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# Resiliency and Attachment as Factors in Return and Completion of High School: a Study of Inner-city African American Males

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RESILIENCY AND ATTACHMENT AS FACTORS IN RETURN AND COMPLETION OF  
HIGH SCHOOL: A STUDY OF INNER-CITY AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

BY

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Clinical Psychology  
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“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith...”

2 Timothy 4:7 (King James Version)

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES  
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Candidate, Myla Michelle Giles has successfully completed all requisite requirements. This candidate's proposal has been reviewed and the candidate may proceed to collect data according to the approved proposal for dissertation under the direction of the mentor and the candidate's dissertation committee.

If there are substantive differences between what has been approved in the proposal and the actual study, the final dissertation should indicate, on a separate page in the Appendix, the approval of the committee for those changes.

Title of Proposed Dissertation:

RESILIENCY AND ATTACHMENT AS FACTORS IN RETURN AND

COMPLETION OF HIGH SCHOOL: A STUDY OF INNER CITY AFRICAN

AMERICAN MALES

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## ABSTRACT

### RESILIENCY AND ATTACHMENT AS FACTORS IN RETURN AND COMPLETION OF HIGH SCHOOL: A STUDY OF INNER-CITY AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Inner-city African American adolescent males face traumatic experiences, daily stressors, adversities and high levels of negative life events. Why or how some urban, African American adolescent males develop into well-functioning and relatively healthy individuals, even in the face of adversity, was the driving question of this study. This exploratory study evaluated the contribution of attachment factors on resiliency functioning in African American adolescent males. Investigated were 80 African American adolescent males, aged 18-21, who had returned to an academic pathway. Demographic data, cross-tabulations and multivariate analysis examined the interaction between attachment styles and resiliency. Proximal exposure via living in an urban environment was a major risk factor and dropping out of school was seen as a negative outcome. Hypotheses stated that there were more insecurely attached individuals who dropped out of high school. The results did not support these hypotheses. However, empirical findings indicated a significant number of African American adolescent males who returned to complete high school were found to have secure attachment styles. In contrast to predictions of poor developmental outcomes, the data in this study revealed that securely attached urban, African American adolescent males who made a decision to drop out of school, eventually returned to complete an academic pathway. The question arose, Are high school dropouts who returned to school more likely to have secure attachment styles than other forms of attachment styles? Because of the complexities associated with this group, which connect to the multiple challenges inner-city African American males face in their living environments, future research that includes multiple methods over time, should consider the role of specific biological, environmental and/or social factors.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Young adults are fertile fields for exploration. They are a glimpse into the externalization of rules, norms, neighborhoods, and family structures that have been internalized, which thereby serve as gauges of an individual's successes or failures in adaptation and to the development of competencies.

Some young adults are provided with advantages such as school districts with large per student operational budgets, state of the art educational materials, cutting-edge technology, and parents who are able to provide financial security. The resources of these environments are designed to mold and shape success: They do not encourage mediocrity and/or failure.

Young adults in inner cities are faced with different developmental experiences. The majority of these young adults are not labeled as gifted or talented, but rather as chronically disruptive and disaffected. This body of at risk young adults is often faced with acute and chronic adversities along the road to success. The causes of their problems are often complex and generally difficult to overcome.

Circumstances related to personal and family problems and /or resource depleted environments have resulted these at risk young adults falling into the abyss of behaviors leading to truancy; school drop-outs; gang membership; criminal activities; violent offenders; manipulative hustlers; run a-ways; explosive and violent fighters; car thieves; prostitutes; drug dealers; academic underachievers, academic failures; drug addicts; teen mothers and fathers; sexually provocative behaviors; murderers; assaultive and combative; and developmentally impaired, immature young adults.

In my experience in working with at risk young adult males, multiple incarcerations and electronic monitoring devices are seen as badges of honor. Newspapers, which have contributed to the notoriety of t risk youth, have illustrated execution style vendettas, a patricide conviction, and appearances on America's Most Wanted television series. Many young adult males have devoted their lives to sacrificing self and/or others in defense of lucrative neighborhood territories. Male family members are often physically or emotionally unavailable as a result of incarceration, substance use or abandonment.

Within the inner-city public school system, these at risk young adults often exhibit chronic and persistent failure, discipline problems, truancy, and absenteeism. Basic skill deficiencies, frustration, alienation, negative self-concept, and a school environment that provides insufficient encouragement for students are contributing factors to their at risk status. These young adults generally have a history of negative school experience and patterns of chronic disruptive behavior. These behaviors not only serve to disrupt their own education, but they also impede the educational progress of classmates.

Exposure to acute and chronic adversities such as AIDS, HIV+ status, abuse, violence, and poverty contribute to the possibility of creating a vulnerable, ineffective young adult population. The descriptors within the above introduction and personal impression have been well researched and documented in the literature relative to the plight of African American males. Many authors have researched and conferred with the experience of African American males (Barbarian, 1993b; Beale, 1990; Beale, Cole, Dupree, Glymph, & Pierre, 1993; Bolland, Lian, & Formichella, 2005; Carswell, 2009; Daly, Jennings, Beckett, & Leashore, 1995; Dubois, Felner, Meares, & Krier, 1994; Fisher, 2004 a-g; Franklin & Franklin, 1985; Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Garibaldi, 2007; Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Griffin, 2005; Guerra, Sameroff, &

Eccles, 1995; Howard, 1996; Jenkins, 2006; Johnson & Perkins, 2009; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Norguera, 1997, 2002; Ogbu, 1990,1991;The Schott Foundation, 2008; Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007).

Despite these types of threats to their well being, it has become apparent to me that some at risk young adults overcome, are immune, or recover from these traumas. Their behavior may not look resilient when viewed by those who enjoy greater access to enhanced resources, but through some sort of uncanny ability, they bounce back from hard knocks and make the most out of what is available. They do survive. They gain a sense of belonging, personal meaning, self-efficacy, and gain life skills. Albeit through unconventional and/or illegal adaptations, they develop into healthy functioning adults who have acquired the ability to love, work, and play.

What is fascinating to me is the fact that in the midst of adversity, some of these at risk young adults continue to strive to correct academic failures, reformulate decisions to drop out of school, return after multiple incarcerations, and continue a pursuit during and after serial losses in an attempt to obtain a better lifestyle.

What are the intrinsic characteristics within this written- off population that enables them to come back to school to work toward high school diplomas at ages 18-21?

What are the protective factors under the resiliency umbrella that provide a buffer against negative risk factors? Are there meaningful attachment relationship messages that were forged in earlier years that have been resurrected and serve as fortifiers?

Witnessing the successes of the majority of at risk young adult males reentering school within a specialized program, helping to guide them through the daily struggle in an attempt to master obstacles, and encouraging them through internal fights to defeat demons from the past is exhausting as well as a fascinating phenomenon.

### Need for the Study

Researchers have documented that competence, resourcefulness, creativity, motivation, altruism, and spirituality are just a few positive documented qualities associated with African American youth who have survived an urban environment (Giordano & Cernkovich, 1993; Griffin, 2005; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy, & Ramierz, 1999; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; McCabe, 1999; Miller, 2002; Noguera, 2002; Stevenson, 1997; Ungar, 2004; Wilson, 2009). However, there are areas to which limited attention has been devoted. Barbarin (1993a) notes that there are many fruitful areas of research that have received scant attention, particularly in light of their critical importance in the development of African American men. One of the issues to be explored is attachment. An examination of the quality of the caregiver-child relationship in the development of African American young adults at risk is necessary as a link between this relationship and resiliency that has been established for other cultures.

African American males and youth of the urban underclass face a negative social and mental health trajectory that includes poor school performance, school dropout, multiple risks for those who become teen parents, and involvement in gangs, violence, and substance abuse (Barbarin, 1993a, Campbell, 1996; Dubois et al., 1994; Garcia-Coll, Lambety, Jenkins, Pipes-McAdo, Wasik, & Vazquez-Garcia, 1996; Lapsley, et al., 2000; McLoyd, 1990; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Wandersman & Nation, 1998). In contrast, Leffert et al. (1998) described that a rich research tradition now exists that demonstrates how some young people who have grown up in extremely disadvantaged conditions have escaped without serious damage. The impact of a family-specific protective factor must be examined in an attempt to determine if it contributes as a significant resiliency protective factor and thus serves as a contributing explanation of the

relationship between protective factors and the healthy development of African American male young adults at risk.

Previous investigations of African Americans have focused on incorporating macro-level analyses. Hauser, Vieyra, Jacobson, & Wertlieb(1989) noted that work on a micro level is less common. Researchers should look in detail at how aspects of family communication and interaction may be linked with young adults' vulnerability and resilience. This study undertakes to examine on a micro level, a specific cultural group and specific gender and the aspects of the caregiver-child relationship that may be associated with favorable outcomes.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationships between attachment styles, perceived parental attachment styles, and indicators of resiliency among African-American male students who have not completed high school by the age of 18-21. Although the chronological age range denotes young adulthood, an adolescent attachment inventory (CAPAI) will be utilized. Research indicates that adolescence runs from the onset of puberty to age 18 and usually culminates with high school graduation. The sample population has not solved the developmental task of adolescence through high school graduation, movement into the labor force, vocational education completion, military, or college. This age range was chosen based upon the documented notations of Batey (1999) and Suh and Suh (2004) that indicated that for Black males, successfully completing the tasks associated with adolescent development have often been problematic due to a complex set of interacting historical and social factors that often inhibit success. This significant lack of mastery negatively influences Black adolescents' academic, professional, and social successes later in life. Racism, socioeconomic disadvantage, and extreme environmental stressors converge to negatively impact and contribute to difficulty in

mastering the developmental tasks that characterize the childhood and adolescent years. By the age of 18 or 19, the sum total of these impediments to adolescent development can often be seen in negative and self-destructive values, attitudes, and behaviors among young Black men. These, in turn, have resulted in academic underachievement; a major problem in Black communities (Ogbu, 2004). However, Arnett (2000) and Garibaldi (2007) agree with Erik Erikson in the belief that industrialized societies allow a prolonged adolescence for identity exploration. To this, many variables have significantly disrupted the African American male's capacity for maturation.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, key terms will be both conceptually and operationally defined as follows.

*At risk male young adults* At risk male young adults aged 18-21 years old who have not solved the developmental task of adolescence by completing high school within a normative time frame; within a 4 year time frame, by maximum age 18.

*Resiliency.* Refers to the ability of people to survive stressful and maltreatment situations, especially the negative influences of poverty; (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Garmezy, 1991; Griffin, 2005; Luther, Cicchetti, & Becker 2000; Unger, 2004; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, & Maton 1999). For the purpose of this study, resiliency will be assessed using the Resilience Skills and Abilities Scale (RSAS), which includes future orientation, active skill acquisition, and independence/risk-taking (Jew, Green, & Kroger, 1999).

*Attachment behavior.* Individual behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able



to help the adolescent with expectations. Attachment will be assessed using the *Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory* (CAPAI, Moretti, McKay, & Holland, 2000).

### **Research Questions**

The study will be guided by the following major research question: What is the perceived parental attachment style and indicators of resiliency among at risk African American males who have dropped out and returned to high school? Under the aegis of this major research question are the following specific research questions:

1. What are the attachment styles of at-risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school?
2. Are attachment styles different for those who designated their mother as the most important person in rearing them than those who designate other persons as most important?
3. Are those who designate their mother as the most important person in rearing them more resilient than those who designate other persons as most important?
4. What is the relationship between perceived parental attachment styles and resiliency among at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be fewer at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school with secure attachment styles than other attachment styles.
2. Those at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school who designate their mother as most important in

rearing them will have more secure attachment styles than those who designate other persons as most important in rearing them.

3. Those at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school who designate their mother as most important in rearing them will have greater resiliency than those who designate other persons as most important in raising them.
4. At risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school who have secure attachment types will have higher levels of resilience than those who have other attachment types.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

1. The use of self-report paper and pencil instruments present biases that can only be addressed by comparing data from other informants. Conversely, this measurement strategy allows young adults to describe their perceptions, thus allowing a direct way of assessing the young adult's attitudes. Although the traditional unfavorable view of self-report instruments is that they depend on the subjects' perceptions and willingness to self-disclose.
2. A major limitation is that the participants' reading comprehension levels will not be pre-assessed.
3. This study cannot be generalized to all populations because the sample is not randomly selected. The subjects come from an at-risk, urban African American male young adult population.
4. Both inventories were normalized on 7th to 12th grade students. Although there is an age differential between the selected population (ages 18-21) and the school

age range of the normalizing group (12-17 years old), the high school grade level range is comparable; 9th – 12th grade. The age differentials present a limitation to the study.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

#### African American Young Adults at Risk

This chapter addresses Resiliency, Family Protective Factors, Educational concerns with African American males, and Attachment Theory. For African American young adults living within inner-city environments their psychological, physical, developmental, and social adjustments are at greater risk because their communities have higher levels of poverty, a poorer quality of public and private services, and increased exposure to life-threatening environmental stressors. These factors increase the probability that for children who grow up in the inner-city will experience physical, developmental, and social and psychological problems (Barbarian, 1993b; Blake & Darling, 2000; Guerra et al. 1995; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Safyer, 1994). Grant (2000) and colleagues found that low-income, urban, African American youth reported significantly higher rates of psychological distress across a range of symptoms when compared to normative samples.

Oftentimes, the areas of psychological distress and behavioral problems are defined within the realms of depression, hopelessness, substance abuse, delinquency, and violent behavior (Garbarino, 1995). Internalizing and externalizing disorders, aggression, impulsivity, attention deficits, hyperactivity, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and low academic achievement are also reported in association with inner-city- youth development (Slaughter and Epps, 1987). Low academic achievement can be perceived as negative school experiences. These experiences often manifest in repeated course failures, repeated suspensions, repeated behavioral interventions, chronic absenteeism, high incidents of drop-out and re-entry rates and/or failure to complete high school within normal developmental progressions (Townsend, 2000).

A considerable amount of research and public interest has focused on the negative outcome experienced by African Americans. According to Franklin and Franklin (1985), many media images of Black life continue to promote negative stereotypes. In agreement, Barbarin (1993b), states that

unfortunately, there seems to be little media interest in or research efforts devoted to understanding African American children who live in nurturing but poor households and who experience emotionally supportive and stable personal relationships in "broken" homes; who develop a positive ethnic identity in spite of rampant denigration of their race; who steadfastly pursue education even though its relationship to gainful employment is uncertain; who abstain from addictive substances even though drugs are ubiquitous and life is unkind; and who avoid gangs, illegal activity, and incarceration in spite of pressure to belong and make the fast buck. (p.479)

It is necessary to further understand the scope of why or how a substantial number of inner-city young adults are able to survive and surpass inner-city challenges and are able to redirect predisposed developmental trajectories, develop into healthy, well-adjusted adults who are productive rather than burdensome to the society, according to Allen, Leadbeater and Aber, (1994). It would appear to me that the strengths described above can be investigated through the concept of resiliency.

### **Resiliency**

According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), the study of resilience, that is how children overcome adversity to achieve good developmental outcomes, arose from the study of risk, as investigators discovered children flourishing in the midst of adversity (Ahern, Ark, & Byers,

2008; Garmezy 1991; Griffin, 2005; Hauser & Allen, 2006; and Luthar et al. 2000). Resilience has been conceptualized as a dynamic process involving an interaction between internal and external risk and protective processes that act to modify the effects of adverse life events (Tiet, Huizinga, & Byrnes, 2010).

Adaptation through various resiliency variables can be conceptualized as avoiding and overcoming delinquency, behavioral problems, psychological maladjustment, academic difficulties, and physical complications (Rak & Patterson, 1996). Resilience theory focuses on strengths rather than deficits. Therefore, its primary purpose is to understand healthy development. In spite of risk exposure, resilience does not imply invulnerability to stress; but rather an ability to recover from negative events, (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2001; Roosa, 2000).

Research literature documents the problems of poor African American inner-city youth by focusing on comparisons between them and White, middle-class youth. Connell, Spencer, and Aber (1994) indicated that much less attention has been paid to variation among within-group individuals. Yet, analyses of within-group differences are necessary to understand why some thrive in high-risk environments.

Resilience has been widely investigated within the contexts of gender, family dynamics, social and peer support, adversities, risk and protective factors, and various connections to coping styles.

Researchers have identified three models of resilience: compensatory, protective, and challenge (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). A compensatory factor model is one in which factors counteract or operate in an opposite direction of a risk factor. The protective model includes assets or resources that moderate or reduce the effects of a risk on a negative outcome. The challenge model suggests that exposure to low levels and high levels of a risk factor are

associated with negative outcomes, but moderate levels of the risk are related to less negative (or positive) outcomes.

The components of the protective model can be summarized into three contextual areas: individual, family, and extra-familial protective factors. Analyzing the impact of all the components underlining the protective factors associated with resiliency is beyond the range of this study. Although extended kinships (extra-familial factors) and family roles have proven to be significant in the structures of African American families, it is the impact of immediate family interactions that is the focus of this investigation.

### **Family Protective Factors**

Resiliency research has identified the family as a significant protective factor. Masten et al. (1999) stated that although a nurturing caregiver is the most important and constant protective factor for children experiencing stress, it is the impact of a particular protective factor that must be empirically examined. The importance of, and values associated with, childrearing and the centrality of a mother figure within African American families has been highlighted by several authors (Bowman, 2007; McAdoo, 1982; Taylor, 1996; Ungar, 2004).

Fiori, Consedine and Magai (2000) reported that African Americans often experience stress because of their ongoing exposure to racism and economic disadvantage. According to Chapman and Mullis (2000),

African American families must prepare their children to function in a society whose dominant culture harbors negative messages about African Americans. This preparation entails communicating to their children the realities and dangers of the world, how to correctly identify and cope with the resulting barriers, and

how to seek support for the feelings evoked when confronting these barriers. (p. 153)

Svanberg (1998) believes the pathway followed by each developing individual and the extent to which he or she becomes resilient to stressful life events is determined to a very significant degree by the pattern of attachment developed during the early years. Because empirical findings, (Amatea et al., 2006; Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Griffin, 2005; Joe, 2009; Luthar, et al., 2000; Masten, 2001; Salem, et al., 1998; Taylor, et al., 1993; and Ungar, 2004) indicate significance between family interactions and developmental trajectories, it is the family level protective factors developed through the attachment process that will be explored in this study.

### **African American Males and Education**

As cited by Klein (2002), an underlying interpretation of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision implies that education is, after all, not just another government program: it is a means of creating personal wealth of the greatest intrinsic as well as instrumental value.

Unfortunately, the 21st century started with a noticeable reversal of positive educational gains among Black males. However, changes to the larger population are often not apparent until systemic problems have persisted for many years. In the case of Black males graduating from high school, when comparing rates within group by age, it appears that a downward trend may have started in the mid-1980s and reached noticeable levels in the population around the mid- to- late 1990s according to (Garibaldi, 2007; Rowley & Bowman, 2009; Toldson, Fry-Brown, & Sutton, 2009; Whiting, 2006).

The Schott Foundation for Public Education "Given half a chance", 2008, reported that over the past 25 years, the social, educational, and economic outcomes for Black males have



been more systemically devastating than the outcomes for any other racial or ethnic group or gender. Black males have consistently low educational attainment levels, are more chronically unemployed and underemployed, (Barbarin, 1993a; Joe & Davis, 2009; Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, 2007; Lofstrom, 2007; Martin, Martin, Semivan-Gibson, & Wilkins, 2007), are less healthy and have access to fewer health care resources, die much younger, and are many times more likely to be sent to jail for periods significantly longer than males of other racial/ethnic groups. On average, Black males are more likely to attend the most segregated and least resourced public schools. Rashid (2009) agreed that the overall quality of life for young African American males continues to be a national disgrace. Young Black men continue to be disproportionately incarcerated in the nation's penal system, experience higher rates of death by homicide and HIV, and have less access to health insurance. They experience a chronic decline in labor force participation, alarming school drop-out rates, higher rates of suspension and expulsion from schools than any other group, disproportionate numbers of referrals for special education services, and generally lower levels of educational attainment than their peers, (Garibaldi, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Levin, et al., 2007; Martin et al.2007; Noguera, 1997, 2002; Townsend, 2000; Whiting, 2006).

The College Board (2010) note that, despite some progress in recent years, the United States is facing an educational challenge of great significance. This crisis is most acute for men of color. Regrettably-indeed, shockingly in the foreseeable future, it is apparent that if the current demographic and educational attainment trends continue, especially for men of color, the overall educational level of the overall American workforce will probably decline. Estimates suggest that the decline will be most noticeable by the year 2020, which is same year President

Obama has set as the deadline for restoring the US to being the first in the world in the percentage of young adults with postsecondary degrees.

### **Current Legislation**

As chronicled by Donnor and Shockley (2010), in response to U.S. student under-preparation and persistent unequal academic outcomes of students of color, the federal government under the George W. Bush administration enacted No Child Left Behind. A focal point of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is to ensure that public schools are held accountable for the academic progress of every student. Originally established by the U.S. government as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, Title 1 was intended to “provide financial assistance to local educational agencies for the education of children of low-income families”. Seeking to remediate the effects of historical disparities in education, the federal government, through Title 1, intended to induce state and local educational agencies into improving the quality of education for “disadvantaged students” using compensatory programs, such as Head Start. In contrast to the 1965 version, ESEA’s reauthorization under NCLB required schools receiving Title 1 funds to use standardized tests to ensure that all students received the same education. In addition, teacher effectiveness was to be measured by student performance on standardized test in mathematics, reading or language arts, and science (Goertz, 2005).

As summarized by Harrison-Jones( 2007) and McMillian (2003/ 2004), some of the most prominent criticisms of NCLB centered around naming the law, sufficient funding (or the lack thereof), definitions of proficiency, ethical issues and oversight, assessment criteria, testing cost and accountability, curricula issues, teacher tenure and flight, and limitations of scientifically

based research standards and leadership. The National Education Association (NEA) also expressed additional concerns and allegations such as: inequitable divisions of resources; minimal curriculum; narrow definition of research; deeply flawed, biased and unreliable test and test data, the heart of NLCB; and stricter teacher qualifications that have exacerbated the nationwide teacher shortage, not provided a stronger teaching force.

Relative to the education processes of African American males, McMillian (2004) indicates that NCLB is a policy based upon a superficial-deficit model with focus in outputs (racial achievement gaps) instead of inputs (resources, accessibility, and quality of instruction). Although NCLB does address the importance of improving inputs, it falls short in defining these inputs and recognizing their effects. Donnor and Shockley (2010) view NCLB as having a disconnect between federal education policy and the skill requirements for the workplace; a misalignment between standards-based assessment and practice; as falling short in recognizing the inability of standardized test to promote contextual learning and skills for post-industrial economy. These shortfalls further emphasizes that NCLB offers very few material solutions and further marginalizes students currently situated at the low-end of the academic achievement gap.

### **Education Experiences**

Given the promise and potential of high quality early childhood programs like NCLB to dramatically alter the life trajectories of many young African American boys, Noguera (2002) contended that African American males are beset with such an ominous array of social and economic hardships, it is hardly surprising that the experience of Black males in education, with respect to attainment and most indicators of academic performance, also show signs of trouble and distress. He believes there is considerable confusion regarding why being Black and male

causes this segment of the population to stand out in the most negative and alarming ways both in school and the larger society.

In the quest to understand this uncertainty, Townsend (2000) applied Polite's chaos theory (1994) from physics to the circumstances facing many African American males. Chaos theory suggests that small cumulative events can have important effects: The simple flutter of a butterfly's wings has significant effects on events hemispheres away. In the same way, outcomes experienced by African American males may not appear significant when considered independently of each other. However, phenomena such as overrepresentation in special and remedial classes, suspensions, expulsions, and other indicators of school failure can have cumulative and disastrous effects on African American males.

According to Rashid (2009), it is a national disgrace that preschool programs are now serving as the incubators for a continued legacy of low expectations and educational failure. He included the writings of others, which show, for example, that expulsion rate for preschoolers is higher than the K-12 expulsion rate, and that African American boys are the most likely to be expelled from preschool. In addition, Rashid addressed the theory of Wald and Losen who have wrote about the "school to prison pipeline". To this, Rashid (2009) further alleged that a school to prison pipeline runs from preschool settings through elementary and middle schools and into the high schools from which young African American men continue to drop out in staggering numbers, and ultimately into federal and state prisons.

Relative to high school completion, Johnson and Perkins (2009) contended that keeping at risk students in school until graduation has been a main concern for schools, communities, states, and the federal government since the 1970s when large cities across the country began

seeing the number of dropouts rise. They further emphasized that dropout rates for students in extremely distressed, impoverished neighborhoods can be “at risk” as much as three times the national average. Noguera (1997) added that the high school dropout rate for Black males is as high as 20-30 percent. Additionally, it is now estimated that 44 percent of all Black men are functionally illiterate. Suh and Suh (2004) speculated that students drop out of high school for various reasons. They surmised that once students dropped out, their decision to complete a high school education afterwards was associated with factors different from drop out characteristics. According to Entwisle, Alexander and Olson (2004), just as the choice to drop out links to prior life history, so must the choice to return to school or seek a GED (General Equivalency Diploma). Why some drop-outs later get more schooling while others do not is not altogether clear. These decisions need to be explored further.

As Black males proceed through the educational pipeline, they appear to become less academically engaged. Black males who have an underdeveloped sense of academic identity are less likely to persist in school, more likely to be identified as “at risk,” less likely to be high achievers, more likely to be in special education, and less likely to be identified as gifted, as researched by Whiting (2006). Joe (2009) asserted that education research has consistently indicated the underachievement of African American males throughout their academic trajectories (from elementary to post-secondary school). These existing academic disparities are seen as early as kindergarten; thereby suggesting that differences among children’s school readiness begins prior to school entry. As suggested by Amatea et al. (2006), assessment and intervention efforts need to be redirected from looking at how children’s learning problems are caused to looking for family strengths, or resiliencies, that can be employed to resolve a child’s problem. Thus, Amatea is vigilant in rejecting the idea that family structure or socioeconomic

status alone is a reason for students not succeeding in school. Researchers proposed a family process perspective, which posited that it is the beliefs, activities, and overall style of interaction of the entire family that produces the necessary mental structures for children's successful school performance.

Myers and Taylor (1998) indicated that there is little doubt about the contribution of factors external to and within African American families to vulnerability and/or resistance to the challenges posed by their social contexts. What has been missing to date, according to Myers and Taylor, are more studies that identify risk factors damaging to the development of inner-city African American children and which coping strategies, social supports and other resources effectively moderate risks. Noguera (2002) agreed that despite the fact that African American males are confronted with a variety of obstacles and challenges, some Black males still find ways to survive and, in some cases, to excel. Interestingly, he observed, we know much less about resilience, perseverance, and the coping strategies employed by individuals whose lives are surrounded by hardships, than we know about those who succumb and become victims of their environment. He concluded that deepening our understanding of how individuals cope with, and respond to, their social and cultural environments is an important part of finding ways to assist Black males with living healthy and productive lives.

Unger (2004) stated that the monitoring of children by parents, disciplinary styles, quality of the relationship between parent and children, the psychosocial condition of the parent(s), and cohesion of the family unit have all been shown to be highly correlated with mental health outcomes and behavior among children and youth growing up under adversity. However, how the parent and family factors exert this influence on children's well-being and the protective mechanisms through which mental health is enhanced and behavioral adjustment under stress

promoted are less well understood. As such, Wampler and Downs (2010), believe the stability of a person's attachment pattern, as well as factors that can alter the pattern under certain circumstances has been demonstrated in several longitudinal studies (Grossman & Grossman, 1990; Main, 1996; Sroufe, 1991). In studies with children, the presence of at least one healthy attachment to a significant adult is omnipresent when resilience is identified (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). However, according to Gregory and Rimm-Kaufman (2008), research on the effects of early mother-child interactions on children's early schooling is extensive, but research that follows children into their high school years is less common. Whether positive mother-child interactions remain protective for older adolescents facing risk and is promotive for all adolescents, regardless of risk, remains open to question.

In summary, empirical investigations of the influence of family characteristics on children's academic outcomes have emphasized the role of the parent as an important mediating factor in a child's academic achievement, and this is particularly true for African American boys (Floyd, 1996; Gutman et al.2002; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Somers, Owens, & Pilawsky, 2008; Wilson, 2009). Educational policy initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have increased accountability among institutions, educators, and parents to better prepare children to succeed academically. However, there is little empirical evidence regarding the extent to which parents' roles (within the home and within their children's schools) influence the school readiness and early academic achievement of African American boys, according to Joe and Davis (2009). They also indicated that the home environments of families are thought to be critical settings for preparing children for school and for fostering their academic achievement. Masten (2001) stated that resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of

children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities. Martin et al. (2007) suggested that the linking of academic achievement with clinical assessment and remediation has not been fully examined when attempting to help African American male adolescents. Accordingly, Masten (2001) indicated that the task before us now is to delineate how adaptive systems develop, how they operate under diverse conditions, how they work for or against success for a given child in his or her environmental and developmental context, and how they can be protected, restored, facilitated, and nurtured in the lives of children. These theories lead to an exploration of attachment theory and how it connects to a commitment to completing education.

### **Attachment Theory: An Overview**

Over time children acquire capacities to direct their own behavior, inhibit action, focus attention, regulate emotional arousal, and maintain social relations in accord with and in response to the demands of their social environment (Lewis, Feiring, & Rosenthal, 2000). These developing competencies are the foundation of children's socio-emotional and academic adjustment (Barbarin, 1993b). The nature of the parent-child relationship during infancy and toddlerhood (most frequently assessed through the attachment paradigm known as the Strange Situation) is widely believed to be an essential factor in the child's personality development and behavioral adjustment (Bowlby, 1977; Brumariu & Kerns, 2010; Sonkim, 2005; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; & Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000).

Among those family protective factors that have been found to have the strongest influence on young adult involvement in risk taking behaviors and delinquency are those that relate to parental attachment, that is, the degree of closeness, warmth, respect, and affection shared between parent and child (Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Lewis et al., 2000; Main,



1996; Wampler & Downs, 2010; Waters et al., 2000). Several researchers (Hamilton, 2000; Hoover, 2002; Myers, 1998; and Scharf et al., 2004) have argued that attachment theory may have a particular relevance in understanding coping because attachment behaviors are directed toward maintaining homeostasis by seeking proximity or closeness to supportive attachment figures.

An examination of the quality of attachment in African American youth at risk is necessary as a link between this relationship and resiliency. Such an analysis will provide culturally specific indicators as well as reveal how the components of resiliency correlate with attachment categories (Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Grossman & Grossman, 1990; Luthar et al., 2000; Main, Hesse, & Hesse, 2011; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Noguera, 2002; Sroufe, 1991; Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; & Wampler & Downs, 2010).

Psychodynamic, social learning, and family systems theories have acknowledged that the quality of the parent-child relationship plays an important role in creating or perpetuating behavioral problems (DeKlyen, 1996). Loeber and Hay (1997) included that for a substantial number of children, factors occurring during infancy and the preschool years appeared to set a developmental trajectory that leads transactionally to school-age conduct disorders, adolescent violence and serious offending, and adult psychiatric disorders.

Interest in the type of attachment bonds that are formed has been evidenced by the abundance of articles investigating attachment theory covering developmental inquiries from birth through adulthood. Both attachment theory and theories of adolescence agree that the resolution of challenges during developmental stages influence subsequent development. Rice (1997) emphasized that there is a considerable consensus that many important developmental tasks of adolescence find their resolution in the context of attachment and family relationships

(see also Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Hamilton, 2000; Lewis, Feiring, & Rosenthal, 2000). Adolescents who are unable to reach out to adults and utilize potential supports often have relational difficulties later in life (Bowlby, 1977; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Scharf, Mayselless & Kivenson-Baron, 2004).

Initially, attachment styles were identified through the laboratory observations of Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978), known as the Strange Situation. In the Strange Situation, the caregiver (most times the mother) –infant interactions are observed. The original experiment consists of the following procedures: a stranger enters the room, and interacts briefly with the caregiver; the caregiver leaves the room and the stranger remains; the infant and the stranger spend time alone in the room without the caregiver; the caregiver returns and the stranger leaves the room. The caregiver-infant interaction is rated by observing the infant's behavior when left alone, with the stranger, and during each reunion with the mother.

Three categories of attachment were developed after observing the infants' behaviors toward the mother during the Strange Situation: secure, avoidant and resistant-ambivalent. In 1986, researchers Main and Solomon identified a fourth classification category when a group of infants consistently did not meet the above classifications: disorganized-disoriented. Through these studies, secure infants showed signs of missing the parent during the first separation and cried during the second separation. The secure infant greeted the parent actively and, after maintaining contact with the parent, settled and returned to play. The avoidant infant did not cry upon separation and actively avoided and ignored the parent upon reunion; moving away from and turning away when picked up. The resistant-ambivalent infant appeared preoccupied with the parent throughout the entire procedure and seemed angry, while simultaneously seeking and resisting the parent. The infant failed to return to exploration upon reunion and continued to

focus on the parent while crying. The fourth category is the disorganized-disoriented infant. This group of infants displayed disorganized behaviors in the parent's presence. For example, the infant froze up displaying a trance-like expression or clung to the care taker while leaning away from the parent (Main, 1996). These descriptions of infants' behaviors help clarify the attachment classifications that are used to categorize children, as well as adolescent attachment styles and to provide a foundation for adult classifications as well.

Bowlby's attachment theory purported that repeated early caregiver-infant interactions resulted in the development of internal working models. It is the type of attachment bond formed during infancy that becomes the template for continued and future attachments. Working models are the conceptualized beliefs that one has developed about their lovableness, worthiness, and competence in relationship to others. What is desired and elicited from others connects primarily to responsive care-giving and whether or not there is a feeling of security when danger is present. When a secure internal working model is developed, which evolves from consistent interactions, a strategy is formed that involves a coherent integration of information about the attachment figure as well as adaptive affect regulation (Rosenstein & Horowitz, 1996). They also indicated that unresponsive, interfering, rejecting, and otherwise insensitive parenting fosters the development of insecure working models.

Attachment styles can be grouped into two broad categories: secure and insecure (Ainsworth, 1979, 1985, 1989; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Table 1 presents a summary of attachment styles. As attachment style research advances, styles once attributed solely to infants and children have been expanded along a continuum incorporating adult behaviors.

An examination of the quality of the care-giver-child relationship (attachment) of African American male young adults at risk is a necessary link between this relationship and resilient pathways.

Table 1

*Attachment Styles*

<b>Child Attachment Style:</b>	<b>Adult Attachment Style:</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Secure</b></p> <p>Child continues to explore environment after reunion with caregiver Positive affect Positive perception of self Better school adjustment Greater language skills Greater conflict resolution skills</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Secure/Autonomous</b></p> <p>Adult has awareness of the importance of attachments Views the self and others positively</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Avoidant</b></p> <p>Child appears indifferent when reuniting with caregiver Lower externalizing behavior Less socially competent Most likely to victimize others at school Most likely to be rejected by teachers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dismissing/Avoidant</b></p> <p>Withdrawn, rejecting of attachments based in fear of being rejected or hurt therefore does not value/minimizes attachments Views self as positive and others as negative</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Resistant/Ambivalent</b></p> <p>Child seems distressed and clingy with the caregiver and has a hard time re-engaging in exploratory play High level of externalizing behavior Most likely to be pampered by teacher Most likely to be victims at school</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Preoccupied/Anxious</b></p> <p>Angry; blurred boundaries; anxious Awareness of the importance of attachment, but past fuses with present Views self as negative and others as positive</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Disorganized/Disoriented</b></p> <p>Reunion behavior cannot be classified into one of the above categories; child fluctuates between various styles Substantial problems at school Exhibits substantial aggression</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unresolved/Disorganized</b></p> <p>Frightened by memory of past traumas; often slips into past experiences of being unsafe Views self and others negative</p>

### Chapter III

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationships between attachment styles, perceived parental attachment styles, and indicators of resiliency among at risk African-American male students who have not completed high school by the age of 18. This chapter will address the methods and procedure to be used in this study.

### **Sample**

The subjects for this study were 180 African American males aged 18-21 re-enrolling in an inner-city high school program. These at risk young adults have reached an academic level ranging from 9th -12th grade, but have not been able to negotiate the educational system with age appropriate maturational skills. As stated earlier, these males have varied combinations of at risk indicators: school absenteeism, truancy and multiple suspensions, histories of assaultive and aggressive behaviors, moderate to severe emotional and behavioral problems, poor self control, deficient educational and academic skills, criminal records, noncompliance to codes of conduct, ineffective socialization and communication skills, and/or inconsistent and poor motivation.

### **Measurement Instruments**

The study incorporated two major measures, one for resiliency and one for attachment mode. A biographic data questionnaire was also be included. The measures will be discussed in detail in this section.

#### ***Resilience Skills and Abilities Scale***

Resiliency will be assessed using the Resilience Skills and Abilities Scale (RSAS) developed by Jew, Green, and Kroger (1999). The scale contains 45 items that assess three resiliency factors: Future Orientation (FO, 13 items), Active Skill Acquisition (ASA, 21 items),

and Independence/Risk-Taking (IRT, 11 items). Each item is anchored to a six-point Likert type response mode as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = mildly disagree, 4 = mildly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Each scale is scored using the following techniques: first, negatively worded items are reverse coded; second, the scores are summed over all items comprising each scale; third, the total score is divided by the number of items. Therefore, each scale has a theoretical range from 1 to 6.

Future Orientation (FO) is defined as the ability to have faith in the future and take future goals into one's decision-making. Typical items assessing the future orientation scale are: "I look forward to my future," "In general, life is good," and "I feel like there's hope for tomorrow." In a sample of 392 7th through 12th grade students of predominantly European-American parents, the scale was administered twice with an interval of 4 months, as were the other two scales, achieving coefficient alphas of .91 and .95 on the pre-test and post test, respectively. A stability coefficient was obtained by correlating scores from the pre-test with the post test, which was .57.

Active Skill Acquisition (ASA) refers to willingness to help others and receive help from others. Typical items from the ASA scale are: "My teachers or counselors have been very helpful in getting me through rough times," "if one of my parents developed a serious illness, I would learn a lot about it so that I could help them," and "I help others who can't help themselves." The coefficient alphas achieved by the ASA scale were .79 on the pretest and .81 on the post test. The stability coefficient was .48.

Independent Risk Taking (IRT) is defined as the ability to make decisions on one's own and take risks in one's decision-making. Typical items from the IRT scale are: "Sometimes it is worth it to take risks that I shouldn't," "Sometimes I need to take risks to make things better,"

and "I can usually recognize when situations might be dangerous." Coefficient alphas achieved by the IRT were .68 on the pretest and .77 on the post test. The stability coefficient was .36.

The three scales obtained sufficient levels of internal consistency. Alpha reliability coefficients were substantially above the minimum of .60 for attitude surveys. Stability coefficients must be evaluated in terms of the amount of time between pretest and post test. In this case, it was four months. Stability coefficients indicate acceptable stability for the FO and ASA scales ( $r \approx .50$ ); the IRT scale was less stable over time.

The Resiliency Skills and Abilities Scale (RSAS) was assessed for validity using several methods. Convergent validity was assessed in two ways: first, the three scales were intercorrelated for both pretest and post test assessments. On the pretest, intercorrelations ranged from .25 (ASA with IRT) to .50 (FO with ASA). On the post test, intercorrelations ranged from .34 (ASA with IRT) to .70 (FO with ASA). All correlations were significant at or above the .05 level, indicating that they were significant around the central construct of resiliency. Post test the resiliency scores were then correlated with a measure of student coping skills (A-cope) with the expectations that the higher the resiliency, the better the coping skills. This expectation was met with significant correlations ranging from .26 (IRT) to .60 (FO).

Predictive validity was assessed by comparing students classified as at risk or not at risk based on self-report of the following problems: parental death, divorce, alcohol and substance abuse, physical abuse, and trouble with law enforcement. T-tests were conducted to compare at risk and non-at risk groups on the resiliency measures with the expectations of the students who are not at risk score significantly higher than those at risk. Significant differences were found on all five indicators for the FO scale and for substance abuse and trouble with the law for the ASA scale. No significant differences were found between the two groups on the IRT scale.



Earlier versions of the scale were correlated with elastic achievement, locus of control, athletic performance, and friendships. In each case, students evidencing higher scores on resiliency scored higher on each of these dimensions. Jew et al. (1999) concluded that the RSAS validly measured resiliency.

**Flesch Reading Ease Test.** This test rates text on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard files, you want the score to be between 60 and 70. The Resilience Skills and Abilities Scale's score is 72.3.

**Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test.** This test rates a text on U.S. school grade level. For example, a score of 8.0 means that an eighth grader can understand the document. For most documents, a score of 7.0-8.0 is achieved. The Resilience Skills and Abilities Scale's score is 5.3.

### **Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory**

Attachment styles and perceived parental attachment was assessed utilizing the Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory (CAPAI) (Moretti, McKay, & Holland, 2000). The CAPAI consists of two major scales (18 items each, scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale from *disagree strongly* to *agree strongly*) designed to provide continuous ratings on dimensions of anxiety and avoidance.

Anxiety is defined in this study as fear of abandonment by a parent (Steiger, 1996). Typical items on the anxiety scale are: "When I'm away from my parent I feel anxious and afraid," "I resent it when my parent spends time away from me," and "My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away."

Avoidance is defined in the study as discomfort with closeness and dependency (Steiger, 1996). Typical items on the avoidant scale are, "I worry about being abandoned by my parent,"

"I often wish that my parents feelings for me were strong as my feelings are for my parent," and "I resent it when my parent spends time away from me."

The Anxiety (X) and Avoidance (V) scales are computed using the summed scale technique after reverse coding all positive items (e.g., "I tell my parent just about everything" [V]). Because both scales contain 18 items, the theoretical range of scores for each is from 18 to 126. Median splits are used to categorize participants into the four dimensions: preoccupied (anxious; high anxiety, low avoidance), fearful (disorganized; high anxiety, high avoidance), dismissing (avoidant; low anxiety, high avoidance) and secure (low anxiety, low avoidance) orientations, Steiger (1996).

The Avoidance and Anxiety scales were assessed for reliability and validity using a sample of 164 young people between the ages of 11 and 17 who had been referred for treatment in a Canadian mental-health center. The sample was 77% White, 16% Canadian Native Americans, and 7% other. The Avoidant scale achieved coefficient alpha of .91 and the alpha coefficient for the Anxiety scale was .89. The scores indicated high levels of internal consistency. No stability coefficients were reported.

Factorial validity was conducted by factor analyses of the items on the CAPAI. The factor analysis confirmed the two factor structure of the CAPAI. In general, items loaded as expected on the Avoidance and Anxiety scales. The two scales were independent of each other, correlating non-significantly ( $r = -.02$ ).

In addition to the CAPAI, study participants took the Youth Self-Report (YSR). This report is a self administered assessment of psychological problems on several dimensions, including social withdrawal, aggressive behavior, anxiety/depression, and somatic complaints. For the testing of the validity of the CAPAI, YSR internalization and externalization scores were

used. In addition, they were assessed on the Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI-II) and the Weschler intelligence scales (WISC-III for those less than 16 years old and the WAIS for those aged 16 and above).

According to Steiger (1996), discriminant validity (test constructs that are not related, indeed show no relationship) was assessed by correlating CAPAI anxiety and avoidance scores with IQ scores, with the expectations that they would not be significantly correlated. Correlations were weak, negative, and not significant. However, when participants were classified by attachment type, lower IQ participants evidenced lower avoidant and preoccupied attachment styles. Steiger opined that adolescents with lower IQs may be more dependent on caregivers and therefore less avoidant.

Convergent validity (tests constructs that are expected to be related show a relationship) was assessed by correlating scores on the Anxiety and Avoidance scales with the Internal and External Problems scores from the YSR and the BDI-II depression scores, with the expectations that the Anxiety and Avoidance Scales would have moderate correlations with indicators of psychological problems. These expectations were empirically verified. All correlations of the Avoidance and Anxiety scales scores with internalization, externalization, and depression scores were significant, with the correlations between Anxiety scale significantly higher than the correlations for the Avoidance scale and the criterion variables. Correlations between anxiety and the YSR and BDI-II range from .35 to .51 ( $ps < .01$ ); correlations for avoidance were between .19 and .28 ( $ps < .05$ ).

In addition, participants were classified into the four attachment types and MANOVA's were run using attachment type and gender as factors. Between-subjects differences indicated significant differences between attachment types and depression scores and YSR internalization

and externalization scores, with a secure attachment type having the lowest scores on the criterion variables (Steiger 1996).

With the exception of the anomalous relationship between IQ scores and avoidance and preoccupied attachment styles, the CAPAI showed evidence of factorial, discriminate, and convergent validity in the assessment of adolescent-parent attachment. Although it was not assessed using an African-American population, the evidence suggests that the administration should yield valid results. This will be an expansion of the test validation on a new population.

**Flesch Reading Ease Test.** This test rates text on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard files, you want the score to be between 60 and 70. The Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory's score is 68.9.

**Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test.** This test rates a text on U.S. school grade level. For example, a score of 8.0 means that an eighth grader can understand the document. For most documents, a score of 7.0-8.0 is achieved. The Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory's score is 6.8.

### **Data Collection**

I was granted permission to conduct the study by the school district's Internal Review Board and the programs' Director. A list of potential candidates was solicited from the programs' social workers and/or guidance counselors. A meeting of interested candidates will occur. At this time the study was explained and consent forms were given to those who chose to participate.

Administration of the measures was be overseen by each of the six social workers of the programs. The social workers were exposed to and in-serviced on the two instruments (RSAS

and CAPAI) and standardized administration procedures were be taught and reviewed by me. Special attention and explicit instructions were given to stop administration if subjects stated or appeared to have discomfort in completion. All participation was voluntary and subjects were permitted to withdraw at any point without consequences.

The program's social workers received an administration date and time. The subjects were given verbal instructions and reading/terminology support was given on an individual as needed basis. Time and sequence of questionnaire completion was not constrained. Completed questionnaires remained anonymous and were coded via a numeric system, returned to the chief researcher, and kept in a secured location.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Preliminary analyses consisted of frequencies and distributions of the people most important in raising participants and descriptive statistics of the major indicators in the study. Means, standard deviations, and alpha reliability coefficients were analyzed on the resiliency indicators of FO, ASA, and ISR from the RSAS and the Anxiety and Avoidance scales from the CAPAI.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis 1, which stated, There will be fewer at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school with secure attachment styles than other attachment styles, was assessed using a 2 X 2 cross tabular analysis and the chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic.

Hypothesis 2, which stated, Those at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school who designate their mother as most important in rearing them will

have more secure attachment styles than those who designate other persons as most important in raising them, was tested using a 2 X 2 cross tabular analysis and the chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic.

Hypothesis 3, which stated, Those at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school who designate their mother as most important in rearing them will have greater resiliency than those who designate other persons as most important in raising them, was tested using *t*-tests comparing those indicating mothers and those not indicating mothers as their primary caretaker on the three subscales of the RSAS.

Hypothesis 4, which stated, At risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school who have secure attachment types will have higher levels of resilience than those who have other attachment types, was tested using multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) with the four attachment styles as the factor, and the three subscales of the RSAS as the dependent variables. If Hypothesis 3 is confirmed, then Hypothesis 4 will be tested using a two-way MANOVA that will include mother/other as a second factor. All hypotheses will be tested at an alpha level of .05.

#### **Power Analysis**

A preliminary power analysis concluded that a medium effect size ( $f=.25$ ) through an analysis of variance utilizing the four attachment types. According to this power analysis a sample size of 180 participants is needed. If the attachment types were combined into two or three categories (i.e. collapse the three non-secure attachment types and compare them to the secure attachment type) then a sample size of 128 participants will achieve the same power results.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

This population African American, adolescent males who had dropped out of high school, was very transient, suspicious, reluctant to participate, and had very high absenteeism rates. To this end, the number of subjects was reduced from 180 to 80. To assure the validity, reliability, and the integrity of the experiment, a power analysis was conducted using G\*power software. For hypotheses 1 and 2, a power analysis was conducted with a sample size of 80 with an effect size of .33 for cross-tabular analysis using the goodness of fit criterion (hypothesis testing at  $\alpha = .05$ ). The goodness of fit criterion measured the extent to which the observed distribution differed from a random distribution. The effect size of .33 produced a medium effect size, which is the default criterion for power analysis. The resulting power coefficient is .84; above the minimum criterion of .80. Therefore, the attenuation of the sample size does not reduce the power of the analysis below the minimum criterion.

Hypothesis 3 was reassessed again with G\*power software specifying a sample of 80 ( $\alpha = .05$ ), with a medium effect size of .5 (a deviation between the two means of one half of a standard deviation). The power coefficient was .72, slightly beneath the criterion of .80. Using an effect size of .6, the power coefficient was .84. This means that Hypothesis 3 required a slightly larger than medium effect size to achieve the power ratio of .80. Hypothesis 4 was tested using multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) with the four attachment styles as the factor, and the three subscales of the RSAS as the dependent variables.

Because Hypothesis 4 is a multivariate hypothesis that has for groups and three measures, and the possibility of two factors, there was no empirical basis on which to judge the effect size. For a small effect size, there would be .25 of a standard deviation (effect size = .11) between

secure attachment and the other attachment types, the power coefficient would be .66. For a medium sized effect size (.50 of a standard deviation, effect size = .22), the power coefficient would be .89, well above the minimal criterion. Therefore, the MANOVA was run as stated as the methodology. The statistical output demonstrated the power coefficient of each factor. Because the power is weak, the following strategy was employed: collapse the non-secure attachment styles into a single category and the MANOVA was employed. According to G\*power, assuming a small effect size of .25, the power coefficient for two groups with three measures is .96.

In conclusion, the assessment of the attenuation of the sample size only marginally affected the inferential power of the statistics and did not threaten the validity of the findings.

This chapter contains two major sections plus a summary. The first section presented descriptive data on the participants; the second section contains the results of testing the hypotheses. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

### **Preliminary Findings**

In this section, descriptive findings related to participants' demographic backgrounds, parenting, family integrity, and motivation to return to school are presented. Table 2 presents data on the demographic background of the study participants.

Participants ranged between the ages of 18 and 21, with the majority (65.1%) below the age of 20. Most (61.3%) were 12th-graders; slightly more than one quarter (26.3%) were 11th graders. Seven and one half percent were 10th-graders and 5.0% were ninth graders.

Categorically, when queried about the number of siblings they had, 23.8% were either the oldest child or an only child; 22.5% had one older sibling, 26.3% had two older siblings, and 27.5% had three or more older siblings. Similarly, 23.8% were either the youngest child or an



only child; 20.0% had one older sibling, 23.8% had two older siblings, and 32.5% had three or more older siblings.

Table 2

*Demographic Background of Study Participants (N = 80)*

Demographic Variable	N	%
<b>Age</b>		
18	27	33.8
19	25	31.3
20	13	16.3
21	15	18.8
<b>Grade</b>		
9	4	5.0
10	6	7.5
11	21	26.3
12	49	61.3
<b>Older siblings</b>		
0	19	23.8
1	18	22.5
2	21	26.3
3	11	13.8
4	3	3.8
5	4	5.0
6+	4	5.0
<b>Younger siblings</b>		
0	19	23.8
1	16	20.0
2	19	23.8
3	11	13.8
4	7	8.8
5	3	3.8
6+	5	6.3

Table 3 contains the descriptive results on parenting. A majority (63.8%) indicated that they were raised by their mother; 21.3% indicated they were raised by their father, and 20% indicated that they were raised by their grandmother. Thirteen and eight tenths percent indicated

they were raised by somebody other than a close relative; 7.5% indicated that they were raised by an aunt and 1.3% indicated that they were raised by either a stepfather or an uncle. Results sum to over 100% because some participants indicated more than one person was involved in their rearing. Interestingly, being reared by step-mothers was not indicated at all.

Table 3

*Frequencies and Distributions on Parenting (N = 80)*

Parenting	N	%
Who raised you?		
Mother	51	63.8
Father	17	21.3
Grandmother	16	20.0
Other	11	13.8
Aunt	6	7.5
Stepfather	1	1.3
Uncle	1	1.3
Who do you call parent?		
Mother	61	76.3
Father	26	32.5
Grandmother	9	11.3
Other	8	10.0
Stepfather	2	2.5
Aunt	2	2.5
Who do you count on most?		
Mother	49	61.3
Other	22	27.5
Father	4	5.0
Grandmother	2	2.5
Aunt	1	1.3
Uncle	1	1.3

More than three fourths (76.3%) of the respondents indicated that they called their mother their parent; less than half that called fathers their parent (32.5%). Eleven and three tenths percent indicated that their grandmother was their parent, 10.0% designated some non-close

relative as their parent, and 2.5% each indicated a stepfather or an aunt as their parent. Results sum to over 100% because some participants indicated more than one parent.

Most participants (61.3%) indicated that they counted on their mother most; 27.5% counted on some other person; not family related, such as self or a romantic partner. Close relatives such as father (5.0%), grandmother (2.5%), and aunt and uncle (1.3% each) accounted for the remainder of people counted on most.

Table 4 contains the descriptive data on family integrity. Only 23.8% of the respondents indicated that their parents were living together; 75.0% of respondents said their parents were not living together, and one person (1.3%) did not answer the question. Slightly more than two thirds (68.8%) of respondents indicated that their parents were separated; 28.8% of respondents indicated their parents were not separated, and 2.5% of respondents did not answer the question. When asked whether their parents ever lived together, 83.8% indicated that they had, 13.8% indicated that they had not, and 2.5% did not answer the question.

Table 4

*Frequencies and Distributions on Family Integrity (N = 80)*

Family integrity	N	%
Parents together		
Yes	19	23.8
No	60	75.0
Missing	1	1.3
Parents separated		
Yes	55	68.8
No	23	28.8
Missing	2	2.5
Parents ever together		
Yes	67	83.8
No	11	13.8
Missing	2	2.5

Study participants were asked who or what made them decide to return to school. It was an open-ended question. Responses (see Table 5) were coded under who and what. The majority (56.3%) wrote that they had decided to return to school on their own. Mothers (11.3%) were the most important outside person that influenced the decision, followed by the family (7.5%), having a baby (3.8%), a sister or girlfriend was influential in 5% of the cases, and one person each (1.3%) mentioned a guidance counselor, the influence of the community or friends.

When students wrote about what made them return to school, 35.0% indicated that they needed an education to improve their future prospects, to get a job, or to get certification in technical fields. Another 10.0% suggested that getting an education was an alternative to getting into trouble or going to prison. Another 5.0% identified a change in their motivation as making them more open to education. One person (1.3%) mentioned that he wanted to be a role model, get better grades, or go to college.

Table 5

*Responses to, "Who or What Made You Decide to Come Back to School?" (N = 80)*

Motivator	N	%
<b>Who</b>		
Self	45	56.3
Mother	9	11.3
Family	6	7.5
Baby	3	3.8
Sister	2	2.5
Girlfriend	2	2.5
Counselor	1	1.3
Community	1	1.3
Friends	1	1.3
<b>What</b>		
Need a future	8	10.0
Need a job	8	10.0
Need a diploma	8	10.0
Trouble/drift	7	8.8

Change in motivation	4	5.0
Need an education	4	5.0
Want to be a role model	1	1.3
Grades	1	1.3
Want to go to college	1	1.3
Prison	1	1.3

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### Hypothesis Testing

In this section, the four hypotheses of this study are assessed. Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be fewer at risk young adult African-American males who have not completed high school with secure attachment styles than other attachment styles. Table 6 contains the cross tabulation of observed and expected distributions on attachment styles.

Table 6

*Crosstabulation of Observed and Expected Distributions on Attachment Styles, with Norms from the Literature*

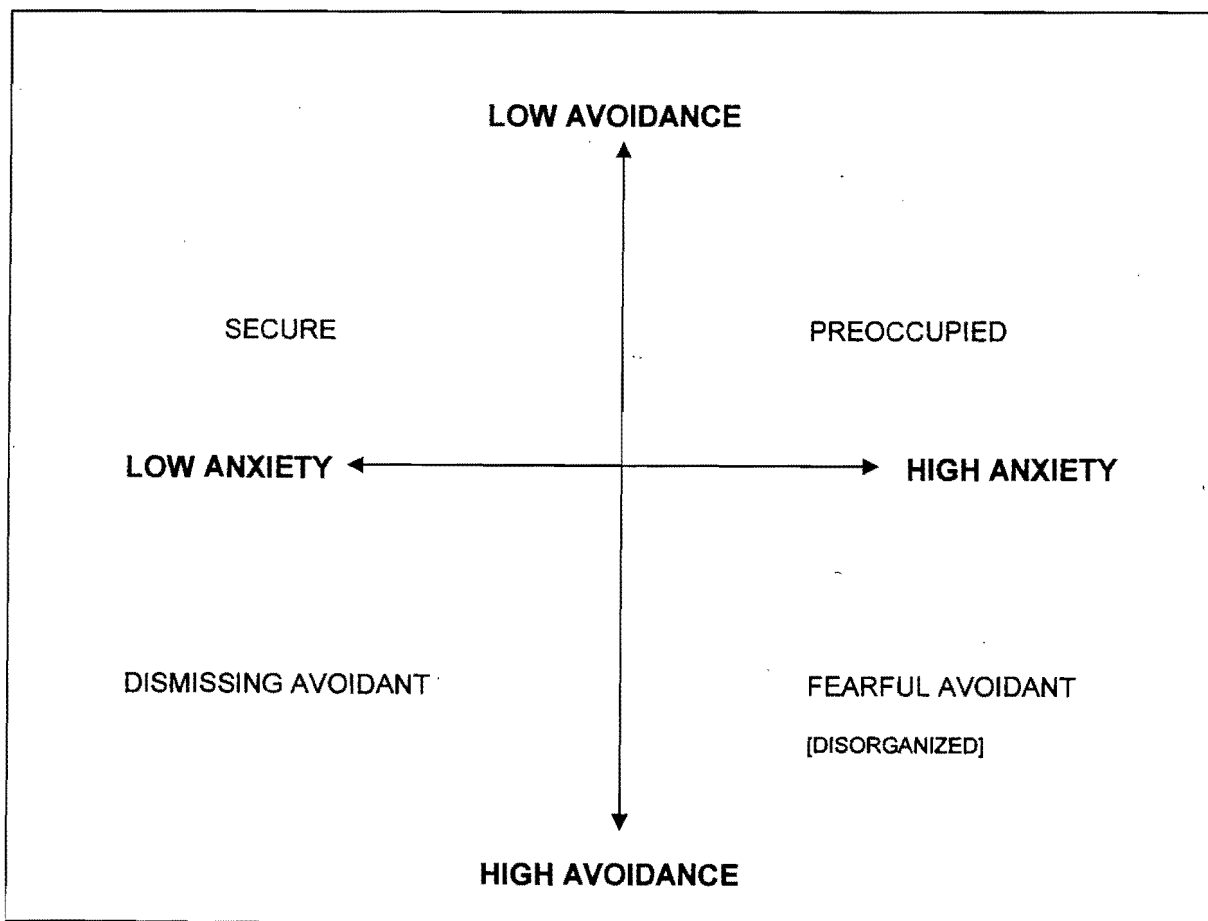
Attachment Type	Observed	Expected	Literature
<b>Secure</b>			
<i>N</i>	28	20	
%	35.0	25.0	65 <sup>a, b, c, g</sup> 59 <sup>d</sup> 70 <sup>e</sup> 70 <sup>f</sup>
<b>Dismissing/Avoidant</b>			
<i>N</i>	12	20	
%	15.0	25.0	20 <sup>a, e, f, g</sup> 21 <sup>b, c</sup> 25 <sup>d</sup>
<b>Preoccupied/Ambivalent</b>			
<i>N</i>	14	20	
%	17.5	25.0	10-15 <sup>a</sup> 14 <sup>b, c</sup> 11 <sup>d</sup> 10 <sup>e, f</sup> 15 <sup>g</sup>
<b>Fearful/Disorganized</b>			
<i>N</i>	26	20	
%	32.5	25.0	10-15 <sup>a</sup> 5 <sup>d</sup>
<b>Total</b>			
<i>N</i>	80	80.0	
%			
	100.0	100.0	

Note:  $\chi^2$  (3 df) = 10.00,  $p < .05$ .

*Literature Sources:* <sup>a</sup>V. L. Colin (1991). *Infant attachment: What we now know*. Chevy Chase, MD: Department of Health and Human Services, Nancy Low & Associates; <sup>b</sup>S. Goldberg, (1991). Recent developments in attachment theory and research. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry / La Revue canadienne de psychiatrie*, 36(6), 393-400; <sup>c</sup>M. Main, E. Hesse, & S. Hesse, (2011). Attachment theory and research: Overview with suggested applications to child custody. *Family Court Review*, 49(3), 426-463; <sup>d</sup>K. D. Mickelson, R. C. Kessler, & P. R. Shaver (1997). Adult attachment in a nationally representative sample. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 1092-1106; <sup>e</sup>A. Sagi, & M. H. VanIjzendoorn (1991). Primary appraisal of the Strange Situation: A cross-cultural analysis of pre-separation episodes. *Developmental Psychology*, 27(4), 587; <sup>f</sup>J. van Dijk, (1991). *Persons handicapped by rubella: Victors and victims – a follow-up study*. Amsterdam: National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness. <http://www.swets.com>; <sup>g</sup>E. Waters, (1978). The reliability and stability of individual differences in infant mother attachment. *Child Development*, 49(2), 483-494.

As stated in Chapter III, attachment types were computed using median splits on anxiety and avoidance scales. Those study participants who are below the median on both anxiety and avoidance are classified as secure (low anxiety/low avoidance); study participants who are above the median on both scales are identified as fearful/disorganized (high anxiety/high avoidance), whereas those who are high on avoidance but low on anxiety are classified as dismissing/avoidant and those who are high on anxiety but low on avoidance are identified as preoccupied/ambivalent (see Figure 1).

*Dimensions of attachment categories.*



(R. Chris Fraley, 2010).

As can be seen in Table 6 the expected distribution would be 25.0% in each of the four cells. In the observed column, we note that the distribution deviates significantly from randomness ( $\chi^2$  [3 df] = 10.00,  $p < .05$ ), with overrepresentation in secure (35.0%) and fearful/disorganized (32.5%) attachments. It is literally true that there are fewer participants who have secure attachments than other attachments, but this is a reflection of the way in which the classification system was developed and computed within the instrument.

The attachment categories were created by median splits on the fearful/avoidant and preoccupied scales. If the scales were not correlated, then the sample would be evenly distributed among four attachment types. However, the dismissing/avoidant (high avoidance and low anxiety) and preoccupied (high anxiety/low avoidance) scales are moderately correlated ( $r = .60$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Because of this statistical design, the fearful/avoidant [disorganized] (high avoidance/high anxiety) and secure (low avoidance/low anxiety) categories have representations of greater proportions than the dismissing/avoidant (high avoidance/low anxiety) – preoccupied (high anxiety/low avoidance) attachment categories.

Table 6 also contains norms derived from the literature (Colin, 1991; Goldberg, 1991; Main, Hesse, & Hesse, 2011; Mickelson, Kessler et al., 1997; Sagi & VanIjzendoorn, 1991; Waters, 1978). These studies contain data from over 30 years of research on attachment behavior, beginning with the early Ainsworth Strange Situation experiments (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The methods reviewed included, in addition to the strange situation, data from the Attachment Q-sort (Main et al., 2011) and the Adult Attachment Inventory (AAI) (Mickelson et al., 1997). As can be seen in Table 6, the classification results from these studies have been extremely consistent, with secure attachment ranging between 59% and 70%, with 65% as the mode. Similarly, distributions in the non-secure attachment types were also highly



consistent, with the exception of the fearful/disorganized mode. The dismissing/avoidant category hovers around 20% among all studies, while the preoccupied/ambivalent mode ranges between 10-15%.

The fearful/avoidant [disorganized] category was not included in Ainsworth's original categorization system. From the beginning, some attachment responses did not fit into any categories and were left as *unclassified* (Main, 1996). Although Mickelson and associates (1997) used the unclassified label in their research, as far back as 1991, Colin, (1991) identified them as *disorganized* and estimated incidence at between 10-15%. Later, the label was changed to *fearful/disorganized* (Main, 1996). In the Mickelson study, 4.5% of the adults studied fit into that category. In other studies (Goldberg, 1991; Main et al., 2011; Sagi & VanIjzendoorn, 1991), where a fourth category was mentioned, authors regarded the frequency as trace amounts, or less than 5%. It is important to note that because of the way in which the CAPAI is scored, results do not conform to the distributions that are found in the literature. This constitutes a limitation on the generalizability of the findings of the CAPAI.

Therefore, given the statistical limitations, it can tentatively be said that the findings do not support Hypothesis 1, in that the opposite was found. There are more participants who have secure attachments than any of the three other attachment modes. However, these findings only give an indication about the distribution among attachment types. It does not give relevance as to why securely attached individuals return to school after dropping out.

Hypothesis 2 states, that those at risk, young-adult African-American males who have not completed high school who designate their mother as most important in raising them will have more secure attachment styles than those who designate other persons as most important in raising them. This hypothesis was tested using a cross-tabulation that compared participants

with mothers as their primary caretaker with those who designated somebody other than their mother as their primary caretaker on secure attachments and non-secure attachments. In each case, variables were dichotomized, resulting in a 2 x 2 comparison. Those indicating mothers as their primary caretaker constituted 66.3% of the sample, with 33.8% of the sample designating other people as their prime caretakers. The three non-secure attachment styles (dismissing/avoidant, preoccupied/ambivalent and fearful/disorganized) were collapsed into a single category. The distributions are presented In Table 7.

Table 7

*Crosstabulation of Attachment Type by Caretaker*

Attachment Type	Caretaker		Total
	Mother	Other	
<b>Secure</b>			
<i>n</i>	16	12	28
%	30.2	44.4	35.0
<b>Not secure</b>			
<i>n</i>	37	15	52
%	69.8	55.6	65.0
<b>Total</b>			
<i>n</i>	53	27	80
%	66.3	33.8	100.0

Note:  $\chi^2$  (1 df) = 1.60, ns.

Of the 53 participants who indicated their mother as their primary caretaker, 16 (30.2%) had a secure attachment, and of the 27 participants who indicated their primary caretaker was

somebody other than their mother 12 (44.4%) had secure attachments. Therefore, no significant differences were found on attachment types between those participants who had mothers as their primary caretaker and those who had others. Hypothesis 2 was not supported by the findings.

Hypothesis 3 stated, that those at risk, young-adult African-American males who have not completed high school who designate their mother as most important in raising them will have greater resiliency than those who designate other persons as most important in raising them. This hypothesis was tested by comparing those who had designated their mothers as their primary caretaker with those who had somebody else as their primary caretaker on the three resiliency variables on the RSAS (Independence/Risk-Taking, Active Skill Acquisition, Future Orientation) using a *t*-test. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics and t-Values on Resiliency by Caretaker (N = 80)*

Resiliency	Caregiver	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (78)
RSAS Independence Risk Taking					
	Mother	53	4.85	0.88	0.12
	Other	27	4.82	1.08	
RSAS Active Skill Acquisition					
	Mother	53	5.02	0.88	-0.25
	Other	27	5.07	0.92	
RSAS Future Orientation					
	Mother	53	4.87	1.04	-0.52
	Other	27	4.99	0.95	

The data in Table 8 indicate no significant differences between those whose mothers were caretakers compared to those who designated other people as their caretaker on the resiliency scales. Hypothesis 3 was not supported by the findings.

Hypothesis 4 stated that at risk, young-adult, African-American males who have not completed high school who have secure attachment types will have higher levels of resilience than those who have other attachment types. This hypothesis was tested by comparing the four attachment types on the three resiliency scales using a MANOVA. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 9 and a summary of the MANOVA is presented in Table 10.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Resiliency by Attachment Type (N = 80)*

Resiliency/Attachment Type	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
<b>RSAS Independence Risk Taking</b>			
Secure	4.74	1.16	28
Non-secure	4.90	0.82	52
Total	4.84	0.95	80
<b>RSAS Active Skill Acquisition</b>			
Secure	5.16	1.02	28
Non-secure	4.97	0.82	52
Total	5.04	0.89	80
<b>RSAS Future Orientation</b>			
Secure	5.09	1.05	28
Non-secure	4.81	0.98	52
Total	4.91	1.01	80

Table 10

*Summary of MANOVA for Resiliency by Attachment Types (N = 80)*

Source	Dependent Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Attachment Type						
	Independence Risk Taking	3.86	3	1.29	1.46	0.23
	Active Skill Acquisition	3.68	3	1.23	1.59	0.20
	Future Orientation	3.22	3	1.07	1.06	0.37
Error						
	Independence Risk Taking	66.97	76	0.88		
	Active Skill Acquisition	58.77	76	0.77		
	Future Orientation	77.11	76	1.01		
Total						
	Independence Risk Taking	70.83	79			
	Active Skill Acquisition	62.46	79			
	Future Orientation	80.33	79			

Note: Multivariate analyses; Wilkes'  $\lambda = .87$ , partial  $\eta = .05$ , ns.

In the MANOVA, Wilkes  $\lambda$  Indicates whether between-group differences account for a significant portion of variance or not. It was not significant. The partial  $\eta$  indicated that only 5% of the variance could be accounted for between-group differences. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported by the findings.

### Summary of the Findings

The sample consisted of 80 African-American males between the ages of 18 and 21 who had not completed high school, but who had decided to return. They spanned all four high school grades, with 60.0% being 12th-graders. Slightly less than one quarter of the participants had no other siblings at home. An equal amount (76.2%) had either an older or a younger sibling at home. Approximately two thirds were raised by their mother; less than one third had a father present. Although 21.3% of the subjects indicated that their father raised them, only 5.0% indicated that they counted on their fathers the most.

Approximately three quarters of the participants came from families in which their parents had been separated; 13.8% indicated that their parents had never lived together. Most participants indicated that they made the decision to return to school for their own reasons. Their primary motivation for returning to school was to improve their job prospects and their future. Others were motivated by the desire to change their lives because they were in trouble, either with the judicial system or through negative neighborhood associations.

Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be fewer study participants who had dropped out of school with secure attachment types than other attachment types was not proved. The other three hypotheses were not supported by the findings either. That is, there was no evidence indicating that participants who were raised by their mothers would have more secure attachment types or more resiliency than those who were raised by others and that those with secure attachment types would be more resilient than those with other attachment types. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter V

### SUMMARY

There is no disagreement that inner-city African American adolescent males face traumatic experiences, daily stressors, adversities and high levels of negative life events. In addition to coping with the flux associated with adolescent development, the collage of their lives is plastered with pictures of high unemployment rates; absentee fathers; disillusioning role models; family disruptions; disorganized neighborhoods that are unstable, crowded and crime ridden; gang related community violence; inadequate housing; schools of poor quality; decreased access to resources; low socioeconomic status; and pervasive poverty (Barbarin, 1993; Fisher, 2004; Floyd, 1996; Jenkins, 2006; Luthar, 1991; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Noguera, 1997, 2002; Polite, 1994; and Rashid, 2009). As Zimmerman et al., (1999) indicated, few researchers have studied why or how some youth, especially urban, African American adolescents, develop into well-functioning and relatively healthy individuals even in the face of adversity.

The Risk Protective model of resiliency theory suggests that a protective factor serves to moderate the relationship between risk factors and negative outcomes (Amatea et al., 2006; Bowman, 2006; Floyd, 1996; Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Gutman & Misgley, 2000; Gutman et al., 2002; Masten, 2001; Masten, et al., 1990; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Ungar, 2004; Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008a, 2008b; Zimmerman et al., 1999). The purpose of this study, while exploratory in nature, was to evaluate the contribution of attachment factors on resiliency functioning in African American adolescent males.

The underlying notion of this investigation was that, although the school completion path may have been interrupted, having a secure attachment foundation established during the early

childhood years would be identified as a resiliency risk protective factor, thus moderating the return to an academic pathway. A quantitative correlational approach was designed to investigate the role of secure attachment style as the risk protective factor. Proximal exposure via living in an urban environment is a major risk factor, and dropping out of school is a negative outcome. Unfortunately, no empirical relationship between resiliency and secure attachment was found. To this point, Weinfield et al.(2000) believed that resiliency is multi-dimensional and children can have primary, secondary, or tertiary attachment traits which can service the ego depending upon the "strange situation". This adaptation can occur depending upon the stressor, the skills, and the supports of the individual. Consequently, it is not possible to cover all the areas of functioning that might potentially contribute to resilient functioning. Current trends in resiliency research are beginning to explore the possibility of the differing usage of various resiliency systems depending on the situation and the need. For example, given any situation, a person may have a resiliency arsenal consisting of family, individual, social, or environmental resources. The results of this study indicate that individual resources played a major role in the decision to return to school. Combined results indicate that 51.3% of the respondents expressed personal decisions such as: needing an education to improve their future prospects, to get a job, or to get a certification; getting an education was alternative to getting into trouble or going to prison; a change in their motivation thus making them more open to education; and wanting to be a role model, get better grades, or go to college.

### **African American Young Adults at Risk**

Regarding the multiple challenges that inner-city, African American males face in their living environments, it has become apparent that there were other variables that may have been significant to investigate that were not part of this exploratory study. As Vanderbilt and Shaw



(2008) indicated, living in poor dangerous neighborhoods guarantees exposure to risk factors outside the home that affect development. To this point, the type, severity, and level of exposure to environmental risk factors are worth investigating, but are not part of this study.

### **Resiliency**

The lack of correlation between resiliency and secure attachment is best explained by Curtis and Cicchetti (2003) in that understanding of a multi-faceted phenomenon such as resilience, includes the challenge of simultaneously incorporating multiple levels both across and within systems (biological, environmental and social). This study focused on attachment and no other areas of functioning that might potentially contribute to resiliency. This study explored a single domain, attachment. In hindsight, just as significant to African American adolescent male development are themes of poverty, peer support/pressure, education, household headed by one parent, mental and/or physical health, and other prominent living conditions.

### **Family Protective Factors**

Consistent with the research of Blake and Darling (2000), African American families, which include extended family members, remain as a strong, supportive, contributing factor in raising African American children. The results of this study are that 63.8% of participants were raised by their mothers, 21.3% by their fathers, and 28.8% were being raised by other family members. Interestingly, only 5% of the subjects indicated they could not count/rely on their fathers. Whereas the percentage of parental separation was high (68.8), most participants viewed the family structure as being intact with 83.3% describing their families as a unit. The definition of the term *unit* was not explored, thus the seeming contradiction of this score is a limitation of this study. The results do not render an indication that traditionally viewed caregivers (both

parents active in the child (ren) rearing) are a source of distress despite the adversities the families may face.

In African American families, there are multiple caregivers and respondents to the child's needs. Child rearing strategies are diverse (Amatea et al., 2006; Beale-Spencer, 1990; Blake & Darling, 2000; Jackson, 1993; McCabe, 1999; Myers & Taylor, 1998; Salem et al, 1998; Taylor, 1996; Ungar, 2004; Waites, 2009), therefore the original parameters of the traditional strange situation may not manifest in what is viewed as non-traditional child rearing cultures and attachment styles and representations may be developed from other sources that may or may not be viewed as the primary caregiver/parent. Further exploration of the source of attachment styles would enhance the future studies.

### **African American Males and Education**

Research has confirmed that high school dropouts face challenges that remain throughout adulthood, such as difficulties with obtaining and maintaining employment, poor interpersonal relationships, and higher rates of substance abuse. It is interesting to note that 56% of the subjects in this study indicated being self motivated to return to school. These results alluding to a self-motivational factor signifies that some level of internal locus of control had improved/developed since dropping out of school.

Whereas the subjects managed to understand the relationship between academic success and future job opportunities by returning to complete their schooling, a question remains about the subjects' ability to recover from negative circumstances that contributed to the decision to drop out of school. The length of time between dropping out and return and what were the experiences the subjects' encountered while out of school are areas for future research. In other

words, while out of school, what was the length of time and what were the significant experiences that may have contributed to increasing levels of resilience and desire to return and complete school?

### **Attachment Theory**

The most interesting finding relative to attachment is the number of secure attachment classifications this study revealed. Statistically, as indicated, secure attachment was found (35.0%) of greater frequency than the other three attachment styles. Given the foundation that secure attachment provides, one might speculate that a higher number of non-securely attached subjects would not complete school due to early childhood influences which did not adequately develop secure bases of support. This might reflect the development of an insecure attachment. Through the development of non-secure attachment, one is prone to less social competence, more externalizing behavior, greater aggression, engagement difficulties, and substantial problems at school; theoretically, securely attached individuals do not experience such characteristics.

Research has indicated that African American adolescent males who are at a high risk for poor developmental outcomes are more likely to develop non-secure attachments, of which not completing school may be considered a related factor as part of the life lived (Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000). However, in contrast to predictions of poor developmental outcomes, the data in this study (35% observed vs. 25% expected) revealed that securely attached, urban, African American adolescent males who made a decision to drop out of school, eventually return to complete an academic pathway. The question arises: are the high school dropouts returning to school more likely to have secure attachment styles than other forms of attachment styles?

More detailed, comprehensive investigations are needed to tease out other anomalies. Accordingly, Brown and Wright's (2003) study of the relationship between attachment strategies and psychopathology in adolescence highlighted that adolescents classified as having an avoidant attachment pattern were not significantly different from those with secure attachments. This may also be consistent with the proposal that a deactivating strategy is used with avoidant types. The applicability here lies with how questions on self-reporting instruments are answered. When responding on self reporting instruments, a person with an avoidant attachment type might be more inclined to give answers that are more desirable than honest or revealing. Utilizing a deactivating strategy to answer survey questions, one is better able to preserve the integrity of the ego, thereby not evoking undesirable emotional states.

Scharf and Kivenson-Baron (2004) and Weinfield et al., (2000), agree and speculated that possibly there is something about the combination of high rates of attachment related negative life events and the period of late adolescence that makes a dismissing/disorganized state of mind with respect to attachment more likely at this point in [adolescent] development. To these points raised, (Brown & Wright, 2003; Scharf et al., 2004; Weinfield et al., 2000) while completing survey instruments, adolescents' reflection upon past care giving interactions, previous questionable activities, and past failures at school completion may have heighten emotional defenses of this population thus producing higher numbers of secure attachment scores.

With this in mind, the inability to detect the significant correlations between attachment style and resiliency among study participants may be due in part to specific characteristics of the group studied. With this sample, negative life events and stressors are all too common and vary with some stressors diminishing over time. Is there a correlation between

reported attachment styles and changes to resiliency levels as life stressors diminish and/or change? Finally, is there a connection between maturation and secure attachment development?

### **Limitations of the Study**

I used convenience sampling techniques. Convenience sampling introduces sampling biases that are unknown. The African American adolescent males who participated in the study may be different from those who did not participate but met participant criteria. Study related attrition rates were not gathered. This limits the generalizability of the study.

An important limitation in this study is the use of the CAPAI to measure attachment. Because of the way in which the CAPAI is scored, results do not conform to attachment distributions that are found in the literature. Also, the CAPAI was not normed using a sample representing the population of the United States, so there is no external criterion by which the sample is over or underrepresented in the four attachment categories. In order to solve this problem, questions to inquire about caregiver responses were incorporated. This is in alignment with questions on the CAPAI that ask participants to name the person who is their most significant caregiver.

In addition, the way the CAPAI conceptualized the attachment typologies is by obtaining median splits on the anxiety and avoidance scales (Steiger, 1996). This means that each variable is split so that half the sample is above the median and half is below the median. In a median split, scores on linear measurement techniques get subdivided into high and low on each scale, which are cross tabulated, resulting in the four attachment categories. This particular method places severe constraints on the distribution of the sample over the four categories. For example, if the two scales from which the median splits are derived have a correlation of .00, the sample

will necessarily be distributed evenly among the four resulting categories. Contrarily, if the two scales are perfectly correlated ( $r = 1.00$ ), the high/high and low/low cells will each contain 50% of the sample. In addition, the use of median splits loses important information. For example, a subject that scores in the 49th percentile of the distribution is classed as low, while a person who scores at the 51st percentile is classed as high, even though their scores may differ by a single point.

Second, neither measurement instrument was normed or developed to account for differences with and within African American cultures. There continues to be a lack of measurement instruments developed specifically for adolescents and/or African Americans. The scant pool of data and research in the literature indicates that this is not a frequently measured group with the variables investigated in this study. African American males are not often subjects of empirical investigations. Without normative data, there is no way of knowing whether those African-American males in this study, who were defined as having secure attachments, would be defined as having secure attachments in a larger, more diverse population.

Finally, the study did not include cross informant comparisons (i.e., caregivers, parents, teachers, peers) to determine consistency, correlations, or variance of the respondents' view of self, attachment, and resilience. Additionally, it is not clear how much social desirability influenced subjects' responses. This is a population that is often especially guarded and unwilling to share their experiences. Because of these constraints, the generalizability the findings of the study are limited and need to be substantiated by subsequent research.

### **Clinical Implications**

The clinical psychology of resilience and attachment seeks to define and develop the qualities of both areas in an attempt to identify new skills and help empower clients to overcome adversity, embrace change, and thrive. The realization, understanding, and appreciation that biological, environmental, social, and psychological factors have multiple layers and complex interactions is essential. These qualities are critical components to consider and enhance in the treatment process. In treatment, resilience harnesses the strengths and assets of a person and attachment sheds light on how individuals interact and relate. An understanding of all the components that comprise an individual's perceptions, relatedness, lived experiences, and current functioning play a critical role in treatment planning far beyond the role played by simply viewing a person as symptoms and impairment.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Because of the complexities associated with this group, future research that includes multiple methods over time, especially those that do not rely solely on adolescents' self-report measures such as observations, in depth interviews, and production and interpretation of projective representations, would better serve this population because more data would be gathered.

It may be beneficial to assess how the environment may have affected the subject's executive functioning mechanisms such as logical planning, memory, inhibition, attention, attitude awareness, self-confidence, and problem-solving abilities to provide a more accurate baseline of ego integrity and resiliency (Brumariu & Kerns, 2010; Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003; Luther et al., 2000).

Because researchers no longer view resilience as an internal characteristic, but rather as a dynamic process, the question remains: Are resilience levels innate attributes or circumstantial? Vanderbilt and Shaw (2008a, 2008b) stated that resilience may not be generalized, but rather specific, with children showing strengths and weaknesses depending on the domain in question and is often inconsistent across domains. How resilient individuals manifest adaptation in the face of varying stressors and adversity remains yet to be explored; an analysis of various types of risk factors along with levels of resiliency in a longitudinal study would benefit in future studies. Taking into consideration the defensive functioning connected to certain types of attachment style, exploring the connection between resilience and defense mechanisms (processes) is also an important area to investigate. In addition, a study of securely attached individuals who are high school drop-outs would be worthwhile. Researchers could conduct in-depth explorations on the causes, conditions and decisions. Given the desire to develop an identity through acquiring a status, a name and/or a reputation for some inner-city, African American, adolescent males is worthy of investigation. Researchers might gather information about factors that may have contributed to participants being labeled with an at risk status, such as the effect of associations with unconventional neighborhood groups.

Overall, inner-city, African-American adolescent males continue to be a much understudied group and needs much greater understanding through research, and gain assistance through policy development and implementation, and therapeutic interventions. This study has contributed to the data pool in that African American adolescent males, their attachment styles and their resiliency levels are not frequently combined and measured.



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Appendix A  
Consent Form

PHONE: 973-313-6314

Seton Hall University  
Institutional Review Board

JUN 21 2011

Approval Date



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**Researcher's Connection:** Ms. Giles is a clinical psychology student at Seton Hall University. She is studying in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy to become a doctor.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is understand what family member(s) African American males, who come back to school are most connect to and also to find out what skills keep you going during tough times.

**Duration:** Finishing all the questions will take about 30 minutes.

**Procedure:** You will fill out two questionnaires; **The Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory**, will tell you in your family you are most connected to; the **Resiliency Skills and Ability Scale** will tell what skills you have that keep you going during hard situations; and **A Demographic Sheet** will tell a little about your background..

**Voluntary Nature:** You may choose not to participate in this study. You will answer the questions only if you wish, and you may withdraw from the study at any time by choosing not to finish.

**Anonymity:** Your answers will be kept confidential and your government name will not be identified or used in any report. Your answers will have a number, not your name. No one will ever know who you are.

**Confidentiality:** Your answers will be put on a flash drive, locked up and kept away from the school.

**Records:** All answers and information will be destroyed after the study is finished.

**Risks:** You will not have to do anything physical and there will be no physical harm by answering these questions. But, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you may stop. Your Social worker or Guidance Counselor in the room will be with you and will help you at anytime.

**Benefits:** Your answers will help people who work with African American males begin to understand why people come back to high school and want to finish high school.

**Contacts:** If you have any issues before, during or after, please call Ms. Giles at (973) 268-5960 or Dr. Cheryl Thompson-Sard, her supervisor/teacher at (973) 761-9451.

An extra copy of this page will be given to you to hold onto.

Thank you for your cooperation.

*Consent to participate is indicated by returning the questionnaire and this form with your signature.*

*I have read and understand all the information above. I agree to participate in this study.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Expiration Date  
JUN 21 2012

Appendix B  
Demographic Survey

## Demographic Sheet

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your grade level? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What religion do you practice? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many brothers and sisters are older than you? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many brothers and sisters are younger than you? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who played the most important part in raising you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who do you call your parent? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are your mother and father together? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are your mother and father separated? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Were your parents ever together? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Who do you count on most? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Who or what made you decide to come back to school?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C  
Resilience Skills and Abilities Scale

## Resiliency Skills and Abilities Scale

READ EACH QUESTION CAREFULLY AND THEN RATE YOURSELF AS TO WHETHER YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENTS. PLEASE ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS.

CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION

	STONGLY DISAGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	SLIGHTLY DISAGREE	SLIGHTLY AGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. Sometimes it is worth it to take risks that I shouldn't.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I can tell when others are upset.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I have a lot of hope.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Sometimes I need to take risks to make things better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Someday I will be able to use what I have learned to help others	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I can feel what other people are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The past is not as important as the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Some people cannot make it because of their childhood	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I can usually recognize when situations might be dangerous	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I am able to make my friends feel better when they are sad.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I get a lot of pleasure out of giving to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Someday I will be able to make my dreams come true.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Everyone is able to be loved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. If I have to, I take a lot of risks.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I can feel when a situation is dangerous.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I am happy with my life	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Even though parents hurt their children, they can still be good parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. In general, Life is good	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. People can depend on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I believe it's best to take a risk, no matter what the consequences	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. A person can do a bad thing and still be a really good person.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. My brothers and sisters depend on me a lot of the time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. If something bad happened, I would talk to my friends about it	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I am able to "let go" of the bad things in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I believe that someone loves me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

26. Good people can do bad things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. No matter what happens I will make it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I believe in the "goodness" of others	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Someday I will be able to use what I have learned to help others in my life	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. I like helping others who cannot help themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. I look forward to the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. My teachers or counselors have been very helpful in getting me through rough times	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. One of the most important things in life is giving to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. If one of my parents developed a serious illness, I would learn a lot about it so I could help them	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. I feel like there is hope for tomorrow.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Something good always comes out of something bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. I help others who cannot help themselves	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. I do not like feeling out of control	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. Most of the time, I take care of people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. I am in control of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. I am able to control my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. I have a plan for the future	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. I have a good attitude about life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. I believe I can be loved no matter what I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45. I can be loved by a teacher, coach, counselor or someone else other than my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6

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Appendix D

Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory



## HOW I FEEL ABOUT MY CAREGIVER

Please think about one parent/caregiver that has played the **most important part in raising you**. You may live with this parent now or you may live somewhere else and have contact with this parent.

Answer all the questions based on how you feel about this parent/caregiver. **Before you start, who this parent/caregiver? (Circle one)**

**MOM**                      **DAD**                      **STEPMOM**                      **STEPDAD**                      **FOSTER MOM**    **FOSTER DAD**  
**AUNT**                      **UNCLE**                      **GRANDMOM**                      **GRANDDAD**  
**OTHER PERSON** \_\_\_\_\_

**READ EACH SENTENCE AND CIRCLE THE NUMBER TO SHOW HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE**

	Disagree A Lot	Disagree somewhat	Disagree A little	Neutral	Agree A little	Agree somewhat	Agree A Lot
1. I prefer not to show my parent how I feel deep down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. When I am away from my parent I feel anxious and afraid.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I would rather take care of myself then depend on my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am very comfortable being close to my parent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. If I can't get my parent to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have very mixed feelings about my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I find it difficult to depend on my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I worry about being away from my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I worry that my parent won't care as much about me as I care about my parent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Often just when you think you can depend on my parent, my parent doesn't come through for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I worry about being abandoned by my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. I don't feel comfortable opening up to my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I don't like it when my parent and I have to be separated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. It is important to me to feel independent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Just when my parent starts to get close to me, I find myself pulling away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I get frustrated when my parent is not around as much as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. My feelings about my parent seems to change often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I get uncomfortable when my parent wants to be very close.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I have often had to get angry to get my parent's attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I often wish my parent's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings are for my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I feel comfortable depending on my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I have learned from bitter experience that my parent is not to be trusted.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. When my parent disapproves of me, I feel really bad about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I try to avoid getting too close to my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I worry a lot about my relationship with my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I tell my parent just about everything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I often want to be really close to my parent and sometimes this makes my parent back away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. When I am away from my parent, I miss my parent a great deal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I rely on myself, not my parent to solve my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I want to get close to my parent but I keep pulling back.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

33. I resent it when my parent spends time away from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I am often not sure how I feel about my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. I find it relatively easy to get close to my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Sometimes I feel that I have to force my parent to show that my parent cares about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. I don't mind asking my parent for comfort, advice, or help.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I find it difficult to trust my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I am confident that my parent likes and respects me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. I am in no hurry to make my relationship with my parent better.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I worry a fair amount about losing my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. I turn to my parent for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. I would like to spend much more time with my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. I do not need my parent to take care of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. I prefer not to be too close to my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. I get frustrated if my parent is not available when I need my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. I often have trouble figuring out whether I love my parent or not.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. It helps to turn to my parent in times of need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. It's best to be on your guard when you are dealing with my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. I often feel that I am not good enough for my parent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. If you've got a job to do, you should do it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

no matter who gets hurt.							
54. I often don't worry about being abandoned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. I am nervous when my parent gets too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Moretti, M. M. (2000). *The Comprehensive Adolescent-Parent Attachment Inventory (CAPAI)*. Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada: Unpublished measure and data.