes with my father.
6. Where does your family now live? \_\_\_\_\_ On a farm \_\_\_\_\_ In the country, not on a farm  
\_\_\_\_\_ On an American Indian reservation \_\_\_\_\_ In a small town (under 2,500 in  
population) \_\_\_\_\_ In a town of 2,500 to 9,999 \_\_\_\_\_ In a small city (10,000-49,999)  
\_\_\_\_\_ In a medium size city (50,000 – 250,000) \_\_\_\_\_ In a large city (over 250,000)
7. What is the highest level of schooling your father (or step-father or male foster  
parent/guardian) completed? \_\_\_\_\_ Completed grade school or less \_\_\_\_\_ Some high  
school \_\_\_\_\_ Completed high school \_\_\_\_\_ Some college \_\_\_\_\_ Completed college \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate or professional after college \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know or does not apply
8. What is the highest level of schooling your mother (or step-mother or female foster  
parent/guardian) completed? \_\_\_\_\_ Completed grade school or less \_\_\_\_\_ Some high  
school \_\_\_\_\_ Completed high school \_\_\_\_\_ Some college \_\_\_\_\_ Completed college \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate or professional school after college \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know or does not apply

### ABOUT SCHOOL

9. What grades do you earn in school? \_\_\_\_\_ Mostly As \_\_\_\_\_ About half As and half Bs  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mostly Bs \_\_\_\_\_ About half Bs and Cs \_\_\_\_\_ Mostly Cs \_\_\_\_\_ About half Cs  
and half Ds \_\_\_\_\_ Mostly Ds \_\_\_\_\_ Mostly below Ds
10. On an average school day, about how much time do you spend doing homework  
outside of school? \_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_ Half hour or less \_\_\_\_\_ Between half an hour and an  
hour \_\_\_\_\_ 1 hour \_\_\_\_\_ 2 hours \_\_\_\_\_ 3 hours or more



For each of the following, mark one response. How often does one of your parents...?  
Very Often                  Often                  Sometimes                  Always

- 11. Help you with your schoolwork?
- 12. Talk to you about what you are doing in school?
- 13. Ask you about homework?
- 14. Go to meetings or events at your school?

How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Mark one answer for each.  
Strongly agree                  Agree                  Not Sure                  Disagree                  Strongly Disagree

- 15. At school I try as hard as I can to do my best work
- 16. My teachers really care about me
- 17. It bothers me when I don't do something well
- 18. I get a lot of encouragement at my school
- 19. Teachers at school push me to be the best I can be
- 20. In my school there are clear rules about what students can and cannot do
- 21. I care about the school I go to
- 22. Students in my school care about me
- 23. At my school, everyone knows that you'll get in trouble for using alcohol or other drugs
- 24. Students help decide what goes on in my school
- 25. I don't care how I do in school
- 26. If I break a rule at school, I'm sure to get in trouble

How many times have you had classes in school that taught you about the following topics?

Never                  Once                  Twice                  3-4 times                  5 or more times

- 27. Alcohol and other drugs
- 28. Sexuality



45. During an average week, how many hours do you work in a paid job? \_\_\_\_\_ None  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5 hours or less \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10 hours \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15 \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20 \_\_\_\_\_ 21-25 \_\_\_\_\_ 26-30  
\_\_\_\_\_ More than 30 hours

### ABOUT YOU

How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Mark one answer for each.  
Strongly agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

46. On the whole, I like myself

47. It is against my values to drink alcohol while I am a teenage

48. At times, I think I am no good at all

49. I get along well with my parents

50. All in all, I am glad I am me

51. I feel I do not have much to be proud of

52. If I break one of my parents' rules, I usually get punished

53. My parents give me help and support when I need it

54. It is against my values to have sex while I am a teenager

55. My parents often tell me they love me

56. In my family, I feel useful and important

57. In my family, there are clear rules about what I can and cannot do

58. In my neighborhood, there are a lot of people who care about me

59. If one of my neighbors saw me do something wrong, he or she would tell one of my parents

60. My parents push me to be the best I can be

During an average week, how many hours do you spend...?

0                      1                      2                      3-5                      6-10                      11 or more

61. Playing on or helping with sports teams at school or in the community

62. In clubs or organizations at school

- 63. In clubs or organizations outside of school
- 64. Reading just for fun (not part of schoolwork)
- 65. Going to program, groups, or services at a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious spiritual place
- 66. Helping other people without getting paid
- 67. Practicing or taking lessons in music, art, drama, or dance, after school or on weekends
- 68. Doing volunteer work with a congregation (church, synagogue, etc)
- 69. Doing volunteer work in a hospital or care facility
- 70. Working on a community service project
- 71. Tutoring or helping someone who is having trouble with schoolwork
- 72. Doing volunteer work to help the environment
- 73. Helping out at a recreation center or other community center

Think about the people who you know well. How do you think they would rate you on each of these? Mark one answer for each.

People who know me would say that this is .....

Not at all like me      A little like me      Somewhat like me      Quite like me      Very  
 Much like me

- 74. Knowing how to say “no” when someone wants me to do things I know are wrong or dangerous
- 75. Caring about other people’s feelings
- 76. Thinking through the possible good and bad results of different choices before I make decisions
- 77. Respecting the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture than I am
- 78. Staying away from people who might get me in trouble
- 79. Feeling really sad when one of my friends is unhappy

80. Being good at making and keeping friends
81. Knowing a lot about people of other races
82. Enjoying being with people who are of a different race than I am
83. Being good at planning ahead
84. Taking good care of my body
85. How many times, if any, have you had alcohol to drink during the last 30 days? \_\_\_ 0  
\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3-5 \_\_\_ 6-9 \_\_\_ 10-19 \_\_\_ 20-39 \_\_\_ 40+
86. How many times, if any, have you smoked cigarettes during the last 30 days? \_\_\_ 0  
\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3-5 \_\_\_ 6-9 \_\_\_ 10-19 \_\_\_ 20-39 \_\_\_ 40+
87. How many times, if any, have you used marijuana (grass, pot) or hashish (hash, hash oil) during the last 12 months? \_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3-5 \_\_\_ 6-9 \_\_\_ 10-19 \_\_\_  
20-39 \_\_\_ 40+

#### ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

88. In the last 12 months, have you been to a dentist? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
89. In the last 12 months, have you talked with a doctor or nurse about your health? \_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_ No
90. In the last 12 months, have you gone to a doctor for a checkup or physical exam when you were not sick? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no
91. If you were feeling sad or “bummed out” and wanted to talk to someone, is there a counselor, social worker, or psychologist you could go to? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no
92. In the last 12 months, have you gone to a nurse’s office or clinic in your school for help or advice? Mark only one. \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ My school doesn’t have a nurse’s office or a clinic
93. How often do you binge eat and then make yourself throw up or use laxatives to get rid of the food you have eaten? \_\_\_ Never \_\_\_ Once in a while \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_  
Often

#### MORE ABOUT YOU

How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Mark one answer for each.  
Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

94. Sometimes I feel like my life has no purpose

95. Adults in my town or city make me feel important
96. Adults in my town or city listen to what I have to say
97. I'm given lots of chances to help make my town or city a better place in which to live
98. Adults in my town or city don't care about people my age
99. In my town or city, I feel like I matter to people
100. When things don't go well for me, I am good at finding a way to make things better
101. When I am an adult, I'm sure I will have a good life
102. I have lots of good conversations with my parents
103. My parents spend a lot of time helping other people
104. I have little control over the things that will happen in my life
105. I have talked with parents about the role my education will play in having the jobs or careers I want
106. I have talked with an adult other than my parents (such as a school counselor) about jobs/careers I am interested in
107. If you had an important concern about drugs, alcohol, sex, or some other serious issue, would you talk to your parent(s) about it? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ probably \_\_\_ I'm not sure \_\_\_ probably not \_\_\_ no
108. How much of the time do your parents ask you where you are going or with whom you will be? \_\_\_ never \_\_\_ seldom \_\_\_ some of the time \_\_\_ most of the time \_\_\_ all of the time
109. In an average week, how many times do all of the people in your family who live with you eat dinner together? \_\_\_ none \_\_\_ once a week \_\_\_ twice a week \_\_\_ three times a week \_\_\_ 4 times a week \_\_\_ 5 times a week \_\_\_ 6 times a week \_\_\_ 7 times a week
110. How many times in the last 12 months has someone asked you to help on service or volunteer projects? \_\_\_ never \_\_\_ once \_\_\_ twice \_\_\_ 3-4 times \_\_\_ 5 or more times
- Among the people you consider to be your closet friends, how many would you say...?
- None                      A Few                      Some                      Most                      All
111. Drink alcohol once a week or more

112. Have used drugs such as marijuana or cocaine

113. Do well in school

114. Get into trouble at school

How often do you feel afraid of ...?

Never

Once in a while

Sometimes

Often

Always

115. Walking around your neighborhood

116. Getting hurt by someone at your school

117. Getting hurt by someone in your home

118. On the average, how many evenings per week do you go out just to be with your friends without anything special to do? \_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_ 7

119. Imagine that someone at your school hit you or pushed you for no reason. What would you do? Mark one answer. \_\_\_ I'd hit or push them right back. \_\_\_ I'd try to hurt them worse than they hurt me. \_\_\_ I'd try to talk to this person and work our differences. \_\_\_ I'd talk to a teacher or other adult. \_\_\_ I'd just ignore it and do nothing.

How many adults have you known for two or more years who...?

0

1

2

3 or 4

5 or more

120. Give you lot of encouragement whenever they see you ...

121. You look forward to spending time with ...

122. Spend a lot of time helping other people

123. Do things that are wrong or dangerous

124. Talk with you at least once a month

125. A mentor is an adult outside your family who cares about and spends time with you. Mentors can come from schools, businesses, etc. How often do you spend time with your mentor? \_\_\_ I don't have a mentor \_\_\_ Less than once a month \_\_\_ About once a month \_\_\_ about two or three times a month \_\_\_ about once a week \_\_\_ more than once a week

## ABOUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU

How important is each of the following to you in your life? Mark one answer for each.  
Not important      Somewhat impt.      Not sure      Quite impt.      Extremely impt.

126. Helping other people

127. Helping to reduce hunger and poverty in the world

128. Helping to make the world a better place in which to live

129. Helping to make sure that all people are treated fairly

130. Speaking up for equality

131. Giving time or money to make life better for other people

132. Doing what I believe is right even if my friends make fun of me

133. Standing up for what I believe, even when it's unpopular to do so

134. Telling the truth, even when it's not easy

135. Accepting responsibility for my actions when I make a mistake or get in trouble

136. Doing my best even when I have to do a job I don't like

#### ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

137. Have you watched or helped someone do their job to learn about it and what they do? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Mark one answer for each.  
Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

138. The classes I take in school will help me get a good job

139. I have a clear idea about the kind of job or career I want to have

140. I have talked about a job/career I am interested in with a person doing that kind of work

141. The skills I am learning in school

142. I know how to use a computer to do things like schoolwork, finding information, or typing papers



143. The skills and responsibilities I am learning from doing work like baby-sitting, cutting grass, or working a job are preparing me for a future job

APPENDIX E  
FAMILY ENVIRONMENT SCALE

Family Environment Scale  
FES

There are 90 statements to be completed. They are statements about families. You are to decide which of these statements are true of your family and which are false. Make all your marks on the separate sheet. If you think the statement is *True* or mostly *True* of your family, make an X in the box labeled T (true). If you think the statement is *False* or mostly *False* of your family, make an X in the box labeled F (false).

1. Family members really help and support one another.
2. Family members often keep their feelings to themselves.
3. We fight a lot in our family.
4. We don't do things on our own very often in our family.
5. We feel it is important to be the best at whatever you do.
6. We often talk about political and social problems.
7. We spend most weekends and evenings at home.
8. Family members attend church, synagogue, or Sunday School fairly often.
9. Activities in our family are pretty carefully planned.
10. Family members are rarely ordered around.
11. We often seem to be killing time at home.
12. We say anything we want to around home.
13. Family members rarely become openly angry.
14. In our family, we are strongly encouraged to be independent.
15. Getting ahead in life is very important in our family.
16. We rarely go to lectures, plays or concerts.
17. Friends often come over for dinner or to visit.
18. We don't say prayers in our family.
19. We are generally very neat and orderly.

20. There are very few rules to follow in our family.
21. We put a lot of energy into what we do at home.
22. It's hard to "blow off steam" at home without upsetting somebody.
23. Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things.
24. We think things out for ourselves in our family.
25. How much money a person makes is not very important to us.
26. Learning about new and different things is very important in our family.
27. Nobody in our family is active in sports, Little league, bowling, etc.
28. We often talk about the religious meaning of Christmas, Passover, or other holidays.
29. It's often hard to find things when you need them in our household.
30. There is one family member who makes most of the decisions.
31. There is a feeling of togetherness in our family.
32. We tell each other about our personal problems.
33. Family members hardly ever lose their tempers.
34. We come and go as we want to in our family.
35. We believe in competition and "may the best man win."
36. We are not that interested in cultural activities.
37. We often go to movies, sports events, camping, etc.
38. We don't believe in heaven or hell.
39. Being on time is very important in our family.
40. There are set ways of doing things at home.
41. We rarely volunteer when something has to be done at home.

42. If we feel like doing something on the spur of the moment we often just pick up and go.
43. Family members often criticize each other.
44. There is very little privacy in our family.
45. We always strive to do things just a little better the next time.
46. We rarely have intellectual discussions.
47. Everyone in our family has a hobby or two.
48. Family members have strict ideas about what is right and wrong.
49. People change their minds often in our family.
50. There is a strong emphasis on following rules in our family.
51. Family members really back each other up.
52. Someone usually gets upset if you complain in our family.
53. Family members sometimes hit each other.
54. Family members almost always rely on themselves when a problem comes up.
55. Family members rarely worry about job promotions, school grades, etc.
56. Someone in our family plays a musical instrument.
57. Family members are not very involved in recreational activities outside work or school.
58. We believe there are some things you just have to take on faith.
59. Family members make sure their rooms are neat.
60. Everyone has an equal say in family decisions.
61. There is very little group spirit in our family.
62. Money and paying bills is openly talked about in our family.
63. If there's a disagreement in our family, we try hard to smooth things over and keep the peace.

64. Family members strongly encourage each other to stand up for their rights.
65. In our family, we don't try that hard to succeed.
66. Family members often go to the library.
67. Family members sometimes attend courses or take lessons for some hobby or interest (outside of school).
68. In our family each person has different ideas about what is right and wrong.
69. Each person's duties are clearly defined in our family.
70. We can do whatever we want to in our family.
71. We really get along well with each other.
72. We are usually careful about what we say to each other.
73. Family members often try to one-up or out-do each other.
74. It's hard to be by yourself without hurting someone's feelings in our household.
75. "Work before play" is the rule in our family.
76. Watching T.V. is more important than reading in our family.
77. Family members go out a lot.
78. The Bible is a very important book in our home.
79. Money is not handled very carefully in our family.
80. Rules are pretty inflexible in our household.
81. There is plenty of time and attention for everyone in our family.
82. There are a lot of spontaneous discussions in our family.
83. In our family, we believe you don't ever get anywhere by raising your voice.
84. We are not really encouraged to speak up for ourselves in our family.
85. Family members are often compared with others as to how well they are doing at work or school.

86. Family members really like music, art and literature.
87. Our main form of entertainment is watching T.V. or listening to the radio.
88. Family members believe that if you sin you will be punished.
89. Dishes are usually done immediately after eating.
90. You can't get away with much in our family.

APPENDIX F  
THE MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE



## The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people originate from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Mexican American, Hispanic, Black, Asian American, American Indian, Anglo-American, and White. Every person is born into an ethnic group, or sometimes two groups, but people differ on how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behavior is affected by it. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in:

In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_\_

Use the numbers given below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree
	Strongly Disagree		

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own. \_\_\_\_\_

10. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. \_\_\_\_\_
12. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups. \_\_\_\_\_
13. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group. \_\_\_\_\_
14. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. \_\_\_\_\_
17. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups. \_\_\_\_\_
18. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. \_\_\_\_\_
19. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own. \_\_\_\_\_
20. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. \_\_\_\_\_

Write in the number that gives the best answer to each question.

21. My ethnicity is:

- (1) Asian, Asian American, or Oriental
- (2) Black or African American
- (3) Hispanic or Latino/a
- (4) White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- (5) American Indian
- (6) Mixed; parents are from two different groups
- (7) Other (write in ): \_\_\_\_\_

22. My father's ethnicity is (use numbers above) \_\_\_\_\_

23. My mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above) \_\_\_\_\_

