APPLYING THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR TO EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND INTENTIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES AND VIEWS OF LOW INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS USING A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

A Dissertation by

Felecia A. Lee

Masters of Arts, Wichita State University, 2010
Bachelors of Arts, Wichita State University, 2008

Submitted to the Department of Psychology and the faculty of the Graduate School of Wichita State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
Note that thesis and dissertation work is protected by copyright, with all rights reserved. Only the author has the legal right to publish, produce, sell or distribute this work. Author permission is needed for others to directly quote significant amounts of information in their own work or to summarize substantial amounts of information in their own work. Limited amounts of information cited, paraphrased, or summarized from the work may be used with proper citation of where to find the original work.
APPLYING THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR TO EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND INTENTIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES AND VIEWS OF LOW INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS USING A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

The following faculty have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Psychology.

____________________________________
Rhonda Lewis, Committee Chair

____________________________________
Charles Burdsal, Committee Member

____________________________________
Alex Chaparro, Committee Member

____________________________________
Darwin Dorr, Committee Member

____________________________________
Jodie Hertzog, Committee Member

Accepted for the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
_______________________________
Ron Matson, Dean

Accepted for the Graduate School
_______________________________
Abu Masud, Interim Dean
DEDICATION

To my family who have always been there to support me. My mother and all of my brothers and sisters, Calvin, James, Bree, Brandon, Joey, Jeannie, Lexi and Alex- I could never have done it without you. Also, to all of my friends-I cannot name you all but you know who you are. I love you all
Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22.6
I thank the wonderful group of adolescents that participated in this study for sharing their hopes, goals and dreams with me. I hope in some small way I have impacted your life as you have changed mine. Also, thanks to Kyrah Brown, David Stowell, and Christie Yaussi who helped me in data collection, transcription and analysis.

I also thank my advisor, Dr. Rhonda Lewis for her continuous support and patience over the years and with whose guidance I have grown personally and professionally. Thanks to my committee members, Charles Burdsal whose guidance and teaching for which I will be forever grateful, Alex Chapparo, Darwin Dorr and Jodie Hertzog for their assistance and suggestions during this process.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the goals and challenges of low-income African American adolescents as it relates to their educational goals and aspirations. A mixed-methods approach was employed using qualitative interviews and survey data. The Theory of Planned Behavior was utilized in order to assess how the attitudes of adolescents, the attitudes of significant others and perceived control contributed to adolescent intentions to complete high school and attend college and how their intentions relate to their current academic performance. The data obtained was analyzed separately and collectively in order to develop an overall interpretation. The findings suggest that based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, two patterns of adolescent profiles emerged: intentional thinkers and unintentional thinkers. Each profile will be discussed in terms of individual attitudes, perceived attitudes of significant others and perceived barriers as well as how this relates to current academic performance, intentions, expectations and school effort. Gender differences also emerged within this population. The implications that this research has concerning targeted interventions for low-income African American adolescents will be discussed as well as future research and limitations.
PREFACE

This work was inspired with the intention of providing an opportunity for adolescents to discuss educational dreams and challenges. Often this population (low-income African American adolescents between ages 11-14) is overlooked and their voices are not heard. My hope is that this work gives adolescents the opportunity to express their goals and provides an initial understanding and framework to inform interventions designed for African American adolescents. With this additional knowledge, we can meet adolescents where they are and be the village that raises the child.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I.</strong> INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background and Significance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Gap</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Gap</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk and Protective Factors</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers Associated with Educational Attainment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Planned Behavior</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components of the Theory of Reasoned Action</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Planned Behavior: Adding Control</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Constructs and Differentiated Constructs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Planned Behavior and Educational Attainment</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context and Background</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II.</strong> METHODS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and Setting</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1. Qualitative Interviews</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2. Quantitative Surveys</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Interviews- Data Reduction, Coding and Definitions</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Surveys</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III.</strong> RESULTS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of Qualitative Interviews</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of Quantitative Surveys</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Results</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV.</strong> DISCUSSION</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Planned Behavior</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiles: Intentional and Unintentional thinkers</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative findings</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for developing interventions</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research and Recommendations</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Quantitative Survey</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Interview Questions</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Interview Protocol</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. An Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Characteristics of select schools in Wichita, Kansas</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research Questions and Interview Questions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Questions that Compose reduced School Attitude Assessment</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey-Revised (SAAS-R)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. List of General Codes, Sub-codes and Definitions</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kappa Scores</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Theory of Planned Behavior</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Blended Model of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Educational Aspirations</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods Application</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Analysis of Intentional and Unintentional Thinkers</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

The educational aspirations and outlook for African American adolescents is troublesome. African American adolescents are at an increased risk for underachievement in school and dropping out of school. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2009), minorities comprise more than half of dropouts and African American adolescents are disproportionately represented among those dropping out and expulsions. African American adolescents tend to have lower grade, poorer reading and math scores and lower standardized test scores than their Caucasian counterparts (Jeynes, 2005) (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2011). According to the NCES (2011), White students at grade 12 scored 27 points higher in reading than their Black counterparts and this achievement gap was not significantly different from previous assessment years. This indicates a lack of progress for decreasing the gap.

A mixed methods approach (the use of qualitative and quantitative research) was used to gather information from adolescents about their future educational goals. The purpose of the content analysis (qualitative methodology) was to explore the factors that directly influence the educational attainment and aspirations of African American adolescents. Content analysis “as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena” (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). The general purpose of this content analysis is to describe in broad categorization the factors that influence educational aspirations and attainment for this population. The quantitative analysis was utilized as an additional data triangulation point. Given the challenges of African American adolescents, this study examined the individual
adolescents’ attitudes towards education, perceptions they hold concerning the attitudes of significant others (parents, teachers and peers) towards education, barriers and challenges to educational success and educational aspirations. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) was used in this study as a guiding framework to examine how the attitudes of students in combination with those of significant others and barriers influence the educational intentions and behavior (educational performance) of the adolescent.

Results of previous studies provide several reasons why these outcomes may persist among some African American students. Outcomes include poor engagement in the school environment, low grades, and absenteeism. Connell et al. (1995) found that students engaged in school have a lower likelihood of performing risky educational behaviors such as failing courses, suspension and low attendance rates and were less likely to drop out of school. Other explanations include lack of role models (Zirkel, 2002), low self-efficacy concerning educational attainment (Kerpelman et al., 2008) or unknown barriers and challenges that cannot be overcome. Environmental barriers are also inherent in growing up in a low resource community and recently many studies have demonstrated this explanation to be a contributing factor in school failure (Cebello, McLoyd & Toyokawa, 2004; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov & Sealand, 1993; Crane, 1991).

Extensive research has been conducted in the area of academic failure and later life achievement. Academic failure in the beginning of late elementary school is indicative of unsuccessful academic endeavors. Research indicates that poor academic performance during early adolescence often sets the stage for lack of educational success in later years (Kerpleman et al., 2008; Dauber, Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Garneir, Stein & Jacobs, 1997; Lazar & Darlington, 1982). There is a linkage between academic performance, level of educational
attainment and career or later labor market opportunities (Coleman, 1961; Jencks, 1972). The career opportunities are limited for those who experience academic failure at an early age. Therefore, it is imperative that poor educational outcomes be addressed with African American adolescents in order to ensure positive outcomes later in life. While African American adolescents’ performance in the classroom is lagging behind their white counterparts, their intentions to achieve academically and their career related intentions are high (Kao & Thompson, 2003). However, studies have not examined the education perceptions of adolescents and their lived experiences.

African American adolescents report high expectations for their educational achievement (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Kao & Tienda, 1998). African American adolescents consistently state that their education is important and that they aspire to complete high school and attend and graduate from college. In a study conducted by Pedro Noguera (2003), 90% of African American male respondents agreed that their education was important to them and that they wanted to attend college. However, only 18% of the adolescents reported that they worked hard to achieve good grades. These findings seem to be inconsistent. This indicates that there is a disconnect between the educational aspirations, values and intentions of African American adolescents and their current educational performance. This study was conducted with high school African American males and did not assess their values and intentions through qualitative methodology.

Race Gap

The educational achievement gap has been well researched and documented (Jencks, 1972; Miller, 1995; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). The educational achievement gap refers to the disparity between minority students and White students on a variety of educational measures including test scores, grades and high school and college completion. Frameworks have been
developed that suggests that the achievement gap between Black and White students is due to societal level racism that affects African American adolescents (Ogbu, 1997). The social context in which adolescents live affects their educational aspirations as well as their beliefs concerning educational attainment.

Although the educational gap is minimal early in schooling, it increases quickly through school completion (Fryer & Levitt, 2004). Studies have confirmed that Black students typically score 0.64 standard deviations below White students on standardized testing measures upon entering school and this difference increases into high school. If Black students consistently lose ground on White students at the rate of 0.10 standard deviations a year, Black students will continue to be behind their White counterparts upon entering high school.

Similarly, Hispanic students average lower test scores than White students, while Asian American students have comparable scores to their White counterparts (Kao & Thompson, 2003). These differences are especially apparent among high achieving students. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been assessing 17 year olds since 1971 in terms of vocabulary, reading and math. Among those performing highly on the NAEP (350 points or higher), 13% of Asians, 6% of White students, 1% of Black students and Hispanic students and less than 1% of Native Americans meet this criteria (Kao & Thompson, 2003). Student grades also parallel trends found in standardized testing measures with Asian Americans having the highest GPA’s followed by White, Hispanic and Black students. However, after controlling for parental schooling, income, household status, immigrant status, and prior experiences at school, Hispanic students were no longer statistically significantly different from their White counterparts. Asian students still had a statistically higher GPA than White students and Black students had a statistically lower GPA than White students. Concerning high school completion,
in 1990, approximately 78% of White, 78% of Asians, 66% of Native Americans, 63% of Black and 50% of Hispanics, age 25 and older had a high school diploma (Kao & Thompson, 2003). This indicates the necessity to understand additional barriers that these minority groups face that affect their standardized testing scores, current grades, high school completion and eventually college enrollment and future career success. It is also essential to understand the factors that contribute to school failure in Black students considering that after controlling for a variety of covariates, Black students were still significantly behind their White, Asian and Hispanic counterparts.

Explanations have been affirmed as to why the educational race gap increases between Black and White students. Neighborhoods and schools that have a high concentration of African American students are disproportionately located in poor areas (Roscigno, 2000) and these schools are often inferior in non-traditional terms of quality indicators including a higher percentage of students obtaining free/reduced lunches, increased gang problems and more litter around the school and therefore lack the resources to enhance educational opportunities (Fryer & Levitt, 2004).

**Gender Gap**

There are also differences in educational attainment and aspirations between African American males and females. These differences are reflected in educational performance and test scores. Adolescent African American girls tend to have higher test scores than African American boys (Greene & Mickelson, 2006). African American females are graduating at higher rates than their male counterparts and are attending college and then graduate school more often than African American males (Saunders et al., 2004). Honora (2002) found that there were even differences between high achieving African American females and high achieving African
American males. High achieving African American females tended to have higher expectations related to education as well as consider more long-term goals associated with their education although their GPA’s were similar to that of high achieving African American males.

A study conducted by Osborne (1997) found that African American males begin to disengage from their school environment at an early age (8th grade) and this continues until 12th grade. This pattern was not found in African American females. Similarly, a study conducted by Roderick (2003) investigating the transition to high school for African American males found that African American males experienced a more dramatic decline in educational performance than African American females. Furthermore, Cokley (2002) found that this pattern was also apparent in African American college students. The relationship between grade point average and academic self-concept showed a decrease between freshman and senior year for African American males. This was not the same for African American females. These studies reveal that the gender gap continues into higher educational attainment.

Taken together, it appears that African American males need to be engaged in their school environment in order to attain educational success. Interventions that target African American males must be aware of this factor. It is also necessary to bridge the gap between middle school or junior high and high school for African American males and females and assess additional barriers and challenges that they may face. It is pertinent that during this time of early adolescence, factors that contribute to healthy educational growth and success are nurtured. There is a dearth in the literature that addresses these educational issues using qualitative methodology. Thus, it is important to gather such information to understand student views of educational factors that potentially affect the academic success of African American students.
Risk and Protective Factors

Individual and Peer Risk Factors

There are multiple risk and protective factors associated with educational outcomes for African American adolescents. Risk factors are anything that increases risk or susceptibility, in this case, for academic failure (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992). These risk factors can be described in terms of the multiple contexts in which adolescents reside. Individual risk factors that affect educational performance for adolescents include self-esteem (students with low self-esteem may think poorly of themselves and feel that they are unable to be successful academically and this can lead to school disengagement) (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn & Sellers, 2006), class preparation, grade point average declining following the transition to middle school, and teen pregnancy (Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell & Feinman, 1994; McGee & Newcomb, 1992). The peers that adolescents associate with are also potential risk factors. Deviant peers and those unsupportive of their friend’s educational pursuits can negatively affect educational outcomes (McGee & Newcomb, 1992; Acker & Wehby, 2000).

Other factors that contribute to poor academic performance are students lack of classroom performance (i.e. simply not turning in their homework or lacking focus concerning school work). Researchers have shown that homework completion is associated with an increase in academic retention (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). Students who complete homework are more likely to have an increased understanding and grasp of the academic material than those who do not complete their homework (Cooper & Valentine, 2001).

Family Risk Factors

Family risk factors (Acker & Wehby, 2000) include parental mental illness, family conflict, familial attitudes toward education, the educational aspirations of the parents for the
student, the absence or presence of other family stressors including substance abuse and
domestic violence in the household and neighborhood and chronic hassles such as racial
discrimination (Neblett et al., 2006). African American adolescents are exposed to considerable
levels of these risk conditions (Evans, 2004; Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby & Kracke,
2009; Bureau of Justice, 2008). Family Stress Theory (McLoyd, 1998) may give some credence
as to how all of these conditions relate to academic performance. Family Stress Theory states
that negative economic conditions and poverty have adverse effects on family environment and
such hassles are inversely related to adjustment. It may be difficult for children to make
education a priority if there are major family stressors within the home and neighborhood
presenting additional barriers.

Living in poverty and household composition (residing in a single parent household) has
been associated with behavioral difficulties, emotional distress, and academic failure (McLoyd,
1998). It is also known that lack of parental involvement is a risk factor associated with
academic failure (Jeynes, 2005; Nesbitt, 1993). The extent to which a parent is able to be
involved in their adolescent’s academics is related to their socioeconomic status. It may be that
those in lower socioeconomic statuses are working more to financially support their children and
therefore do not have time to become or remain involved in the students’ educational affairs.
Research indicates that parental involvement is related to family structure. Single families and
poor families are more likely to face unemployment, work longer hours and work multiple jobs
(Jeynes, 2005). If this direct connection exists between socioeconomic status, family structure
and parental involvement, the risk for African American adolescents appears to be high
considering the increased likelihood of African American adolescents residing in such
households (Mather, 2010).
Environmental Risk Factors

Within the school system risk factors include poorly prepared teachers and ineffective school leaders (Gaynor, 2012). If teachers are not prepared to advise students and there is inadequate school leadership, this can negatively impact a student’s performance (Acker & Wehby, 2000). Another risk factor for academic success is whether the school institution has adequate resources available to the adolescents. If there are not enough textbooks or computers available to the adolescents, it is difficult for the teachers to perform their duties and difficult for the student to complete necessary tasks.

Protective Factors

Individual and Peer Protective factors

Protective factors moderate the presence of risk factors and can offer a “kind of immunity against stressful experiences” (Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen, 1984). There are also protective factors that are associated with educational outcomes for African American adolescents. A 2007 study conducted by Li, Nussbaum and Richards (2007) examining 263 adolescents in grades 5th through 8th found that several factors were related to academic performance and risk behaviors. Self-confidence was a “protective-stabilizing” factor or provided a “stress buffering” relationship against poverty. Across both externalizing (“acting out”) and internalizing (depression) symptoms, confidence was protective when poverty level was examined as a risk factor. If an adolescent had high levels of confidence there was no relation between externalizing behaviors and poverty (whereas with low levels of confidence, there was a positive relationship). The pattern remained true for internalizing symptoms. Therefore, if the adolescent was confident, being in an impoverished situation was no longer a factor affecting internalizing and externalizing behaviors. There was a gap in the research concerning how confidence was defined
among the adolescent. This study, however, was quantitative and lacked a qualitative component in which the role of confidence could be explored as a protective factor. Interviewing the adolescents would be more telling of what factors contribute to academic performance.

Adolescents’ future education orientation is also related to their current academic performance. According to Nurmi (1991, 2005), future orientation include the thoughts, dreams and expectations that adolescents have for future events including educational attainment. Future education orientation has been studied as a protective factor associated with adolescents specifically minority adolescents and those that are low-income (McCabe & Barnett, 2000) and have been described as a good indicator of student’s future plans (Campbell, 1983). This orientation toward the future provides motivation for adolescents to meet future educational goals. Significant others (parents, teachers and peers) influence the potential aspirations of adolescents and future education aspirations. All adolescents (Black, Hispanic, White and Asian) report high aspirations despite low attainment for Hispanic and African American students (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). Therefore, it is unclear what having high aspirations means for adolescents. If the future orientation of African American adolescents does not include future educational successes (achieving a good grade point average, graduating from high school, etc.), they may be unable to see their future selves completing educational goals and not have any motivation to attempt to reach those goals. It has been recommended that research be completed to understand the future education orientations and aspirations of African American adolescents.

*Family Protective Factors*

Family support and helpfulness also serve as a protective factor against externalizing and internalizing behaviors across multiple risk factors (Li et al., 2007). When risk was low, family helpfulness and support was a protective factor for internalizing symptoms, but this did not hold
true when risk was high. This reveals the importance of positive family communications as well as demonstrates that the quality of the interactions that adolescents have with their family may be more key than just being a part of a family (Li, et al., 2007). During this positive family communication, a discussion between the adolescent and parents should take place in order for the adolescent to understand the goals and aspirations that parents have set forth for them.

*Environmental Protective Factors*

The availability of external resources is also a powerful protective factor for adolescents. The availability of external support from teachers and other peer relationships, affect the attitudes and expectations that adolescents have toward school (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002). Relationships with teachers, parents, and peers’ parents are associated with students’ achievement as it relates to educational beliefs and academic performance (Wentzel, 1998). It is also well recognized that there are many human resources in the school (adults such as administrators, counselors etc.) that serve as supportive adults for adolescents.

In addition, availability of community resources has potential to diminish risk factors, such as exposure to violence and poverty that could be present in an adolescents’ life. Typically, communities that have resources available are supportive and caring in nature and hold high expectations for adolescents within their community (Benard, 1991). Availability of resources including child care, health care, education and job training are often lacking in communities that are plagued by poverty, which is the greatest risk factor for adolescents experiencing negative life outcomes (Benard, 1991). It is very important that resources within the community be available in order for adolescents to succeed academically and counter damaging risk factors.

*Parent Influence*
A supportive and involved parent is also a protective factor for African American adolescents (Gutman, 2003). When parents are involved in many aspects of their child’s life (school and extracurricular) the adolescents feels cared for and supported and is more likely to respond positively to life situations and develop positive outcomes. Research has suggested that if parents are actively involved in the educational careers of their adolescents, it is more likely that children will do their homework (Balli, Demo & Wedman, 1998), which is related to student achievement (Trautwein & Koller, 2003).

A study completed by Jeynes (2005) investigated the effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement of African American adolescents. As expected, the study concluded that having highly involved parents contributed to positive academic outcomes. According to Dauber and Epstein (1993), “parental involvement is important for children’s learning, attitudes about school and aspirations” (p.53). African American adolescents may feel that there is no reason to strive for educational attainment and academic goals if they are not receiving encouragement, support and guidance from parents.

Positive attitudes toward education from the parents also serve as protective factors. If parents convey to adolescents the importance of education and promote positive attitudes, the child is likely to achieve academically. Parent influence has also shown to be important concerning the creation of positive future education orientation (Kerpelman et al., 2008). Parents affect the interest and goals that children develop and also serve as role models for educational success as well as encourage adolescents in their abilities to accomplish educational goals. Parents should communicate values and goals that they have for their children concerning education and the positive outcomes from being educated. There is a positive association between the future expectations that adolescents hold for themselves and the parents education
level, perceived expectations that the parents have for their child and the message that parents communicate to their children concerning the importance of education (Nurmi, 1991). Wilson and Wilson (1992) also found that the degree to which there is educational support in the home will influence whether the child attends college and maternal expectations have an especially strong influence on adolescents’ educational attainment. If adolescents are not exposed to (verbally or by way of a role model) the value of education or future goals are not communicated with adolescents from parents, it may be difficult for adolescents to develop their own future education orientation. In addition, if they are able to develop a future education orientation, it may be skewed by what they are exposed to (media, deviant peers, etc.). Parental involvement and influence are crucial in a child’s educational success.

**Role Models**

Previous research has revealed that role models or having an individual in the life of an adolescent whom they can “admire” is associated with higher educational aspirations and motivation to achieve. A study conducted by Zirkel (2002) found that more important than having a role model who has achieved academically, it is important that adolescents have a same race, same gendered role model. These role models are able to provide adolescents with ideas of what is possible and the opportunities that are available to them being of a particular race and gender. The author argues that in order to understand adolescent motivations, we must understand the social and cultural context that adolescents (and their role models) live within (Zirkel, 2002). It may be difficult for an African American girl to understand her possibility of becoming a physician if she is not exposed to any female African American physicians. The findings from this study revealed that students (White and Black) that had matched race-gender role models had a greater investment in their educational outcomes. This was evidenced by the
fact that these students reported better academic performance, had more achievement related
goals and could verbalize those goals. These students were also more likely to think about their
futures and have an adult as an idol rather than a peer as a role model. The results from this study
reflect the importance of adolescents having a role model in their lives in order to encourage
goals. This study, however, looked at the influence of role models among an ethnically diverse
middle-class population rather than low-income African American adolescents. The availability
of role models and their role may be very different for this population.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy contributes to an adolescent’s future educational attainment and success.
Self-efficacy theory postulates that aspirations, behaviors and motivations are influenced by an
individual’s belief in their ability to complete the outcome (Bandura 1977). If adolescents do not
believe that they have the ability to complete their education, it compromises their motivations,
aspirations and current behavior. Increased self-efficacy contributes to higher expectations
concerning education and for African American students contributes to holding a firmer
commitment towards their educational goals (Kerpleman et al., 2008). Adolescents who
experience higher self-efficacy also set high and concrete goals and have logical steps in
attaining their goals (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck & Connell, 1998). These students understand
the efforts needed to accomplish their educational goals. When adolescents are encouraged with
positive messages, which boosts their confidence they believe they can complete a behavior
(perceived control) despite barriers and challenges, this leads to increased academic motivation
(Kerpelman et al., 2008).
Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity may also serve as a protective factor for African American adolescents. Ethnic identity has been defined by Jean Phinney (1992) as a “complex construct including a commitment and sense of belonging to a group, positive evaluation of the group, interest in and knowledge about the group and involvement in social activities of the group”. Brook and Phal (2005) found that in a sample of low-income African American adolescents, ethnic identity was a protective factor in early adulthood and those that had a high sense of ethnic identity were less likely to become involved in drug use and were less likely to become depressed. If African American adolescents feel connected to an ethnic group and feel as if their ethnic group values education, they have improved academic performance (Kerpleman, et al., 2008).

Gender Differences in Risk and Protective Factors

There may, however, be gender differences in factors that are associated with academic success for males and females. According to Connell et al. (1995) higher levels of adult support at home predicted males’ educational risk behavior. The more adult support males received at home, the less likely they were to engage in educationally risky behaviors, such as failing to turn in homework and school absenteeism. This pattern was not as prominent for African American females. Another study completed by Jeynes (2005) (a,b) found that when controlling for socioeconomic status, parents are more likely to be involved in the education of their African American daughters than the education of their African American sons. If these findings are true, it appears that African American males are slipping through the cracks and that they may need more support in order to successfully navigate through schooling. Furthermore, African American females have shown firmer intentions in their commitment towards education (including remaining in school and achieving higher grade point averages) (Saunders et al.,
2004). This may be related to African American females’ beliefs in their ability to attain their educational goals (educational self-efficacy).

There are also differences found concerning future education orientation. A study conducted by Kerpelman et al. (2008) investigated how self-efficacy, ethnic identity and perceived parental support were associated with future education orientation among African American adolescents. The study found that increased academic achievement was related to a higher future education orientation for African American females, but there was no relationship of these factors for African American males. If future education orientation is associated with academic success, African American males are at an increased risk for academic failure. It is especially important to understand the factors that will increase the likelihood of educational success, particularly for African American males who may be more enticed by the sports and the entertainment industries and less concerned with academics. Table 1 provides a summary of the risk and protective factors previously discussed.

Many of these studies, however, did not target the low-income population that is at an increased risk for poor academic outcomes. There are a number of factors that need to be addressed in order to increase the potential and likelihood that African American students will be successful in academic endeavors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Possible Risk Factors</th>
<th>Possible Protective Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem/Self Confidence</td>
<td>Low self-esteem/confidence</td>
<td>High self-esteem/confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class preparation</td>
<td>Poor class preparation</td>
<td>Successful class preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Pregnancy</td>
<td>Being pregnant as a teen</td>
<td>Not experiencing teen pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade point average</td>
<td>Low grade point average</td>
<td>High grade point average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline following the transition to high school</td>
<td>Unsuccessful transition</td>
<td>Successful transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future education orientation</td>
<td>Lack of future education orientation</td>
<td>Defined future education orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental mental illness</td>
<td>Presence of mental illness</td>
<td>Absence of mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Conflict</td>
<td>Presence of family conflict</td>
<td>Absence of family conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards education</td>
<td>Negative attitudes towards school and school completion</td>
<td>Positive attitudes toward school and school completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family stressor</td>
<td>Presence of family stressors (domestic violence and substance abuse)</td>
<td>Absence of family stressors (domestic violence and substance abuse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in poverty and household composition</td>
<td>Living in low-income areas and single parent household</td>
<td>Living in an affluent area and two parent household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family support and helpfulness</td>
<td>Absence of family support and helpfulness</td>
<td>Presence of family support and helpfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly Prepared Teachers</td>
<td>Poorly prepared teachers</td>
<td>Prepared teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of school resources</td>
<td>Unavailable school resources</td>
<td>Available school resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective School leaders</td>
<td>Ineffective school leaders</td>
<td>Effective school leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of community resources (e.g. child care and job training)</td>
<td>Unavailable community resources</td>
<td>Availability of community resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Barriers associated with educational attainment**

Research has been conducted in order to examine barriers that African American adolescents face concerning educational attainment. The popularly studied phenomenon of “acting white” may possibly be a barrier for African American adolescents particularly African
American males. This is the idea that some African American adolescents may feel that they are acting or will be perceived by their peers that they are “acting white” if they perform well in school (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). African American students counteract this burden by acting out in class, participating in sports (which are characterized as a primarily black domain), and performing poorly in school (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Additionally, if Black students do not see education as a means of social mobility, they are likely to withdraw from their academic goals (Ogbu, 1974). This may be a barrier that deters African American adolescents from achieving academically.

However, there may be an inverse relationship in students’ academic work and their participation in sports, particularly African American males. Students who do not keep their grades up are unable to participate in extracurricular sports. Perhaps those who do not meet the academic requirements are unable to participate in sports and may drop out of school. In a study completed by Hubbard (1999) examining the college aspirations of low-income African American students involved in a college preparatory program, findings suggest that African American females involved in the program planned to go to college and use it to obtain a career. All African American males in the study were also planning on attending college, but only until they could get their “big break” playing sports. It is crucial that the importance of education be conveyed to African American males without completely resting on participation in sports.

There is also a link between adolescents’ experiences with racial discrimination and academic outcomes such as academic curiosity, academic persistence, and academic performance. Neblett et al. (2006) examined how racial discrimination experiences affect African American students. Findings revealed that students that reported more racial discrimination experiences were less likely to be curious in the classroom, less likely to be
persistent in the face of academic challenges and tended to self-report lower grades. This suggests that frequent experience with racial discrimination is associated with poorer academic outcomes. This is often a chronic hassle that African American adolescents must cope with and it affects their educational beliefs and performance (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & L’Heureux Lewis, 2006).

Placement based on skills and abilities prior to high school can also be detrimental to the educational success of African American adolescents. African American children and low-income children are often placed on the “non-college track”. Ethnic minorities are disproportionately placed on lower tracks (15% of African Americans in the lower track, 36% of African American in the college preparatory track, compared to 11% and 46% for Caucasian students, respectively) (National Center of Education Statistics, 1997). Placement on a lower track has a negative effect on the education of adolescents namely their attitudes related to learning and achievement (Hallinan, 1988). Prior to being placed on a track, many African American students will begin to disengage, but if interventions are developed prior to the point of disengagement and the decline following the transition to high school, the educational experience of many African American students can be improved.

There are a number of risk factors that are interfering with the academic success of African American adolescents and protective factors that need to be strengthened in order to increase the likelihood of academic success. The Theory of Planned Behavior acts as a guide for understanding factors influencing educational success in the current study.

**Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behavior was developed as a modification of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbien, 1980). The rationale for developing the Theory of
Reasoned Action was to understand the relationship between attitudes and behaviors and to create a model in order to understand this connection. The Theory of Reasoned Action includes measures of attitudes as well as normative perceptions to determine behavioral intentions and behavioral outcomes. Later, the Theory of Planned Behavior added perceived behavioral control.

**Figure 1. Theory of Planned Behavior**

**Components of the Theory of Reasoned Action**

There are several components to the Theory of Reasoned Action. Within this model, behavior is a direct result of intentions. Intention is defined as the “perceived likelihood of performing a behavior” (Ajzen, 1985). Intention is a direct function of the attitude about the
behavior and the subjective norm associated with the behavior. In knowing the intentions motivating behavior interventions can be developed more effectively because the determinants motivating the intentions can be addressed before the behavior is performed.

Attitude refers to an overall evaluation of the behavior which can be directly measured and is composed of beliefs about the behavior and evaluation of the behavior. Beliefs about the behavior are the beliefs that the behavior performance is associated with certain attributes or outcomes (Ajzen, 1985). Evaluation of the behavior is composed of the values that are attached to a behavioral outcome or attribute (Ajzen, 1985). Both behavioral beliefs and evaluation about the behavior are indirectly measured in the model.

Subjective norms are beliefs about whether most people approve or disapprove of the behavior and this can also be directly measured. Subjective norms consist of normative beliefs and motivation to comply which are measured indirectly. Normative beliefs refer to the belief about whether each referent approves or disapproves of the behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Motivation to comply is motivation to adhere to what the referent thinks (Ajzen, 1985).

The Theory of Reasoned Action asserted that the most important determinant of a behavior is a person’s behavioral intention because intention directly influences behavior. The direct measures (attitudes and subjective norms) are more strongly associated with intentions and therefore better than the indirect measures (behavioral beliefs, evaluation of those beliefs, normative beliefs and motivation to comply) for predicting behavior (Ajzen, 1985). The theory also assumes that certain components are more strongly associated with certain behaviors than other components. Some behaviors are under complete attitudinal control while others are under complete subjective norm control. Some behaviors can also be found under attitudinal control in some populations while under complete subjective norm control in other populations.
What motivates an individual to engage in certain behaviors cannot be ignored. According to the theory, there are underlying reasons that determine an individual’s motivation to perform or to not perform a behavior. These reasons, which are made up of an individual’s behavioral and normative beliefs, determine their attitude as well as their subjective norms regarding the situation and this is regardless of whether their beliefs are logical or rationale (Ajzen, 1985). If an individual’s underlying motivations are illogical or irrational, their behavior may not be logical or rational consequently.

The Theory of Reasoned Action, however, does not take into account the degree to which the behavior is under volition in order to successfully predict behavior. Volitional control refers to the degree of control over the behavior an individual has in a given situation. A setback occurs in the theory when an individual is highly motivated to perform a behavior, but the behavior may not be performed due to environmental conditions that intervene (Ajzen, 1985). The Theory of Planned Behavior was developed in order to understand this situation.

**Theory of Planned Behavior: Adding Control**

The Theory of Planned Behavior expands upon the Theory of Reasoned Action to add another component that may affect behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This theory gives us an understanding of behavior when an individual does not have complete volitional control over a situation. This added component is an effort to account for factors outside of the individual’s control that may affect his or her intention or behavior. Components that were added to the Theory of Reasoned Action were perceived behavioral control, control beliefs and perceived power. Perceived behavioral control, which can be directly measured, is the overall measure of perceived control over a behavior and consists of control beliefs and perceived power. Control beliefs are measured indirectly and refer to the perceived likelihood of occurrence of each
facilitating or constraining condition (Ajzen, 1985). Perceived power is also an indirect measure and refers to the perceived effect of the condition in making behavioral performance difficult or easy (Ajzen, 1985).

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, behavior is determined by both motivation (intention) as well as ability (perceived behavioral control). The theory asserts that an individual will exert more effort to perform a behavior when his or her perceived behavioral control is high. There is an interplay between intentions and perceived behavioral control. Perception concerning behavioral performance along with behavioral intention is expected to have a direct effect on behavior, especially when perceived control over the situation is an accurate assessment of actual control over the situation (Ajzen, 1985).

**Global Constructs and Differentiated Constructs**

There are global constructs as well as differentiated constructs associated with the Theory of Planned Behavior. Distinctions have been found among the global constructs, as some of the variance in intentions is unexplained (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Sub-components, known as differentiated constructs, have been identified in order to better explain the variance within attitudes, normative values and volition (Ajzen, 2001). Attitude has been divided into affective attitude and instrumental attitude. Affective attitude refers to whether an individual likes or dislikes the behavior and instrumental attitude refers to whether an individual believes the behavior is beneficial. Subjective norms have been divided into descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Descriptive norms refers to whether the behavior is approved by important others and injunctive is whether the behavior is performed by important others. And volition has been divided into perceived controllability and self-efficacy. Perceived controllability is the extent that an individual has access to the means of control and self-efficacy is an individual’s situation
specific self-confidence for engaging in the behavior. These modifications to the Theory of Planned Behavior have been shown to better explain change in the global constructs. (Manstead & Van Eekelenm 1998).

Taken together the Theory of Planned Behavior (Figure 1) can be used to determine the behaviors of individuals taking into account their intentions which encompass a wide variety of components. It is also important to acknowledge the amount of control an individual has in any given situation. Effective interventions can be developed when there is an understanding of the many components that come into play when performing a behavior.

**Theory of Planned Behavior and Educational Attainment**

Figure 2 displays how educational attainment is related to the Theory of Planned Behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior will be used as a model to guide our understanding of educational attainment for African American adolescents rather than testing the model directly. The behavioral beliefs and outcomes that affect the educational attitudes that African American adolescents hold are influenced by the outcomes they feel are related to their educational performance as well as the value that adolescents attach to education. One reason there may appear to be a disconnect between intentions and behavior for African American adolescents is that they may not understand the importance of education because they do not understand the outcomes that are associated with education. Attitudes are formed through considering the possible consequences of completing a behavior. Therefore, positive attitudes are formed as a result of believing that a behavior will have positive outcomes (Davis, Johnson, Cribbs, & Saunders, 2002). The importance of education to the individual then affects the aspirations that they hold to complete high school and college and in turn affect their current educational performance.
The second component in understanding educational performance is subjective norms or social pressures. Subjective norms in this case would be how parents and referent others (teachers, peers and other significant adults in the life of the adolescents) view the importance of education. These subjective norms are influenced by whether referent others approve of educational attainment and the willingness of the adolescents to comply to these beliefs. This in turn effects the aspirations of adolescents and their educational performance. Another factor that may affect current educational performance of African American adolescents is that their parents or referent others do not convey the importance of education to the adolescents or adolescents are not motivated to acquiesce to those views.

A third component that affects the educational performance of African American adolescents is the belief about the ease/difficulty of attaining the educational aspirations that they have set forth. If adolescents perceive that it is very difficult for them to complete high school and attend college, they may believe that it is outside of their control to finish. Adolescents will exert more effort in terms of educational performance when their behavioral control is high; when they feel that completing high school and going on to college is within their control.

*An Added Component: The Social Context*

It is also important to note that adolescents live within a social context and this affects all aspects of their behaviors and intentions. Adolescents impact the social context and the social context impacts the individual. These social contexts that adolescents live within include systems (such as government and school), family, peers and other significant adults, and neighborhoods. These larger systems are associated with the attitudes and beliefs that adolescents as well as parents hold concerning education. Racism and discrimination are present within the larger social context and influence the academic achievement of adolescents (Neblett et al., 2006).
various social contexts in which adolescents live create stressors (such as domestic violence, lack of resources, etc.). Depending on the protective and risk factors that the individual possesses and the support received from the various social contexts, the adolescents may have positive developmental outcomes (such as graduating high school and attending college) or abnormal developmental outcomes (such as dropping out of high school).

Individual factors also affect how adolescents view the importance of education. The importance of education to the adolescents may be affected by their self-esteem and/or their ethnic identity. Both of these factors are constantly evolving and becoming more developed within the adolescent. Self-esteem and ethnic identity affect adolescents as well as what they feel that they can accomplish.

This is the point in which environmental factors are considered. If adolescents are residing in low-resource communities, they may feel that attaining future educational success is difficult due to lack of available resources such as inadequate schools, lack of jobs in the community as well as features that are often associated with low resourced communities often infested with crime and gangs (Jarrett, 1995). Neighborhood quality has also been linked to educational performance and school completion rates (Bowen, Bowen & Ware, 2002). A study completed by Ceballo et al. (2004) examined how neighborhood quality effects the educational aspiration of adolescents. The study found that for African American adolescents, having affluent neighbors was associated with placing a high value on education by viewing education as important and useful. This was associated with the adolescents putting forth more effort academically. Community and neighborhood quality can be a major education protective or risk factor for African American adolescents.
All of these factors (importance of education to the individual, how referent others view the importance of education, whether educational attainment is within their control and the social context) affect the intentions that African American adolescents have concerning educational aspiration and affect their current educational performance including class attendance and grades.

**Figure 2: Blended Model of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Educational Aspirations**

**Previous Research on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Education**

Previous literature supports the idea that the intentions, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavior control affect educational aspirations. A study conducted by Davis et al. (2002) examined the factors that influence African American adolescents to stay in school. Approximately 231 high school students in a Midwest school were surveyed in order to understand factors that are related to academic success. Attitudes toward completing school were
related to the students’ intentions to complete the school year. In this study, attitudes toward school were the best predictor of their intentions to stay in school. The students who perceived positive outcomes related to staying in school had the strongest intentions to stay in school. The authors suggest that “students must believe that they will receive a favorable return on their time and investment in school”. Therefore, adolescents must see some positive outcome as a result of their efforts in school. A perception of control over completing the school year was also related to the students’ intentions to complete school. If students felt that they could overcome challenges and barriers related to completing school, they had greater intentions of completing the school year. Although this study was conducted with high school students, it is important to examine the attitudes and intentions of adolescents at early ages in order to intervene and design programs that prepare adolescents to be successful in high school. It is also necessary to review the role of significant others, particularly parents who assist adolescents with developing goals and preparing for their future education. A survey was utilized to gather input from adolescents and interviews with the adolescents were not conducted.

The Theory of Planned Behavior also gives further credence to Ogbu’s oppositional culture explanation (1991). The oppositional culture explanation states that minorities do not perceive fewer rewards as well as fewer career opportunities associated with educational achievement. If African American adolescents perceive that there are fewer rewards associated with academic success and academic success is not necessarily linked to future occupational opportunities, their aspirations and current educational performance will reflect this. If African American adolescents cannot understand how their current educational performance has positive future outcomes, it will be difficult for them to value education. Roderick’s 2003 study revealed that even those African American males who had the academic skills, lacked self-efficacy and a
sense of future. This is further related to African American students not understanding the positive outcomes that are associated with academic performance. A study conducted by Brown and Jones (2004) showed that African American students who tended to think about their future were also able to perceive the usefulness and value of education. Furthermore, understanding education usefulness was related to students placing value on their current academic works and this was further reflected in their current grade point averages. The outcomes and values that these African American high school students place on education (understanding the usefulness of education) was related to the attitudes that they held toward school and related to intentions and was reflected in their current grade point average (their educational performance). This study, however, also lacked evaluation of significant others in the life of the adolescent and the social context in which adolescents live.

In contrast with other studies examining African American adolescents, the current study is targeting young low-income African American adolescents to understand their attitudes toward education, their assessment of significant others’ attitude towards education and perceived barriers and challenges. We believe that these factors contribute to their future educational success or failure. Early adolescence (prior to entering high school) is a critical period in which to intervene with this group. This study also employs a mixed-methods approach in order to assess the educational aspirations, goals and barriers of African American adolescents. This approach has been rarely utilized among researchers studying young low-income African American adolescents. Many of the studies that assess differences in educational outcomes and intentions are quantitative in nature and do not take into account additional matters that cannot typically be captured in survey measures. The information gathered from this study
can be used to develop interventions or enhance interventions that target African American adolescents.

**Context and Background**

A partnership was established with a local K-8 school in Wichita, Kansas to examine adolescents who were most at risk for school failure. This targeted population is exposed to multiple risk factors associated with substance abuse, family management problems, contact with local police as well as lack of a commitment to school which can potentially lead to low grades and high school dropout. Due to the composition of this low resource community, there is a lack of protective factors within the community. This particular area in Wichita is ranked third in the state for the percentage of households with children that have single parents, as well as the percentage of families in poverty, percentage of 5 to 17 year olds that are not enrolled in school and the percentage of 18 to 24 year olds who do not have a high school diploma (SMART tool data, 2000). There are also few protective factors in place for peers and individuals due to the limited resources that are available in this neighborhood. This project gathered information from the adolescents and describes the worldview as they see it. The elementary and middle school in this low-resourced community serves as a vehicle to gain access to the attitudes, beliefs and aspirations of the population.

The total population of Kansas as of 2010 was 2,853,118, with 727,239 adolescents under the age 18. The total child population was composed of 69% Caucasian, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 7% African American, 2% Asian, and 5.5% Other (Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, and mixed race). In 2010, 45.7% of students in Kansas qualified for free/reduced lunch (Kids Count Data Center, 2010).
The area school resides in a low-income neighborhood and services 377 students. The percentage of students that receive free/reduced lunch as of 2010 was 82.5% and the school population is composed of 67.4% African American, 24.7% Caucasian, 5.8% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, and 0.8% American Indian students. This school has a higher percentage of African American adolescents than the average Kansas school of 8%. The percent proficient and above goal for reading in the state of Kansas is 87.8%. For the targeted school, only 72.1% met this goal and only 64.4% of African Americans met this goal. The percent proficient and above goal for math in the State of Kansas is 86.7%. For the targeted school, only 57.9% met this goal and only 45.3% of African Americans met this goal. The percent of economically disadvantaged students in this building is 86.3% compared to 74.0% in the district and 47.6% on the state of Kansas (Kansas Department of Education, 2010).

To compare the outlook of these students to other students in Wichita, two schools, one predominately Hispanic (K-8) and one predominately African American (K-5), isl be examined (See Table 2) (Kansas Department of Education, 2010).

Table 2
Characteristics of select schools in Wichita, Kansas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Percent African American</th>
<th>Percent that qualify for free or reduced lunch</th>
<th>Percent of economically disadvantaged in building</th>
<th>Overall school % that met reading goal</th>
<th>% of African American students who met goal in school</th>
<th>Overall school % that met math goal</th>
<th>% of African American students who met goal in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas Schools</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target school (K-8)</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school (K-5)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school (K-8)</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent proficient and above goal for reading is 87.8%.
Percent proficient and above goal for math is 86.7%.

This school and community appear to be at an increased risk for impoverished conditions and lack the necessary resources to provide African American adolescents with the factors that contribute to success in their educational performance. Due to the lack of resources in this
community, academic failure for the adolescents that reside in this area is more likely than in other areas. This particular school and sample were chosen to be examined for this research for those reasons.

**Purpose**

This study used data from qualitative interviews and surveys to understand the educational intentions, attitudes, attitudes of significant others and perceived control (perceived barriers) among African American young adolescents. The quantitative research method used to assess educational intentions is a survey instrument. In order to gain a more complete and complex understanding of the educational intentions and beliefs of adolescents, it is necessary to utilize qualitative methodology, in particular content analysis. Qualitative research is conducted when we need a detailed understanding concerning an issue and involves a naturalistic, interpretative approach to the world (Creswell, 2007). This type of research is also conducted to empower individuals to share their stories and hear their voices. Qualitative research methods have become increasing utilized as a mode of collecting data in the social sciences (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Qualitative research “studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The collection of data should be sensitive to the individuals involved in the study and develop a complex description and interpretation of the problem and extend the literature surrounding the phenomenon.

In order to study this topic using content analysis, open-ended questions are asked to encourage participants to share their views and explore particular views that are important as expressed by them. The process includes working from raw data and developing larger categories that encapsulate the experience of the participants. For qualitative research it is
recommend that the sample size is directed by the research question until data saturation is obtained (Pope, Zieland & Mays, 2000).

Qualitative research is necessary in this project to hear the voices of adolescents as it relates to their academic goals and barriers to achieving those goals. Investigating the beliefs and attitudes of these adolescents at an early age is especially rich because their current age precedes when many larger educational issues occur such as school disengagement and dropout. In understanding their current outlook on education, it may be possible to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors and maladaptive outcomes. This study will examine the individual attitudes, attitudes of significant others and perceived barriers of adolescents living in Northeast Wichita. By interviewing the adolescents we can understand the social context in which adolescents live to better understand the factors that influence their behaviors. Much has been speculated as to possible barriers that African American adolescents face in achieving educational success, but it is important to understand the barriers that adolescents, themselves perceive, in terms of education.

Many studies have focused on the beginning of school transition (See Entwisle & Alexander, 1993 for a full review), but few have examined the transition for low-income African American males and females though a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is needed in this population and for this issue because it is unclear as to whether survey instruments can capture the differences between adolescents who are actively realistically thinking about educational attainment and those who are reporting unplanned, unrealistic goals. If we can assess whether adolescents understand the requirements needed to attain their educational goals and assess whether these goals are well thought out, interventions can be developed to assist adolescents. Also, if we can assess goals prior to placement on tracks in high school (educational careers and
vocational bound) (Kao & Thompson, 2003), we can improve academic performance and encourage a realistic and positive future education plan. By understanding factors that affect educational intentions, we can assist in providing educationally appropriate and beneficial materials to adolescents and meet adolescents where they are in their educational endeavors.

Furthermore, the majority of the previously described studies focused on an older population (high school students) and this study will assess young adolescents (middle school students) in order to gauge their goals and aspirations while they are still adapting their attitudes and goals related to education. During this time of adolescence students are in the early stages of developing their future education orientation and beginning to understand the importance of their schooling to their future success. This study is especially unique about the factors that affect educational issues in this particular population. This study is also collected in a Midwest sample of low-income African American students, which is different than information that is usually collected in low-income inner city areas. There may be something especially unique about the barriers that adolescents face in this particular population. The goal of this study is to understand the aspirations, goals and barriers of disadvantaged low-income African American adolescents as expressed by them to inform the literature in order to design effective educational interventions for this particular population.

A set of interview questions was developed to ascertain the aspirations and goals of these adolescents. By interviewing the adolescents we can better understand the factors that influence their behaviors.

**Research Questions**

How does the Theory of Planned Behavior apply to low-income African American adolescents as expressed by them?
a. What are the educational aspirations as expressed by African American adolescents?
b. What are the attitudes towards school as expressed by African American adolescents?
c. Do the beliefs and attitudes of significant others affect African Americans educational aspirations?
d. What are the perceived barriers and challenges as expressed by African American adolescents?

Table 3. Research Questions and Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question (Connection to the Theory of Planned Behavior)</th>
<th>Question from interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What are the attitudes toward school as expressed by African American adolescents? *(Attitudes toward school)* | Why do you go to school?  
How will it help you in the future? |
| Do the beliefs and attitudes of significant others affect African Americans educational aspirations? *(Significant Others)* | How do your parents view school?  
What do they expect from you? |
| What are the perceived barriers and challenges as expressed by African American adolescents? *(Perceived Behavioral Control)* | Do you think that you will go to college?  
Anything that will stop you from doing that? |
| What are the educational aspirations as expressed by African American adolescents? *(Intentions)* | Do you think that you will go to college? |

Bolded items are grand tour questions  
Not bolded items are sub questions

Hypotheses for the Quantitative Survey

**H01a.** African American adolescents, who have a high sense of ethnic identity, as measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, will have a higher reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised score.
H02. African American adolescents who have a higher reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised score will have higher current grades.

H02b. African American adolescents, who have a high reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised score will have higher future aspirations.

H02c. African American adolescents, who have a higher reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised score will have higher future expectations.
CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The current study utilizes a mixed methods multi-phased approach. Figure 3 provides details of this process. A combination of qualitative and quantitative information was collected in order to expand the existing knowledge concerning African American adolescents’ educational aspirations. An exploratory design was used with a greater emphasis on qualitative methodology. This data was collected independently and data analysis was completed sequentially because this study was a part of a larger study. Prior to the dissertation study beginning, data collection decisions had been made for the quantitative data. Data analysis was performed starting with the qualitative phase which was designed to explore factors that influence educational aspirations. The quantitative data was then used to complement and extend the qualitative findings.

Figure 3. Quantitative and qualitative methods application

Participants and Setting

A purposive sample occurs when participants are selected based on some characteristic (Patton, 1990). Purposive samples are able to inform an understanding of the phenomenon within a particular sub-population. For the purposes of this study, low-income African American middle
school students ages 11-14 were targeted. All participants were recruited from a local Wichita middle school, which has a high enrollment of African American students. Students live within one of the following zip codes: 67214, 67211, 67208 or 67219. These zip codes have some of the highest poverty and free/reduced lunch rates in the city (SmartTool data, 2000). Free/reduced lunch rates for Wichita, KS overall is 58.64%, while for this school 82.5% of their students qualify for free/reduced lunch (Kids Count Data Center, 2010).

For Phase I of this study, 15 interviews (9 females and 6 males) were conducted. Our sample included five 6th grade students, five 7th grade students and five 8th grade students. For Phase II of this study, 34 students (20 female and 14 male) were surveyed including all 15 of the students who were interviewed.

Collection of quantitative and qualitative data occurred independent of each other and quantitative data was collected subsequent to the qualitative information. Approval for this study was gained from all relevant Institutional Review Boards.

**Phase I**

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative study sample was a subsample of the quantitative sample. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the educational perspectives of adolescents. The topics discussed during the interviews included the educational aspirations of the adolescents, how school will benefit them in the future, how their parents and important others view education, individuals who want them to do well in school, if they admire anyone for how they performed in school and any barriers or challenges that may prevent them from obtaining educational goals (See Appendix A).

Instruments
Initially, drafts of the interview protocol were circulated among the research team members, edited, revised and combined with other questions in order to maximize participants comfort level and appropriate levels of disclosure. The interview protocol was then pilot tested with one student at the target school to assess the usability of the protocol. The pilot responses were purely procedural and were not included in this analysis.

Procedure

Students were interviewed one-on-one in a quiet location. The interviewers informed the participants of the purpose of the interviews and asked interviewees for their consent to record the interviews. Participants had the option to refuse participation in this study. Parental consent was obtained as part of the larger study prior to interviews being conducted. Once the interviewer began recording, the participant was given a piece of paper and a colored pencil and then instructed to make a timeline as to how they will see their lives in the next ten years. Interviewers were instructed to give the participants 5-10 minutes to complete their timeline and then discuss the timeline with the students (what events were on the timeline and events that were not on the timeline). The interviewers then proceeded with the interview questions. Some interview questions were mandatory to be asked (grand tour questions) and other questions were provided to the interviewers as follow-up questions if not answered in a previous response (sub-questions). After the interview was complete, interviewers were instructed to validate information heard during the interview with participants. Interviewers were also instructed to take personal notes and memos while conducting the interview in case information was needed at a later date.

Training and Description of Interviewers
The Behavioral Community Research and Action Team members were trained by the lead researcher following a pilot interview on interview protocol (See Appendix B) and conducting interviews. The research interview team consists of 4 African American females, 1 Caucasian female and 1 African American male. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 40 minutes and were audio recorded using a digital recorder and reviewed promptly.

Interviews were conducted with the students at the school that the students attend at the beginning of the school day between September 2011 and October 2011. All interviewers received training in qualitative methodology and interviewing skills. Prior to completing the interviews it was made certain that interviewers were familiar with the interview questions in order to conduct the interview in a conversational manner, ask appropriate follow-up questions and explore relevant topics raised by the adolescent. Interviewers practiced interview questions as well as debriefed each week with the lead researcher with any concerns or questions that they had concerning the interview questions and process.

Phase II
Quantitative Surveys

Instruments

In phase II, the participants completed a 98 item survey compiled by Dr. Rhonda Lewis from existing surveys (See Appendix D). The survey included the School Climate School, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R). Demographic information was also obtained. Surveys were administered to the adolescents at school during the school Spring semester by the Behavioral Community Research and Action Team (BCRAT). Participants took between 25 to
40 minutes to complete the surveys. If students needed assistance, there were adults available to answer any questions.

*School Climate Scale*

The School climate Scale created by Samdal, Wold, & Torsheim (1998) consisted of six items assessing how connected students feel to their school. The items include 1) “I feel I belong at this school”; 2) “Other students accept me as I am”; 3) “Our school is a nice place to be”; 4) “The students in my class enjoy being together”; 5) Most of the students in my class are kind and helpful” and; 6) “When I need extra help I can get it from my teacher”. Response categories for this scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has demonstrated reliability (α=.71) and validity (Vieno, Perkins, Smith & Santinello, 2005). For this sample Cronbach’s α was α=.861.

*Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (1965)*

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) consists of 10 items assessing self-esteem. Possible responses include strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Of the ten items, five items are positively worded (e.g. “On the whole I am satisfied with myself”) and five are negatively worded (e.g. “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure”). Several studies have confirmed the reliability and validity of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Silber & Tippett, 1965; Crandall, 1973; McCarthy & Hoge, 1982). For this sample Cronbach’s alpha was α=0.136. However, after removing item eight from the analysis (I wish I had more respect for myself), α increased to 0.867.

*Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)*

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure created by Jean Phinney (1992) is a fifteen item questionnaire that assesses an individuals’ affirmation and belonging to an ethnic group, ethnic
identity achievement and ethnic behaviors. Possible responses include strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire consists of identifying the individual’s ethnicity as well as the ethnicity of their parents and items such as “I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background” and “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions and customs”. This scale has been established as reliable and valid ($\alpha=.81$ for the high school population) (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts & Romero, 1999). For this sample Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha=.474$. However, after removing “I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to” from the analysis, $\alpha$ increased to 0.89.

*School Attitudes Assessment Survey-Revised*

The thirty-six item School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) (McCoach & Siegle, 2003) assessed school attitudes (including attitudes about teachers, school work, personal abilities, etc.). A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted in order to extract the variables that would best capture this factor. After completing the analysis, 12 items captured school attitudes for this population with a Cronbach’s $\alpha$ of 0.859 (now the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised). Possible responses included strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree. Table 4 provides a list of the questions that composed the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R).
Table 4. Questions that compose reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised

Doing well in school is important for my future career goals

Doing well in school is one of my goals

I am capable of getting straight A’s

I am intelligent

I am organized about my school work

I am smart in school

I can grasp complex concepts in school

I relate well with my teachers

I spend a lot of time on my school work

I use a variety of strategies to learn new material

I want to get good grades in school

Most of the teachers at this school are good teachers

Plan of Analysis

Qualitative Analysis: Data Reduction: Codes, Categories and Definitions

The main purpose of this analysis was to identify repeated themes that were addressed during the interviews (i.e. what are the themes that were expressed by African American adolescents concerning their educational attitudes, attitudes of significant others and barriers). Following interview collection, recorded interviews were transcribed by the Behavioral Research and Action Team and undergraduate assistants. The content of the interviews were analyzed by multiple members of the research team to determine common themes, concepts and meanings
that persist throughout interviews. Coding was understood as a process to determine overall themes.

According to Elo and Kygnas (2007), the data analysis approach for content analysis includes preparation, organizing and reporting. The preparation phase begins with selecting the unit of analysis (McCain 1998, Cavanagh, 1997). The unit of analysis for this study was classified as a question.

The organizing phase of content analysis includes open coding, creating categories and abstraction (Elo & Kygnas, 2007). The open coding process involves notes and headings that are written by the researcher as the text is read. This process is repetitive in which the coder rereads the content to describe all aspects of the information (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Headings are collected from the open coding process and categories are added to a coding sheet (Dey. 1993) and are freely generated (Burnard, 1991). Categories generated from the open coding process are grouped into higher order headings (Burnard, 1991). The purpose of grouping the data is to reduce the number of categories and create categories that provide a description of the phenomenon that will increase understanding and knowledge (Cavanagh, 1997). Finally, abstraction involves formulating a general description of the information through generation of categories (Polit & Beck 2004). During this process categories are named using “content-characteristic” words. Subcategories that are similar are grouped together as categories and categories are grouped as main categories (Dey, 1993).

Reporting includes describing in sufficient detail the process of the analysis so that readers are able to develop a clear understanding of how the analysis was carried out as well as strengths and weaknesses of the study. During this stage of the research, trustworthiness and
credibility should be established and inferences should be based on valid and reliable data. A link between the results and data should also be demonstrated (Polit & Beck, 2004).

First, the coding team determined what was classified as a meaningful unit to be coded (general themes). The lead researcher (Felecia Lee) then read through the interview transcripts creating headings through repetitive readings. To develop codes grounded in the participants’ responses, the research team studied a transcript from the pilot interview and together developed a start list of codes and definitions based on themes that emerged to inform the general research questions through open coding. This start list of codes was used to code the remaining transcripts and was revised, when necessary, to reflect the major themes represented in the interviews. Later, content-characteristic headings were used to describe the themes. Cohen’s kappa was ascertained in order to ensure inter-rater reliability (Table 6 in Results).

Five general codes were used to inform the research questions in this study. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Educational Attainment, I developed additional categories to represent variations within each code. Coding into additional categories was based on independent judgment and consensus of raters. The general codes and definitions are provided in Table 5. General codes used in the study include adolescents attitude toward education (reflecting the importance that the adolescent places on education), significant others beliefs and attitudes toward education (reflecting whether the educational beliefs and attitudes of others are conveyed to adolescents and influence the adolescent), perceived control/perceived barriers in attaining educational desires (reflecting whether attaining goals are within the adolescent’s control) and the adolescents goals (reflecting whether the adolescent had clear and realistic goals).
Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS 19. Due to the small sample size, univariate analyses were completed first in order to check for consistency with adolescents answers. The process included calculation of means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages of how the students felt about education, their current educational performance and effort. Correlational analyses were then completed exploring the relationships between the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) measure as well as future aspirations and future expectations. The reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) measure was also analyzed in conjunction with current grades and future aspirations and expectations through correlational analysis.
### General Code/Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescent attitude towards education</strong></td>
<td>The importance that the adolescent places on education. Includes the value (or lack thereof) and outcomes related to education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive attitudes (1A)</strong></td>
<td>Adolescent conveyed importance of education and discussed how it will assist them in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative/No attitude (1B)</strong></td>
<td>Adolescent was unable to list why education was important for them and could not describe how it will assist them in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significant others beliefs and attitudes toward education</strong></td>
<td>The importance that significant others in the life of the adolescent place on education. Includes the adolescent's willingness to comply with those beliefs and whether this is conveyed to the adolescent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presence of significant others who convey the importance of education (2A)</strong></td>
<td>Adolescent discussed how others have communicated the importance of education and/or educational opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absence of significant others who convey the importance of education (2B)</strong></td>
<td>Adolescent did not identify anyone who has conveyed the importance of education to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Control/Perceived Barriers in attaining educational desires</strong></td>
<td>Whether attaining their educational goals was within the control of the adolescent. Includes the ease or difficulty in attaining those goals and possible barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within the adolescents control/perceived barriers (3A)</strong></td>
<td>Adolescent discussed potential barriers, described how those barriers could be overcome and took personal responsibility for performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outside of the adolescents control/could not perceived barriers (3B)</strong></td>
<td>Adolescent could not describe barriers to educational attainment and believed that other factors (e.g. teachers not liking them) as reasons for poor performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescent Goals</strong></td>
<td>All educational goals of the adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clear and Realistic Goals (4A)</strong></td>
<td>One or two goals seriously considered by the adolescent and expressed an understanding of attaining the goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not clearly defined and unrealistic (4B)</strong></td>
<td>A broad list of possible goals or no list of goals discussed by the adolescent and did not understand the necessary steps in attaining those goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Significant Others includes parents, relatives, peers, teachers, other adults in the life of the adolescent.*

### Role Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Model</th>
<th>Someone the adolescent admires in terms of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, an adult (5A)</td>
<td>Could name an adult role model in terms of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a peer (5B)</td>
<td>Could name a peer role model in terms of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (5C)</td>
<td>Could not name a role model in terms of education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

Qualitative Results

In the context of these interviews, adolescents described many of the desires and aspirations that they had for their future. The adolescents spoke of their goals, the importance of education, whether significant others (parents, peers, relatives, teachers, etc.) conveyed the importance of education to them, barriers or challenges that adolescents faced in completing their educational aspirations, and whether the adolescents had any role models in terms of education. The qualitative data will incorporate the Theory of Planned Behavior and educational attainment.

For qualitative analyses in order to ensure credibility and confirmability among the transferring of information from the participant to the researcher. For the purposes of qualitative methodology, dependability must be ensured rather than generalizability by quantitative terms. Dependability makes certain that the results are accurate from the perspective of the participants, but understands that results will be subject to change and instability (Creswell, 2007). Also, credibility will be established with the data through triangulation, using self-reported survey data, interviews and school records. In order to ensure dependability, internal member checks were completed during the interview process and kappa scores were obtained to check accuracy across coders. Validation of the data ensures accuracy and was gained by digitally viewing interviews in a timely manner, collecting the memoing and field notes of the interviewers as well as providing a rich and thick description of the participants’ experience that allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability. By providing a rich and thick description to the reader, the author enables readers to transfer information to other settings based on shared characteristics (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993).
Cohen’s Kappa was obtained in order to ensure interrater reliability. The highest kappa was obtained between coder 2 and coder 4. The interrater reliability for the coders was found to be a Kappa = .748 (p<.001), 95% CI (.63, .87). The weakest kappa was between coders 3 and 4, Kappa = .567 (p<.001), 95% CI (.44, .70) (See Table 6). Coder 3 maintained a low level of agreement with all other coders. Additional interrater reliability was conducted after coders met to discuss conflicts in coding. Twenty percent of the sample was recoded after this discussion and the kappa score reached .81. According to Landis & Koch (1977), kappa values above .61 represent a substantial agreement between the coders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
<th>Kappa</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder 1</td>
<td>Coder 2</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
<td>0.53976</td>
<td>0.81024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder 1</td>
<td>Coder 3</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
<td>0.46144</td>
<td>0.70056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder 1</td>
<td>Coder 4</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
<td>0.57436</td>
<td>0.80564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder 2</td>
<td>Coder 3</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
<td>0.44988</td>
<td>0.73212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder 2</td>
<td>Coder 4</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
<td>0.6304</td>
<td>0.8656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder 3</td>
<td>Coder 4</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td>&gt;0.001</td>
<td>0.43764</td>
<td>0.69636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

What are the educational aspirations as expressed by African American adolescents? (Do you think you will go to college?)

In order to encourage adolescents to think long-term, one of the first questions asked of them during the interview was what they wanted to be when they grew up. This question was used to understand the educational aspirations of adolescents in terms of long-term career outcomes and ascertain whether adolescents understood the educational requirements for their career goal. Among the statements about their career goals, every adolescent mentioned at least one career goal. These career goals reflected healthcare providers (doctor, veterinarian),
engineering (architectural), and the arts (a singer). Some adolescents seemed fairly clear about their future career goals. One of the 7th grade females responded:

Interviewer: So you are going to start college when you are 18 and what do you want to do while you are in college? What do you want to get a degree in?
P: Umm…Medical
Interviewer: Medicine? You want to be a doctor?
P: Yeah
Interviewer: Any certain type of doctor?
P: An X-ray tech. I want to do sonograms.

Among those who had clearly defined goals (n=9), some expressed an understanding of the requirements to reach their goals and others did not. As an example to reflect the understanding of requirements in order to reach goals a 7th grade female stated:

P: Then in the twelfth grade I am going to graduate.
Interviewer: Yay. And then after 12th grade what are you going to do?
P: College
Interviewer: How long do you think you will have to go to do animation?
P: Well, my grandma said seeing how the economy is right now I need to go to a Master's.
Interviewer: Uh huh. Do you know how long that will take to get your Master's.
P: Eight years

There was also a small set of the students (n=4) who expressed not only clear requirements but also stated how they would obtain those requirements such as attaining scholarships and remaining engaged in school. Below is an example from a 6th grade female.

P: What's that called when you sign up for scholarships in the 9th grade?
Interviewer: When you sign up for scholarships?
P: Yeah, like they said you earn, like applying for colleges early in 9th grade is important.

This student was also involved in extracurricular activities as well as taking honors and advanced courses. She was in the early process of setting up her academic future. She had concrete ideas concerning her future and understood potential barriers and ways to overcome them.
In contrast, others who had clearly defined goals did not express the understanding of requirements to be fulfilled to reach their goal (n=6). The following statement is made by a 7th grade female desiring to be an X-Ray technician. Although it seems that she is clear on what she wants (she didn’t just state doctor, but was specific about her goal), she was unaware about the process (needing to get a bachelor’s degree in a related medical field, how long schooling would take, etc.).

Interviewer: Where do you think you will go to college?
P: Princeton.
Interviewer: Okay. How long do you think you will be in college to do that (be an X-ray technician)?
P: Like I think 20 years.
Interviewer: Because you will like do 4 years to get your Bachelors and then do you know what you would get your bachelors in? Your first degree.
P: I don’t know
Interviewer: Probably something like biology or something like that. And then you would have to go how much longer?
P: I guess 4 years in med school… Umm 4 years to get my bachelor’s degree.
Interviewer: Yep. When you are 22. That sounds right on time. So ummm…when do you think you will start applying to college? Specifically Princeton?
P: I don’t know. Probably 16.
Interviewer: When you are 16? And you are going to start looking for scholarships and stuff like that?
P: Yeah
Interviewer: Do you know the other things that you will need to do to get into Princeton?
P: Not really. Get good grades.

From the raw data, it appears that two different types of thinking exist within this population. There are individuals who have concrete, realistic patterns of thinking and plans for the future and those who have ideas for what they want in the future, but may not be as clear on the requirements and have unrealistic expectations. These patterns will be explored further within the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior.

How do individual attitudes, attitudes of significant others and perceived barriers contribute to adolescent intentions and behavior?
Two patterns of behavior and attitude emerged from this data. There were intentional thinkers and unintentional thinkers. In this sample, of the 15 interviews completed, 9 were classified as intentional thinkers and 6 were classified as unintentional thinkers. The intentional thinkers were likely to be older (of the 9 intentional thinkers, 4 of them were in the 8th grade, 3 in the 7th grade and 2 in the 6th grade) and tended to be female (6 females and 3 males). The overall grand point average of the intentional thinkers was 3.25 and for the unintentional thinkers was 2.57. Figure 4 provides a depiction of the profile of an Intentional thinker and Unintentional thinker.

**Figure 4. Profile of Intentional and Unintentional Thinkers**

**Profile of the Intentional thinker**

Intentional thinkers had clear and realistic goals and understood the requirements for meeting those goals. Some of them were thinking about applying for scholarships, many of them were preparing for college in some way now (involved in extracurricular activities, taking
advanced courses, etc.). Some of these adolescents also tended to have alternative paths in case one did not work out (singer or basketball player, lawyer or doctor). The following is a statement made by one 7th grade female:

Interviewer: Umm and I just asked you what you think you may want to be in 10 years right? And you said what?
P: Singer!
Interviewer: A singer. You still singing right?
P: Yea. Well or play basketball.
Interviewer: Or play basketball? Ok anything else?
P: No.

The adolescent then went on to describe both career progressions via the timeline and describe the educational trajectory for both careers.

Attitude toward school

Those who were identified as intentional thinkers tended to have positive attitudes towards school. These adolescents were able to see the positive outcomes and value of education. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, we know that the value and outcomes that adolescents associate with their education is directly related to their attitude toward school and affects their intentions to complete schooling and intentions directly affects their current performance. Intentional thinkers understood that what they do now affects what they are able to do later in life.

Interviewer: So, I guess, what, how do you think going to school right now is going to help you in the future?
P: Right now you are basically learning what you are gonna learn in the future but it’s gonna be more advanced than what it is now. And you have to learn the simple stuff so that you can learn the big stuff. (8th grade female)

Below is another statement from a 7th grade female.

Interviewer: Um, so why do you go to school?
P: To learn.
Interviewer: To learn, ok.
P: And it gives you lifelong points. Like, math, that’s really important because all the
time in your life you will have to use math. And reading you will have to read all your
life. And it will be important for all your life.

She was able to process and articulate that the abilities and skills that she learned in school now
would assist her in other areas of her life. This example demonstrates the adolescents’
understanding of the long-term benefits that are associated with completing school. This
adolescent is aware that schooling will be important to future endeavors. While she was not able
to state how mathematics would directly apply to her later career, the example below provided
by an 8th grade male specifically described the value that he saw in education and how education
will affect his future.

Interviewer: Ok, um, so why do you go to school?
P: To get my education.
Interviewer: And why is that important to you?
P: Cause if I don’t get my education I won’t be able to do nothing. Like, I won’t, don’t
have none, like, when I grow up I want to be an engineer and I won’t be able to be an
engineer without learning. And math and stuff.
Interviewer: How will going to school, how’s going to school gonna help you with your
future?
P: It’s going to help me to get where I need to be to be an engineer. And math and
reading and social studies and science, is gonna help me be what I want to be when I
grow up.

He saw the personal value in completing his education (as referenced by knowing that he will be
unable to become an engineer without learning mathematics) and knows the courses necessary to
reach that goal and the importance of the courses for attaining future goals.

Other students (n=3) provided examples of why education is important based on what
family has discussed with them. This was shared by a 6th grade female. This example
demonstrates her personal investment in her education and how the values of her family have
been instilled in her concerning the importance of education. She understands how her current
and future grades are related to college entrance. She values her current learning and education because she can see how it will affect her later educational outcomes.

Interviewer: Um do you think that makes her (mother) have, have stricter expectations or do you think she’ll understanding that B’s happen.
P: Stricter expectations. She said anything lower than a B is unacceptable.
Interviewer: Ok, and how do you feel about that?
P: I feel the same way because I wouldn’t settle for a C, D, or F because that means you’re not gonna get as good as, like.
Interviewer: Grade point average?
P: Ya, and you won’t be able to get into as good of a college as you want to.

She has an understanding that her performance in middle school will have an effect on her abilities to reach goals later in life.

All of these adolescents demonstrated a positive attitude toward school and understood the value of education and the potential outcomes in the future. These adolescents also understood that they were gaining a skill set and abilities in school that would assist them in their future endeavors. The intentions that they had for their future were clear and realistic and contributed to their positive attitudes toward school.

**Attitudes of Significant Others**

The attitudes and beliefs that parents, peers and significant others hold toward education influence the attitudes and beliefs that the adolescent holds. Again, parents are crucial for instilling a future education orientation into their adolescents. Intentional thinkers have others who view education as important and the adolescents are motivated to comply with these significant figures. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, we know that normative beliefs about education and an adolescents motivation to comply is directly related to the subjective norms that individuals possesses and affects their intentions to complete schooling and directly affects their current educational behaviors.
The importance of education was expressed in many different ways to the adolescents. Below is an example from a 7th grade female who explains that her teachers have described to her that there is scholarship money. It appears that she has individuals in her life who encourage higher education and encourage her to do well in school.

P: And it’s a really good example of being a friend and responsible and I want to be like her. And there’s this girl, her name was X. Last year she got a scholarship and she’s just now in high school. I want to be like that where you are able to get scholarships before you get out because then you can work harder in high school. And, you know, there’s my third hour teacher said there is just scholarships piling up with money and people don’t get them. And it’s just like there’s money out there waiting for you or somebody else.

Another adolescent who was classified as an intentional thinker identified a family member who conveyed how important education was to them. This significant other was able to influence the adolescent’s views concerning education. The adolescent states that her education would not be as important to her if it was not important to her grandmother (8th grade female).

Interviewer: Yeah. How does she (her grandmother) view education?
P: She views it as like just as important as I do but she says its…she thinks it’s bigger than what we all think it is. I don't really know from her point of view but she says that we are definitely going to need…we cannot survive without education.

(Later during the same interview)

Interviewer: So she sees education as very important?
P: Yes
Interviewer: You think that affects how you see education?
P: Yeah
Interviewer: Yeah. So if she didn't think it was important..
P: Well I guess I would still find it important but not as important as I think it is now.

The example below was shared by a 6th grade female.

Interviewer: Ok, um, how do your parents view you going to school?
P: My parents view it as a good thing. They show that they care about school and that I want to have a good life when I make it to college.
Interviewer: Ok, anything else they expect from you other than having a better life and going to college?
P: Good grades. No trouble at school and um, just to, just what I just said about getting good grades and staying out of trouble.
This adolescent expressed that her parents show that they cared about school and that school is the way to attend college and thereby have a good life. It seems that her parents have discussed with her that in order to be successful, she must do well in school. This same student was later asked about any additional significant others besides her parents that want her to do well in school. She responded that her whole family wanted her to do well in school. She suggests that her family members have discussed many school failures they have had to combat and encourage her at such a young age to do well in school and avoid mistakes that they made.

Interviewer: Ok, um, so you kinda mentioned how your parents want you to do well in school. Are there other people in your life that want you to do well?  
P: My whole family.  
Interviewer: Ok, how do you know this?  
P: Because they tell me that they don’t want me to make the same mistake they did and to do right in school.  
Interviewer: Ok, so because they learned from their mistakes they just don’t want you to repeat them?  
P: Yes.

Another student (8th grade male) explains how his family motivates and encourages him to do well in school.

Interviewer: Ok. So what do the people in your family expect from you in school?  
P: My older sister, um, she always says I need to stop playing around and horse playing in school. Just to get my work done.  
Interviewer: Mhm.  
P: Ya, that’s what she said.  
Interviewer: Does anybody else tell you how they feel about school?  
P: No, they try to help me with my work sometimes.  
Interviewer: Good.  
P: Ya, just a little bit.  
Interviewer: So are there people in your life that want you to do well in school?  
P: Ya.  
Interviewer: Who?  
P: My step-dad, my mom and my sisters.  
Interviewer: And how do they tell you they want you to do well in school?  
P: Well, one of them, they try to, they try to motivate me to do my work and stuff. So I can make better grades.  
Interviewer: What do you mean motivate? How do they motivate you?
P: They like play games, like flash cards or whatever like when I have a test or something they have flash cards that we have a sign on the back of them and the definition on the other side.
Interviewer: Mhm.
P: And I got to try and guess it right, like, having fun with it. Instead of just, just doing it and it being boring.

This adolescent seems to have a strong support system within his family structure that encourages him to do well in school. This family also demonstrates a protective factor that is associated with academic success, which is family helpfulness and support. He has family members telling him how to behave in school in order to receive a good education (“stop horse playing and get your school work done”) and other family members who assist him with his homework and try to make his school work a fun activity (flashcards). Through their actions, his family is able to communicate the importance of receiving a good education.

All of these adolescents identified significant others who have expressed to them the importance of education. The adolescents described many ways in which family and teachers have communicated the opportunities of future education. The intentions that they had for their future were clear and realistic and were established with the assistance of significant others.

Perceived Barriers

Intentional thinkers also believe that educational attainment is within their control. For this analysis, barriers and challenges were categorized by whether the adolescent described any barriers or challenges and adolescents who did not identify any barriers or challenges. Intentional thinkers could see the ease of attaining their educational goals. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior we know that the perceived ease or difficulty of a given situation is directly related to their perceived control which is directly related to their intentions to complete schooling and their current educational performance. Intentional thinkers could think of barriers and ways to overcome them.
Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think there is going to be challenges or things that ummm could keep you from being successful?
P: Umm…there might be some. Like but I think I could overcome it though.
Interviewer: You think you can overcome it? Like what are those challenges you feel?
P: Like people trying to hold you back. Like saying you can’t do things and like but you have to overcome that and know that you can do it.

Another 7th grade female describes another barrier for attending college.

P: I thought they said when applying for big one's (colleges) they don't just like look at GPA's. They look for what else you did like extracurricular.
Interviewer: Yeah…
P: So yeah
Interviewer: So what are you thinking for extracurricular?
P: I could probably put this down, manager (for volleyball) and if I do volleyball or track I could put that down.
Interviewer: Mm hmm
P: I also do all city.
Interviewer: Okay. Do you know what honors classes are?
P: Like for advanced.
Interviewer: Yeah. You can take honors and advanced placement classes
P: I have one advanced placement class here.

Only two students (a 7th and 8th grade female) truly discussed the financial barriers of completing their education.

P: I don’t know it’s really if I have the money to. It depends if I get a scholarship and I really want to try and get a scholarship because with conferences with my main classes up here I have one B and the rest are As.

This student was also able to discuss other challenges and barriers that may inhibit them from obtaining their goal and were currently and actively overcoming potential barriers.

As for those who did not mention financial barriers (n=7), it is important to determine if they have not thought of finances being a barrier or if they have not thought far enough into their future to even begin to describe potential barriers.

Several students (n=7) also stated that receiving a good education was within their personal control. They stated that they did not allow others to distract them and their grades were
good because they paid attention in class. These students were actively combating issues that could lead to school failure. One of the 6th grade male students responded with the following:

   Interviewer: So, how do you feel about school?
   P: Great.
   Interviewer: Great. So are you getting good grades?
   P: Mhm.
   Interviewer: Why?
   P: Uh, cause I pay attention and I ask questions to more, to learn more about it.

Another 7th grade female student responded:

   Interviewer: Ok, um, how are your grades right now?
   P: Good, I have all A’s and B’s.
   Interviewer: That’s awesome. Why are your grades so good?
   P: Because I focus a lot in class and turn things in on time.

While others attribute their school failing to outside factors, this adolescent was able to take responsibility for her education. She mentioned two important contributors to why her grades are good: 1) focusing in class and 2) turning her assignments in on time. She understands that you cannot expect good grades without putting in the effort and this was within her control.

   This construct of the Theory of Planned Behavior within this sample was the most inconsistent. Some of those who were intentional thinkers on other constructs (attitudes and significant others), did not describe barriers in obtaining their education goals (the third construct). This could be because intentional thinkers have realistically thought about any potential barriers and are confident in their ability to overcome the challenges.

   The current behavior of these adolescents was also assessed by attaining their grade transcripts for the previous year (Spring 2011-Fall 2011). Those who were identified as intentional thinkers had a higher overall grade point average for the year (3.25 compared to the unintentional thinkers GPA of 2.57).

Profile of the Unintentional thinker
Unintentional thinkers tended to have unrealistic expectations about college including the length of time necessary in order to complete their education and the type of schooling necessary to complete their desired career goals. Many of the students (n=6) could not articulate the steps needed in order to complete their education (e.g. standardized testing: ACT, SAT, finishing high school, applying for college, etc.). Many believed only good grades are needed in order to gain entry and attend the Ivy League schools that they mentioned. However, often more is required in terms of school engagement (honors, AP classes, extracurricular activities and societies, etc.). Several participants stated that they wanted to attend Princeton, Dartmouth and, Harvard, but these schools were often not in line with their career goals (singer, chef, etc.). When further asked why they chose these particular schools, participants stated “they heard it was a good school” or “it was a big school”. This may be related to an unclear future education orientation which includes clear expectations about future educational goals. Overall, this group of adolescents seemed to be much less clear concerning the progression of their educational careers.

Attitudes of Individuals

Those who were identified as unintentional thinkers, tended to have a negative attitude (“I don’t like my classes or school”) or no attitude (“I go because I have to”) towards school. These adolescents were unable to see the positive outcomes and value of education. Unintentional thinkers did not understand that the education that they are receiving now is related to later life outcomes. Below is an example provided by one of the 6th grade male students:

Interviewer: You like to help people? Okay, that’s a good quality to have in a doctor. Ummm. So why do you go to school?
P: So I can be successful in life.
Interviewer: How will that (school) help you be successful?
P: I don’t know. I am just supposed to go.
Many of the students that had a negative or no attitude towards school stated that they knew school would help them be successful, but when further probed and asked how, students were unable to articulate what skills or experiences in school were going to assist them in future success. The response to this question many times by the unintentional thinkers seemed to be a result of social desirability (I need to say school will help me later). These adolescents could not see the value of education and how their future life outcomes hinge on their current education. When asked if there were any personal reasons why they go to school or how their education now is related to their future life outcomes responses were, “no” and “I don’t know”. If adolescents are unable to see the value of education or understand how their current education is related to their future, their attitudes toward school are most likely negative.

**Attitude of Significant Others**

Unintentional thinkers were less likely to report that they had significant others in their lives that discussed education with them. The fact that these adolescents did not have others in their lives assisting them in establishing their future education orientation may contribute to why they had unclear and unrealistic educational expectations. This lack of conversation and discussion concerning education affects the intentions that adolescents have for completion of schooling and their current academic performance. When asked whether anyone had discussed with him how important his education was, a 6th grade male responded “Not really. Just that I have to go”. If students do not appreciate and comprehend the value of school, their intentions and behavior will reflect that.

These adolescents were not able to state that their parents had discussed the importance of education with them or were likely to state that this had been conveyed in a maladaptive manner (such as “they yell at me”). Also, many students stated that their parents want them to go
to school (n=6), but what information and goals concerning education are parents conveying to their children if only telling them they must go to school. A discussion and dialogue is needed to take place between adolescents and parents in order for them to really understand the value of education. When asked how your parents view school, one 6th grade female replied, “I don’t know”. When a 7th grade male was asked how his parents viewed school he responded “that I should go every day”. The student was later asked what his parents expected from him concerning school and he stated that “he didn’t know”. When further probed as to whether they expected a certain grade point average from him he said no.

This lack of conversation or the fact that students are not remembering this conversation is not helpful in instilling positive educational goals and aspirations into the adolescent. Either the adolescents is not motivated to comply with the desires or attitudes of their parents, they are not hearing what their parent believe concerning school or their parents are not properly conveying how important their education is for their future. As previously described, the future education orientation of adolescents is shaped by the information that they receive from their parents and other invested adults and the goals these adults have set forth for them.

Perceived Barriers

In addition, unintentional thinkers did not believe that educational attainment was in their control. These adolescents tended to ascribe their current educational performance to outside influences (e.g. “I am not getting a good grade in that class because the teacher does not like me”). Interestingly, however, these adolescents were often unable to describe any barriers that could hinder their future education goals. Again, the reason for this finding could be because unintentional thinkers have not thought as extensively about their future. Another explanation is that they may have a skewed future education orientation due to lack of discussion with
significant others or absence of a role model. Typically when asked if anything could hinder their educational goals, these adolescents simply stated “nope”. When asked if there were going to be challenges to attending Dartmouth to pursue a medical degree, a 7th grade female shared the following.

Interviewer: Good. Are there challenges or barriers that would keep you from doing well in school?
P: No, I don’t think so.

Some students attributed their school failures to outside factors (n=4). They indicated barriers associated with their academic failure were outside of their control. When asked to describe why his grades were not better in one class, a 7th grade male student said “she don’t like me”. He was unwilling to take responsibility for not doing well in the class and believed that it was out of his control. Believing educational success is within their control and they have the ability to attain their goals, plays into intentions to be successful in school and currently achieving in school.

The current behavior of unintentional thinkers was also assessed by attaining their grade transcripts for the previous year (Spring 2011-Fall 2011). The overall grade point average for unintentional thinkers was 2.57 (as compared with the intentional thinkers having a GPA of 3.25).

These profiles did not hold true for all participants in all situations. Some had negative attitudes towards school, and did not understand the value as related to future success, however, had significant others who conveyed the importance of education to them (n=2). There are other factors (possibly in the social context) that are affecting their current behaviors. However, within this population most participants fell into the two profiles of an Intentional or Unintentional thinker.
Secondary Coding and Findings

Role models
An additional code of interest was the presence or absence of a role model. This code was later added to the analysis because as coding progressed the coders believed that role models in terms of education could be a contributing factor beyond just the significant others attitudes and beliefs as prescribed by the Theory of Planned Behavior. The presence or absence of a role model was divided into three sub-codes: a role model was present in terms of education and that role model was an adult, a role model was present in terms of education and that role model was a peer or there was no role model available in terms of education. The majority of the adolescents in this sample (n=11) reported not having a role model in terms of education regardless of intentional/unintentional grouping. Those who did report having a role model (n=4), however, were more likely to be in the intentional group (n=3).

Of those who did report role models in terms of education three reported an adult role model. Below is a statement that was shared by a female 6th grade student:

Interviewer: Um, is there someone you look up to?
P: Yes.
Interviewer: Who is it?
P: My dad.
Interviewer: Why?
P: Because he’s going to medical school as well. But he stopped and went to Oklahoma for, um, a job.
Interviewer: Ok, um, so he’s your role model because he does well in school?
P: Yes.

Of those who did report role models in terms of education only one reported a peer role model. In analyzing this data it was important to distinguish between those who had reported an adult versus a peer role model. As evidenced below, the reasons that a peer is a role model is very different than why an adult is a role model.

Interviewer: No? You don’t look up to anyone for school? It’s all in you.
P: I kinda look up to X. My friend X because she gets A’s all year. I think she had a 4.0 all year.
Interviewer: Uh huh. So you look up to her?
P: Uh Huh
Interviewer: What are the things that she does that you look up to? Besides getting a 4.0. How did she get that 4.0 that made you look up to her?
P: She like studies all of the time, and reads a lot…

Many of the role models that were named were parents and the most common response when asked why their parents were role models was that they took care of them. Further investigation needs to be completed in order to determine the presence of role models in terms of academics in the lives of African American adolescents and how that affects their future educational aspirations.

**Quantitative Analyses**

The goal of the quantitative survey analysis was to amplify and expand the qualitative findings as well as gauge if there seems to be a disconnect between the goals of the adolescents as expressed through the interviews and their self-reported school performance.

**Ho1a**: *African American adolescents who have a high sense of ethnic identity, as measured by the MEIM, will score higher on the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R).*

School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R)

Prior to compiling the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) measure into one construct, frequency analyses were conducted on items separately.

Most (97.1%) of the adolescents reported that “doing well in school is important to my future goals”. They also reported that doing well in school is one of their goals (97.1%). However, consistent with previous research findings, not all reported they expended the effort necessary to achieve good grades and do well in school. Only 79.4% of the students reported
completing their school work and 67.6% reported spending a lot of time on their schoolwork. Although this is not the same gap in aspirations and effort found in previously described research, there is still a disconnect in goals and aspirations and self-reported effort.

The reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) measure was then reduced into one construct through Principle Component Analysis. Positive views concerning school attitudes was considered at or a above the mean and negative attitudes below the mean. (X=4.4) Sixty-two percent of the sample reported positive school attitudes and 38% reported negative attitudes toward school. This construct was then correlated with their reported future educational aspirations (r(34)=0.24, p=0.895) and future expectations (r(34)=.161, p=0.363).

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure was reduced into one construct. A high sense of ethnic identity was considered at or above the mean and a low sense of ethnic identity was considered (X=4). Fifty-five percent of the sample reported a high sense of ethnic identity and 45% reported a low sense of ethnic identity. This construct was then correlated with the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised measure (r(34)=0.216, p=.220) and their reported future educational aspirations (r(34)=–.020, p=0.911) and future expectations (r(34)=–0.045, p=0.801). Although not significant, it must be noted that there was a negative correlation between ethnic identity and the aspirations and expectations that the adolescents held. Adolescents who had high scores on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure tended to have lower aspirations and expectations for their future education. That is, those who felt positively toward their ethnic identity were more likely to only want to achieve a high school degree/GED or an Associate’s degree.
Ho2a: African American adolescents who have a higher reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) score will have higher current grades.

Current Grades

Student grades were obtained from school records and assessed in order to include another non-self report data point. The range of grade point averages were 1.3-4.0, with a mean of 2.83 (SD=0.47). Current grades were correlated with their reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised measure. Those results revealed that there was an association between current grades and the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised measure (r(34)=0.63, p<.05). Those who currently had a higher grade point average were likely to score higher on the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R).

Ho2b: African American adolescents who have a higher reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) score will have higher future aspirations.

Future Aspirations

Future aspirations were assessed with the question “what is the highest level of education that you would like to receive?” It appears that most stated that they would like to achieve at least a bachelor’s degree (79.2%). A correlation was completed between aspirations and expectations. These findings were not significant (r(34)=.235, p=.188).

Ho2c: African American adolescents who have a higher reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) score will have higher future expectations.

Future Expectations

Future expectations were assessed with the question “what is the highest level of education you believe you will attain?” Interestingly, 79.5% reported that they believe that they
will attain at least a Bachelor’s degree. There were more adolescents who expected to complete Bachelor’s degree than aspired to complete a Bachelor’s degree.

Secondary Findings

Following the qualitative data analysis and considering that several students did not report a significant other in terms of education, analysis was completed on whether students felt that their teachers cared about them. Of the 34 students, 32.3% reported that they were unsure or bluntly disagreed that their teachers care about them. Additional 24% disagreed or were unsure if when they needed extra help, they could receive help from their teacher.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale was reduced into one construct. Normal self-esteem was considered a score greater than 15 and low self-esteem was considered a score of lower than 15. Eighty-eight percent of the sample reported having high self-esteem and 12% reported having low self-esteem.

Gender Differences

There were gender differences within this sample. When asked about future educational aspirations, 29% of the male sample stated that they would be content with a high school diploma or less and only 16% of the females stated that the highest degree that they wanted to attain was a high school diploma or less. When asked about their future educational expectations, 28.5% of males expected to get their law degree, doctorate or M.D. Among the females, 45% expected to get their law degree, doctorate or M.D. African American males also had a lower overall grade point average (M=2.75, SD=.747) than their females counterparts (M=3.11, SD=.229). These findings suggest that even at a young age the aspirations and expectations for African American adolescents are different.
**Overall Interpretation of Findings**

Across both measures adolescents report that performing well in school is important and necessary to their future goals. However, during the qualitative interviews when asked to explain why doing well is important, the sample of unintentional adolescents could not reasonably articulate why they believe this and ways in which the statement is true for their future goals. The intentional thinkers, however, could describe how their education would help them in the future and had clear goals and understood the requirements that were needed. These differences are also reflected in the grades obtained for these students; Intentional thinkers had an overall higher GPA than those who were Unintentional thinkers.

Another noteworthy finding was the absence of significant others in the lives of the adolescent that conveyed the importance of education. The unintentional thinkers were often unable to report someone who conveyed the importance of education to them. Consistent with the qualitative analyses, nearly 1/3 of the sample was unsure or disagreed that their teachers cared about them.

Concerning future aspirations, consistently throughout the interviews and through survey responses adolescents reported that they had very high aspirations and expectations for their future. However, as reflected in the survey responses and interviews the unintentional thinkers did not put forth the effort necessary to do well in school.
This study was exploratory based on a targeted sample of low-income African American adolescents. The purpose of this mixed methods approach was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute to the educational aspirations of African American adolescents considering their attitudes toward education, attitudes and beliefs of significant others and perceived barriers and challenges. These findings should be considered exploratory and replicated. This study did, however, target a population that are at a key period in their development in which interventions can be designed in order to influence their future educational trajectory.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Our findings suggest that the Theory of Planned Behavior was a useful tool in explaining the intentions for African American adolescents to complete high school and attend college and was also useful in understanding their current educational performance. Students who believed that their education would assist them in the future, had significant others who discussed this with them, and were aware of possible challenges were more likely to have higher grade point averages and realistic goals and expectations concerning their future education. It appears that more emphasizes needs to be placed on “selling” the benefits of education to adolescents so that they understand the favorable return on their time and efforts.

This study confirms previous findings completed concerning the Theory of Planned Behavior. Consistent with Davis et al. (2002), positive attitudes toward completing school were related to intentions to complete schooling. The intentional thinkers who understood positive outcomes related to staying in school had clear intentions of completing high school and
attending college. Also, consistent with his findings were that students who felt that they could overcome challenges and barriers and understood potential challenges and barriers had greater intentions of completing high school and attending college. These findings were not dissimilar from those found in other populations. This Midwest sample reported similar intentions and performance as other samples across the nation.

Profiles: Intentional and Unintentional thinkers

Within this sample, all of the adolescents expressed at least one career goal. There was a group of adolescents who understood the importance of education and appreciated how their education would assist them in the future and a group of adolescents who did not. Findings seem to be consistent with previous research (Davis, et al., 2002; Brown & Jones, 2004). Two patterns emerged from this population: Intentional and Unintentional thinkers. Intentional thinkers were adolescents who had positive attitudes toward school, significant others who conveyed the importance of education to them (teachers, parents, family), when reporting perceived barriers thought out ways to overcome those barriers, had clear and realistic expectations and understood the requirements of those expectations. These adolescents seemed to have an understanding on the progression of their education (knowing that they needed to complete high school, get good grades and apply for scholarships). The intentional thinkers had a higher overall GPA than the unintentional thinkers indicating that they could see the eventual outcomes of their education and knew that education would be important for their future.

Unintentional thinkers did not have positive attitudes toward school, did not seem to have significant others available that conveyed the importance education, did not report barriers or challenges to attaining their educational goals and did not seem to have realistic goals or understand the requirements for those goals. The lack of understanding in this group of
adolescents can be explained by what researchers have described as the abstract attitudes versus concrete attitudes that African American adolescents have towards their educational aspirations. Mickelson (1990) argued that Black adolescents may have abstract attitudes that are congruent with achievement but concrete attitudes regarding whether educational success will bring socioeconomic mobility is unclear for them. African American adolescents hold high hopes toward education but do not necessarily believe that this is their path to becoming successful. This could explain the difference between the profiles. Intentional thinkers are moving toward having more concrete ideas rather than abstract and this is why they understand the requirements necessary in completing their educational goals. This may also explain why the effort and aspirations of African American adolescents may be incongruent among some. Students may understand the importance of education abstractly (doing well in school will help me in the future) but may not how to implement concrete steps.

The importance of significant others also influenced the aspirations that adolescents had for their high school completion and college attendance. Parents and guardians were especially influential to these adolescents and the opportunities that are available to them. If the parents and family had high and clear expectations for adolescents, the adolescents were likely to be identified as an intentional thinker and currently be performing better in school. Parental involvement and influence plays a large role in the future education orientation developed by the adolescent (Kerpelman et al., 2008).

Consistent with previous studies (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Noguera, 2003), African American adolescents in this study reported high expectations. More than 90% of the adolescents reported doing well in school was an important personal goal. Most respondents stated they wanted to achieve at least a four-year Bachelor’s degree. However, nearly one-third did not
report putting forth effort to attain those goals (turning in homework, working hard to do well on homework, etc.). This relates back to the intentional and unintentional thinkers. The intentional thinkers understand the requirements for attaining their goals and understand that it is the step-by-step, daily task (e.g. turning in homework on time) that will assist them in reaching their goals.

Perceived behavior control also differed between the two profiles. For example, when discussing barriers several intentional thinkers reported that although they could be distracted with things happening at school, they did well in school by focusing and turning in their homework on time. A protective factor previously described was the importance of homework completion because those who turn in their homework increase academic retention and are more likely to understand the material (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). They understand the importance of turning in their homework and how it will fulfill a requirement for attaining their goals. Quite often unintentional thinkers could not describe perceived barriers. This may be related to the lack of a clear future education orientation.

Secondary Analyses

Role models were also not apparent within the lives of these adolescents. Many reported lack of a role model in terms of education. Role models serve as inspirations for adolescents in what is possible for them and play a role in possible aspirations that adolescents may develop. Students who have role models available report better academic performance, have more achievement-related goals, and think about their future more than those who do not have role models. Although just a small number participants in this sample reported role models (n=4) in terms of academics, they were mostly found in the intentional thinkers group which is consistent with previous research that those with role models are more likely to report positive outcomes.
related to school (Zirkel, 2002). It is especially important that at this period in the adolescent’s life and for low-income African Americans, there may be some individual able to provide educational inspiration and direction, even when, and more importantly especially when, parents may not.

Quantitative Findings

An interesting finding is that for African Americans in this study, having a high sense of ethnic identity was not related to their reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) score or their educational aspirations or attainment. Ethnic identity has been identified as a potential protective factor for African American adolescents (Brook & Phal, 2005). Another interesting discovery was the variable that was removed from analysis in order to strengthen the association between the other ethnic identity variables (“I am happy to be a part of my group”). Upon further analysis, it was found that this variable was significantly but negatively correlated with other variables in the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Further investigation should be completed in order to decipher what these findings mean, but perhaps for this sample, age is a factor because adolescents may not completely understanding what identifying with a particular ethnic group means.

Concerning the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) measure (composed of questions such as “I grasp complex concepts”, “I am intelligent”, “I am organized”), there was no correlation between their future aspirations and their future expectations. This is an interesting finding considering one would expect that adolescents who have a positive school attitude would be more likely to have higher aspirations and expectations for their future and currently be performing better in school. This finding may be an artifact of all adolescents reporting high aspirations (and even higher expectations for some). This result could
also be an artifact of using a survey measure in which adolescents tend to report extremely high aspirations or it could be that participants are responding how they believe the researcher wants them to respond which was not directly assessed in this study. However, there was a significant correlation between current grades (as measured by grade point average) and the reduced School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) measure. Students who had more positive school attitudes such as feeling they are intelligent or doing well in school being one of their goals were more likely to do well in school. This finding comes as no surprise. Students who feel that they have the abilities to do well in school and strive to do well in school are doing well in school. The use of qualitative methodology in this study allowed for a deeper and more complex understanding of the phenomenon.

Within this population, teachers were seen by 1/3 of our sample as uncaring. As previously described, the presence of teachers is a protective factor for future educational success (Gutman, et al., 2002). Teachers are able to provide adolescents with encouragement and guide adolescents to vessels (such as college preparatory programs and scholarships) that will lead to educational success. If students feel as if teachers do not care for them they will not reach out for them as resources and will continue to struggle in school and not perform well.

We also know from previous research the role that teacher expectations play in the academic success of students. For African American males, students have reported feeling that teachers do not feel confident in their future success. The messages that are sent to adolescents through the media and significant others such as teachers affects the future education orientations that adolescents construct. Teacher relationships with adolescents are associated with students achievement related to beliefs and their academic performance. African American males may feel they are not challenged enough and feel that they are not prepared to attend college or they
do not feel that their teachers believe that they can attain success in college. If the adolescent
does not feel that they are being challenged and if the teacher feels the student cannot achieve,
perhaps that adolescent gives up on their goals. If the disparity in educational attainment is to be
reduced possibly even eliminated, all students must be encouraged and challenged in their
academics by their teachers.

Another factor that may be contributing to lack of success for some African Americans is
lack of financial solvency. A study conducted by Cameron and Heckman (2001) found that
although family income accounts for a large gap in college attendance between whites and
minorities, it is the “long-term influence in family income and family background... that best
explains the correlation between college attendance and educational achievement”(pp. 492). This
study is taking the position that it is not the issue of cost at the time of college entrance that is
keeping minorities from attending college; rather it is the cumulative lack of resources over the
lives of adolescents that affect whether they will attend college. When family background was
controlled for, minorities were actually more likely to not only graduate from high school, but
were also more likely to attend college. This indicates that there is a financial barrier that
continues to prevent African-Americans from attending college and it cannot be rectified at the
time of entrance into college. It is an ongoing process that supports the individual over their
entire education. Parents and students should start thinking about and preparing for college from
day one. However, within this sample only 2 students mentioned barriers that were financial in
nature. This indicates that many adolescents are not thinking of the financial cost of education
and may be caught off guard when it is the time for college entrance.

The self-esteem results from this sample were very high. Most of the sample stated that
they had a high sense of self-esteem which has been shown as a protective factor for African
American adolescents and future educational goals. If adolescents are confident in themselves, they are less likely to disengage from the school environment and are more likely to achieve academic success. As demonstrated by Li, et al. (2007), confidence is a protective factor for adolescents who live in impoverished conditions. Hopefully, this confidence translates to feeling as if the adolescent can face challenges and overcome barriers.

There were gender differences in terms of future educational aspirations, expectations and their current grades. Males had lower aspirations and expectations than their female counterparts and also had a lower overall grade point average than the females in this study. This is consistent with previous research completed investigating gender differences in African American adolescent’s educational expectations (Honora, 2002; Hubbard, 1999). The majority of the girls in the sample where identified as intentional thinkers who had already began thinking about their future goals, while the majority of boys in our sample were more likely to be grouped as an unintentional thinker. These female adolescents had a clear future education orientation that included the thoughts, dreams and expectations that they have for their future (Nurmi, 1991, 2005). These findings are disconcerting because research has shown African American males begin to disengage from their school environment at around the 8th grade (Osbourne, 1997) and the transition to high school for African American males is especially imperative. Interventions should be developed to target this population prior to disengagement and attempt to increase protective factors.

The gender difference found in the intentional and unintentional thinkers could be explained by many factors. We know from previous research (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1993) that boys are socialized differently than girls and education may be an issue in which the discussion takes place more with girls than boys. Again, parents are an agent in which children
develop a healthy and realistic future education orientation and if parents are not having educational discussion with their sons, they may not understand the importance of education. Another possible explanation is that males do not mature as quickly as females and may not be as likely to grasp the concrete concepts of education that girls are able to grasp. Males may be in the state of abstract thinking in terms of education for a longer time than their female counterparts and therefore may not develop realistic and concrete expectations and goals for their future (Kerpelman et al., 2008).

Implications for Designing Interventions

These findings have suggested implications for designing interventions for low-income African American students. It is necessary for program designers to meet the students where they need assistance. According to these findings, not all low-income African American adolescents are at the abstract stage of thinking as described by Mickelson (1990). Some of these students seem to have moved on to concrete thinking concerning their future education. The intentional thinkers were able to verbalize their goals and understood the requirements for these goals. The intentional thinkers also had more realistic goals and expectations for their future. Therefore, interventions for these intentional thinkers must be designed keeping this in mind. It is not necessary to “convince” them of the importance of continuing their education because they already have positive attitudes toward school and have significant others in their lives who convey the importance of education to them. Perhaps interventions for the intentional thinkers should target the challenges such as financial barriers that adolescents could potentially face or involve adolescents in college preparatory classes and programs that encourage their continued academic success.
For unintentional thinkers, programs should be designed to target their attitudes towards school, which is based on the potential outcomes and value associated with education. These students need to understand that what they put into school now will assist them in the future. Programs should attempt to change the negative attitude that these students have toward school. Interventions should encourage adolescents and convey how important education is because it seems as if these students do not have others who have had a dialogue with them about education. Unintentional thinkers also need to understand the requirements that are necessary to attain their goals. We need to move them from the abstract attitudes that they hold toward school e.g. (“doing well in school is necessary for my future success”) to more concrete attitudes (e.g. “I need to do well in math class in order to become an engineer”).

Interventions do need to be tailored to each group. Those who are unintentional thinkers are not ready to discuss the financial barriers to success because they have not even solidified in their own selves that continued education is important for their future. Along those same lines, intentional thinkers need to understand potential barriers because they can begin making modifications to their schooling now to overcome those barriers. Additionally, now knowing that these two profiles exist among this particular population, assessments can be developed to evaluate their readiness or interest in their schooling.

Interventions also need to be designed that specifically target these transition years from middle school to high school. Due to the likelihood of low-income African American males disengaging from school at that time, it seems necessary to develop programs that keep low-income African American adolescents involved, not only through sports participation but also as learners. Interventions should be developed that demonstrate to adolescents the outcomes that will result from continued educational success. If we can target adolescents prior to high school
and assess their goals and aspirations, perhaps we can put them on the right track going into high school. With this information, we can support low-income disadvantaged adolescents more effectively. If we have an assessment that can identify those who are *intentional* thinkers versus those who are *unintentional* thinkers, we can design better interventions and develop better strategies to approach these adolescents, rather than assuming that all adolescents view their education in the same manner.

Also, interventions need to be designed for parents and teachers in order to assist low-income African American adolescents. Parents need to understand the importance of communicating the necessity of education to their adolescents at a very young age. If parents understand they are essential in developing a healthy, clear and realistic future education orientation for their children, they may be more likely to have a dialogue with their children and support their child’s goals. Teachers need to be educated in the same way. Having an open dialogue with all students concerning their educational aspirations and expectations is optimal considering the significant role that teachers play in the lives of students.

Students also need to be taught skills about how to better communicate with their teachers. Better communication between students and teachers would result in more positive outcomes for African American adolescents. Often within this population teachers are considered the enemy and adolescents often retaliate by interrupting in class and not turning in homework. This leads to poor academic performance and outcomes for adolescents. Interventions should be designed in order to address the attitudes that adolescents have toward their teachers in order to develop positive attitudes and interactions between teacher and student. On the other side of this same coin, teachers should have high expectations of all students and challenge adolescents in ways that they feel cared for and encouraged. If students feel that teachers care for their
outcomes and want them to achieve in school, they may be inspired and develop clear and realistic goals and expectations for their future.

Limitations

While the qualitative analysis was completed only for a small sample (n=15) because saturation was achieved, the quantitative analyses were completed with the entire sample (n=34). The focus on only African American middle school students provides a rich understanding for this particular population and the results of this study should be used within the context of adding knowledge to African American adolescent’s educational aspirations. This was a purposeful sample, in which adolescents were selected based upon certain characteristics. Therefore, it is important to confirm these exploratory findings to ensure transferability within other populations.

Another limitation to this study was that not all adolescents were matched with an interviewer of the same gender and same race. Although we tried to ensure this across interviews, many of the adolescent males were interviewed by a female interviewer and some adolescents were interviewed by a Caucasian female interviewer. This may have caused some discomfort for participants and led them to be dishonest or inaccurate in responses. The participants, however, have all had previous contact with the all of the interviewers and this may have settled some uncomfortableness, but increased the likelihood that participants may have provided interviewers with socially desirable responses. This was overcome by using the quantitative survey data in conjunction with grades to gain multiple measurements of school performance and aspirations.

Another limitation to this study was the unclear findings concerning potential barriers and challenges that may persist while attempting to complete their schooling. Within this study, we
were unable to establish whether there were different abstract and concrete thinking between the intentional and unintentional thinkers concerning barriers. Why did both groups tend not to report barriers? Had both groups not thought of barriers or had the intentional thinkers thought of ways to overcome any barriers that could challenge them from doing well in school? MacLeod (1987) found that minority adolescents were more abstract in aspirations and were not able to identify concrete examples of blocked mobility like White adolescents. This could be a factor that is consistent across all minority adolescents. This finding needs to be addressed in future research in order to assist adolescents is meeting their goals.

There were also unclear findings concerning role models. Intentional thinkers were more likely to report having a role model in terms of education, but the role the models actually play in their education was unclear. According to Zirkel (2002) it is important for adolescents to have a same race, same gendered role model more so than it is important to have a role model that achieved academically. A limitation within this study is that it was not ascertained as to whether the adolescent had a same gender, same race role model and how the role model encouraged the adolescent. Many adolescents initially reported a role model (usually a parent), but the reasoning for choosing that role model was not based on their educational aspirations or attainment. Further research needs to target the function of role models in this particular population and how they seek and select role models in terms of education.

Other limitations were most of the findings (excluding grades) were self-report (in the form of interviews or survey). Again, students were likely to provide socially desirable responses and were likely to report higher school effort than what is actually accurate. However, there was saturation in the ideas and themes that emerged. Concerning the student’s grades, there is likely to be a ceiling effect due to small amount of variance within the 4.0 grade scale. It is likely that
most students will fall between certain grade point averages and few will fall on the extremes, and therefore be difficult to differentiate between those with “high” grade point average and a “low” grade point average,

And lastly, comprehension of survey questions and interview question may have caused confusion for the participants. Although there were adults available during the survey process and questions in the interviews were piloted and worded at a 5th grade level, participants may not have understood some of the concepts that were being discussed.

**Future research and Recommendations**

For future research, findings should be confirmed in other populations. The students that participated in this study were African American, attending a predominately African American school, and living in low-income neighborhoods. Their responses may be typical of adolescents who have similar experiences, however, this data cannot be generalized to all African Americans. It would be interesting to see if these profiles (intentional and unintentional thinkers) are found again within low income African American populations across ages and geographic locations. These findings should also be replicated with other ethnic groups (Hispanic/Latino, Asian and Native American adolescents), socioeconomic statuses and compare findings to African American students of higher income and with a different geographical background (i.e. zip codes and neighborhoods).

Other areas of future research should look at additional risk factors for Hispanic/Latino and Asian ethnic groups that may affect their educational aspirations and attainment. Studies have confirmed the high aspirations among all adolescents, however, attainment for Hispanic/Latino and African Americans is the lowest across all minority groups (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). Results could be weighted differently (e.g. for Asians parental influence and
the influence of significant others may be weighted more). Therefore, it would be interesting to assess whether patterns persist among these two minority groups considering other potential risk factors and barriers that they face (immigrant status, language barriers, etc.).

Future research should also explore gender differences more in depth. As previously described African American women are more likely to complete high school, attend and complete college and are likely to have higher educational aspirations than their African American male counterparts (Saunders, 2004; Greene & Mickelson, 2006). In this sample, girls were more likely to be classified as *intentional* thinkers. This seems to be reflective of previous research indicating that girls have a more accurate future education orientation (Kerpelman et al., 2008) and therefore more likely to understand the requirements for reaching their educational goals. Research in this area must be continued in order to change the current trends for African American adolescents and educational attainment. These finding also have implications for designing interventions differently for African American males and females. In addition to this qualitative study, future research should examine this group of adolescents through the use of focus group and observations to unpack the educational experiences for African American males and females.

Conclusions

Taken together, it is important to understand the experiences of young people and hear their voices in order to design effective interventions. It is also essential to examine their thoughts and perceptions about their future educational aspirations and intentions, attitudes toward school, attitudes of significant others toward school and potential barriers and challenges that they may have to overcome. Disparities in education continue to exist and this work should be considered an exploratory endeavor that looks to add to the literature and assist in designing
effective interventions for low-income African American adolescents. Although the educational success for some African American adolescents appears unlikely, there are protective factors that are associated with academic success and positive educational and career outcomes. Interventions and programs that are developed must be tailored to fit the unique social context of young African American adolescents and these programs can be tailored to assess the readiness of those students. It seems that African American adolescents desire success in academics as well as in their future professional careers. They just may not know the requirements and actions necessary to reach those goals. Perhaps through effective interventions that provide mentoring, encouragement and positive role models for African-American adolescents, improvement in academic outcomes and other positive life outcomes is attainable.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

QUANTITAIVE ADOLESCENTS SURVEY

This survey is about attitudes toward school, health behaviors and future goals. Do Not write your name on this survey. The answers you give will be kept private. No one will know what you write. Answer the question based on what you really do.
Completing the survey is voluntary. Whether or not you answer the questions will not affect your grade in school. If you are not comfortable answering a question, just leave it blank.
The questions that ask about your background will be used only to describe the types of students completing this survey. The information will not be used to find out your name. No names will ever be reported.
Make sure to read every question.

Thank you very much for your help.
### Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>At times I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Have you ever been bullied on school property?
   A Yes
   B No

2. During the school year, how often have you been bullied at school?
   A Never
   B Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)
   C Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)
   D Every day

3. During this school year how often have you seen someone being bullied?
   A Never
   B Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)
   C Regularly (1 or 2 times a week)
   D Every day

4. During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day? (Add up all the time you spent in any kind of physically activity that increase your heart rate and made you breathe hard some of the time.)
   A 0 days
   B 1 day
   C 2 days
   D 3 days
   E 4 days
   F 5 days
   G 6 days
   H 7 days

5. On an average school day, how many hours do you watch TV?
   A I do not watch TV on an average school day
   B Less than 1 hour per day
   C 1 hour per day
   D 2 hours per day
   E 3 hours per day
   F 4 hours per day
   G 5 or more hours per day
6. On an average school day, how many hours do you play video or computer games or use a computer for something that is not school work (include activities such as Nintendo, GameBoy, Play Station, Xbox, computer games and the internet.)
   A. I do not play video or computer games or use a computer for something that is not school work
   B. Less than 1 hour per day
   C. 1 hour per day
   D. 2 hours per day
   E. 3 hours per day
   F. 4 hours per day
   G. 5 or more hours per day

7. In an average week when you are in school, on how many days do you go to physical education (PE) classes?
   A. 0 days
   B. 1 day
   C. 2 days
   D. 3 days
   E. 4 days
   F. 5 days

8. During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? (Include any teams run by your school or community groups?)
   A. 0 teams
   B. 1 team
   C. 2 teams
   D. 3 or more teams

9. In the past 7 days, how many days did you eat junk food (candy bars, chips etc?)
   A. None
   B. 1 day
   C. 2 days
   D. 3 days
   E. 4 days
   F. 5 days
   G. 6 days
   H. 7 days
10 **In the past 7 days, how many days did you eat vegetables?**
A None
B 1 day
C 2 days
D 3 days
E 4 days
F 5 days
G 6 days
H 7 days

11 **In the past 7 days, how many days did you eat fruits?**
A None
B 1 day
C 2 days
D 3 days
E 4 days
F 5 days
G 6 days
H 7 days
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Doing well in school is important for my future career goals.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Doing well in school is one of my goals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am a responsible student</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I am capable of getting straight As</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I am glad that I go to this school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am good at learning new things in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am intelligent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I am organized about my school work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I am proud of this school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am self-motivated to do my school work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I am smart in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I can grasp complex concepts in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I can learn new things quickly in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I check my assignments before I turn them in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I complete my schoolwork regularly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I concentrate on my schoolwork.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I like my classes.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I relate well to my teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I spend a lot of time on my school work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I use a variety of strategies to learn new material</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I want to do my best in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I want to get good grades in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I work hard at school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX A (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35 It is important for me to do well in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 It’s important to get good grades in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Most of the teachers at this school are good teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 My teachers care about me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 My teachers make learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 School is easy for me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 This is a good school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 This school is a good match for me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 I like this school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 I put a lot of effort into my school work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle the letter that best describes your answer.</th>
<th>Less than High School</th>
<th>GED</th>
<th>High School Diploma</th>
<th>Associate’s Degree (2 years of college)</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Master’s degree</th>
<th>Law Degree</th>
<th>Doctorate or M.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45. What is the highest level of education that you would like to receive?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. What is the highest level of education that you believe you will attain?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>I feel that I belong at my school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Other students accept me as I am at my school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>My school is a nice place to be</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>The students in my class enjoy being together</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Most students in my class are kind and helpful</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>When I need extra help I can get it from my teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>I feel safe at my school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54. What type of student do you consider yourself to be?
   A  Excellent
   B  Good
   C  Fair
   D  Poor

55. What kind of grades do you make?
   A  Mostly F’s (0)
   B  Mostly D’s (1)
   C  Mostly C’s (2)
   D  Mostly B’s (3)
   E  Mostly A’s (4)

56. Looking into the future, how successful do you think you will be?
   A  Very successful
   B  Successful
   C  Not sure
   D  Not very successful
   E  Not very successful at all

57. What kind of job do you want to have when you grow up? How far in school do you need to go to do this job?
APPENDIX A (continued)

Please circle your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Have you ever smoked a cigarette, even 1 or 2 puffs?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Have you ever drunk alcohol?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Have you ever smoked marijuana?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>It is clear to my friends that I am committed to living a drug-free life</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>I have made a final decision to stay away from marijuana.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>If I smoke cigarettes once or twice a day?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>If I smoke marijuana once or twice a week?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>If I smoke marijuana regularly?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>If I smoke marijuana regularly?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A (continued)

Ethnic Identity

In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be__________________________________

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please circle your answer.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 13 | My ethnicity is  
|   | (1) Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese and others  
|   | (2) Black or African American  
|   | (3) Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American and others  
|   | (4) White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; Not Hispanic  
|   | (5) American Indian/Native American  
|   | (6) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups  
|   | (7) Other (write in) ____________________________________________ |

| 14 | My father’s ethnicity is (use numbers above) ___ |

| 15 | My mother’s ethnicity is (use numbers above) ___ |

Comments:

Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX B
INTEVIEW QUESTIONS

Grand Tour Questions- Must be asked
Those that are not Bolded and underlined are probing questions and questions to help guide the interview (students may address these already within the grand tour questions)

What do you think you will do for the next 10 years? Make a timeline
School?
  a. Do you think that you will go to college (May need to prompt students e.g. school after high school, like when we went to WSU this summer)?
  b. Any things that will stop you from doing that?
Job?

Education
A. What makes you happy/What is important to you?
B. Why do you go to school?
   a. How will it help you in the future?
C. How do your parents view school?
   a. What do they expect from you?
D. Who is in your family?
   a. What do they expect from you?
E. Are there people in your life that want you to do well in school?
   a. Who?
   b. How?
F. Is there someone that you look up to?
   a. Is there someone that you look up to for how they did/do in school?

Future Career
G. What do you think that you are good at?
   a. What do you wish you were better at?
H. What do you need to get good at to do that job?
   a. How will you get good at that?

Health
I. How much do you go outside and play every day?
   a. Does your family play with you?
J. What do you usually eat for dinner?
K. Do you usually sit at the table and eat dinner with your whole family?

YEIP
L. How do you feel about…?
   a. Family life
      i. Does your family talk to each other?
         1. Context of conversation…What about?
      ii. Spend time together?
         1. Why doesn’t your family spend more time together?
b. **School life**
   i. How are your grades in school?
      1. Why are your grades ...(so good, not so good).
      ii. How do you get along better with your teacher?

   c. **With friends**

   What did you like about the summer program?
   d. What didn’t you like about the program?
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Notes about the interview process
- Use probes if necessary
  - “Say More”
- Ask them to define terms/jargon
- Be okay with silence (allow them time to process)
- Try to keep the interview between 30 minutes and 45 minutes
- Explain to the adolescents what the interviews are for
  - To help make the program better for them
  - The interviews will be recorded, but they should feel comfortable giving honest answers

Begin Interview
- Warm-up exercise
  - Each participant will be given a piece of paper
  - Ask them to make a timeline for the next ten years and the things that they will do
    - Give 5 minutes for them to draw
    - Discuss with them items that are not on the timeline and questions that are on the timeline
      - Include Education
      - Include Careers

During interview
- Core Questions that must be addressed in interview.
  - Ask core interview questions
    - Use probes
      - “Can you tell me more?”, “What does that mean in terms of education?” - etc

After the interview
- Be sure to debrief with participant to make sure we understand everything that is being said
- Have a piece of paper with you to write down thoughts and ideas