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The Meaning of Academic Achievement for Fathers of African American At-Risk Urban Female Youth

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Walden University
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Abstract

The Meaning of Academic Achievement for Fathers of African American At-Risk Urban Female Youth

by

Shurise Veronica Telesford

MA, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, 2013

BS, University of Arkansas, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Teaching Psychology

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Abstract

Family dynamics, parenting styles, and the impact of parental involvement on children have long been studied, with much of the focus traditionally placed on the mother-child relationship. This study shifted that focus to explore the perceptions of African American fathers of at-risk female youth regarding academic achievement. Using a generic qualitative approach and guided by Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a theory emphasizing how the marginalized learn through critical awareness and collaboration, I sought to understand how these fathers view their daughters' educational experiences and barriers to success. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven fathers living in urban areas in the Southeastern United States. A thematic analysis revealed six key themes: poor engagement in academics, above-average academic performance compared to peers, family disruptions as barriers to success, behavioral concerns in school, a desire for student learning autonomy, and recognition of supportive school resources. Despite the challenges their daughters face, fathers perceived them as capable of high achievement and emphasized the importance of collaboration between students, peers, and educators. Freire's framework highlighted how at-risk youth, when supported by influential figures such as teachers and parents, can rise above oppression. This study contributes to existing literature by centering the voices of fathers and revealing how their perspectives can inform more effective teaching and parenting practices. Educators are encouraged to consider these paternal insights to better understand the full experience of at-risk girls and support them in meaningful ways that foster academic success and contribute to positive social change.

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Dedication

To my personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, thank you. This is dedicated to you. Thank you for your sufficient grace. Thank you for guidance and wisdom through every step of life. Thank you for provision. All glory, honor, and power are ascribed to you. To my parents, even as an adult, your teachings that I received as a child, become increasingly understood. Thank you for everything you instilled in me. To my husband, Lawrence, thank you for your prayers and for your sincere encouragement. The best is yet to come. Our children will walk a path greater than ours. To everyone who has a dream, no matter how big or small the dream may be, you can do it. Whatever you put your mind to, you can accomplish.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Parental involvement has been identified as an essential component in the academic achievement and success of youth (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). The role of the family in the lives of adolescent youth makes a great impact on the success of youth in their personal lives as well as in their academic experiences. Parental relationships and familial support affect academic achievement, thus reflecting greatly within the educational setting (Tulagan & Eccles, 2021). In addition to the effects of parental and familial support on academic achievement, at-risk factors also affect the lives of many youths. Factors, such as delinquent, defiant behavior and negative peer association, affect academic achievement (Jiang, 2023) and can be considered roadblocks within the educational setting.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of fathers of at-risk female youth related to academic achievement. Since parental perceptions influence the educational experiences in the lives of youth, it was important to understand fathers' perspectives on academic achievement (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). Such insights offer educators and others' ideas to develop strategies and programs to reduce academic roadblocks, such as dropping out of high school, school violations, fighting, and truancy (Jiang, 2023).

In this chapter, the roadblocks to academic achievement, as experienced throughout the high school educational career of at-risk female youth, are identified through previous research studies in the background and problem statement. Freire's

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972), used as the theoretical framework of this study, is also described. The chapter also includes the purpose, research question, nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

At-risk youth often drop out of high school because of the many roadblocks to academic achievement throughout their high school educational career, such as low socioeconomic status, lack of resources, deviant behavior, peer pressure, and poor school attendance (Jiang, 2023). Some of these youth engage in individually destructive behaviors, such as gang activity, criminal activity, and premature sexual behavior (Dickerson & Quas, 2021). Female adolescents who engage in high-risk behaviors, such as underage drinking, unprotected sex, drug and alcohol use, violence, and physical assault, are identified as at-risk (Dickerson & Quas, 2021; Logan-Greene et al., 2021). Ford et al. (2021) reported the pervasiveness of violence among high school female students in the United States, with the highest number of violent displays of behavior being among Black, African American female students.

As noted by Bountress et al. (2021), Black adolescents have been historically identified amongst other racial demographics as a population of youth who demonstrate the highest acts of aggression and violent behavior. Culyba et al. (2022) found that, compared to males, African American female youth report the highest number of acts of violence towards others within their age group. Delinquent and high-risk sexual behaviors also lead to lower educational attainment (Muheriwa-Matemba et al., 2024; Reeves & Kalkat, 2023). Low socioeconomic status and educational attainment have

been identified as related factors when considering displays of violence (Bountress et al., 2021), while these experiences of violence are shared as commonalities throughout Black communities and families.

Among African American youth who have been identified as violent perpetrators, one-third have a parent or guardian who did not complete high school (Culyba et al., 2022). In Black families, low income is significantly related to the outcome of school failure and level of education (Bountress et al., 2021), while in these families, maternal education in the home is noted as low. Socioeconomic factors related to low-income households also predict family supports, such as the presence and involvement of a father or other paternal figure in the home (Li et al., 2023). According to Shipe et al. (2022), in the home of a single father, 24% live below the poverty line. Compared to Whites, African American single fathers are more likely to experience unemployment and incarceration (Shipe et al., 2022).

The importance of the role of family has been emphasized as a contributing factor to academic success. There is a significant amount of research that examines the necessity of parental and familial support in the lives of youth (Guo et al., 2025; Martinez-Yarza et al., 2024). This research emphasizes the positive parent-child relationship related to progressive child development and academic success. The academic success and achievement of at-risk youth are significantly influenced by parental involvement and parental engagement throughout the lives of youth who are identified as at-risk (Tulagan & Eccles, 2021). Parental involvement in the lives of adolescents, whether highly involved or less involved, can result in poor choices related

to sexual behavior and drug abuse, while moderate levels of parenting result in less engagement in high-risk behavior, such as alcohol use (Pistella et al., 2022).

The presence of the Black father, especially, has been noted to have positive effects, such as fewer behavioral problems in children (Tyrell & Masten, 2022). Many research studies have focused on the non-resident and absent Black father (Tyrell & Masten, 2022), highlighting the needs and effects of absenteeism. Incarceration amongst Black fathers has been identified as one of the primary reasons for not being present in the lives of youth, as Black men are imprisoned at a rate six times greater than that of white men (Thomas et al., 2022).

However, the style of parenting and interaction is also linked to the behavior of youth and their academic success (Parmar & Nathans, 2022; Tulagan & Eccles, 2021). Hyder and Anbar (2025) explored parental styles and attitudes related to academic achievement. Parental participation has been explored among the population of mothers and fathers of adolescent and school-aged youth, and found that parental involvement from both mother and father influences the achievement of youth in the classroom. In addition, positive fathering has been associated with fewer behavioral problems in boys, while problem behaviors were identified in girls with positive parental styles of Black fathers (Tyrell & Masten, 2022).

Research studies about parental support and attitudes related to academic success and child development have been conducted in other countries, such as India, Spain, Ghana, China, Türkiye, and Korea, highlighting the varied cultural significance (Martinez-Yarza et al., 2024; Ping et al., 2023). In their research on disadvantaged youth,

Lafavor et al. (2021) highlighted gaps of inconsistencies in parental perceptions of child competence in relation to teacher perceptions of at-risk youth behavior and educational competence, as some parents may incorrectly perceive their child's true behavior in comparison to their child's level of academic achievement. However, there was a lack of parental opinion on how the parent-child relationship contributes to the behavior and academic success of high school-aged youth (Song et al., 2024). While research studies have focused on topics related to the effects of family support, parental styles, parental socialization, and involvement on academic achievement (Hyder & Anbar, 2025; Tulagan & Eccles, 2021), parents' perspectives on academic achievement have not been explored with the parents of at-risk female youth. While much was known about the importance of how the parental role contributes to the academic success of youth, there was a lack of information about the role of parents' perspectives on academic achievement. Knowledge about these parents' perspectives assists educational officials with understanding at-risk female youth and the role that parental perspectives play in their academic achievement and supports the development of specific programs for these youth and their parents.

Problem Statement

Parental involvement and academic achievement have been emphasized throughout the literature (Guo et al., 2025; Hyder & Anbar, 2025; Lafavor et al., 2021; Osborne et al., 2023). There has been a focus on the mother-child relationship, but research also emphasizes the significance of Black fathering in the development of youth (Tyrell & Masten, 2022), and there was little research that includes their perspectives. Thus, little was known about the perceptions and attitudes of fathers of underprivileged,

at-risk female youth, and the academic achievement or roadblocks specific to fathers' attitudes associated with the academic achievement of at-risk female youth. Knowledge of how fathers of African American at-risk female adolescents view academic achievement informs teachers and parents when considering effective teaching and parenting of this population of youth. The lack of knowledge about fathers' perceptions and attitudes about the academic achievement of their at-risk female youth limits the ability of schools and at-risk youth programs to address this issue.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore perceptions of fathers of at-risk female youth related to academic achievement in an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States. At-risk youth for this study were defined as exhibiting and engaging in at-risk behavior that has been identified as destructive, such as criminal behavior, gang activity, and premature sexual behavior (Dickerson & Quas, 2021). To address this problem, a generic qualitative approach was used. This approach explored the depth of personal experiences, ideas, and opinions of participants, as explained by Ellis and Hart (2023). The exploration of the fathers' perceptions revealed their varying opinions and attitudes related to the academic achievement of these fathers' female high-school students. The stories, perceptions, and experiences of fathers in relation to academic achievement in an inner-city environment were explored through semi-structured interviews. As some research literature focuses on the lack of paternal involvement in the educational matters of children (Milosavljević Đukić et al., 2022), this research study contributed to understanding the specific population of fathers of female

at-risk youth and their perceptions about academic achievement. Research about parental attitudes toward academic achievement in the lives of at-risk youth could provide important insights to mitigate the numerous roadblocks to academic achievement that have been identified (Lafavor et al., 2021). This study was designed to increase awareness of the relationship between fathers' attitudes and academic achievement and how both affect the success of at-risk female youth in the educational setting.

Research Question

The following research questions guided this study and were used to explore paternal perspectives in relation to the educational achievement of at-risk youth.

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of academic achievement of fathers of at-risk female youth residing in urban areas in the Southeastern region of the United States?

RQ 2: How do fathers of at-risk female youth, residing in inner city environments in the Southeastern United States describe their attitudes about academic achievement?

Theoretical Framework

Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1972) provided the framework for this study, as it addressed how oppressed people experience oppression within the academic setting as a result of the perception that one lacked power or agency in one's own life and the lack of support from authority. Freire's body of work addresses socially oppressed students and the influence of perception. As noted within the literature, authors Bello (2023) and Nkansah (2025) discussed that Freire's framework has been used in many ways to explain what necessary measures were required to improve the outcomes of education in the lives of at-risk students encountering acts of oppression imposed by

figures of authority. For example, as a student displays quiet and passive ability in the classroom, when exploring the passive student, their failure to engage was contrary to an effective dialogue of analytical, critical thinking, while learning and critical thinking and classroom participation should be cultivated (Nkansah, 2025). This was identified as an ineffective barrier for the student.

The exploration of the role of parental attitudes as roadblocks to academic achievement has similarities that are related to Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed framework and the concept of praxis: to reflect upon one's reality and transform that reality through continued reflection and obligatory action (Freire, 1972). Exploring parental attitudes may contribute to this praxis of conscious, critical reflection necessary to eliminate poor academic achievement among at-risk youth (Parmar & Nathans, 2022).

Freire's theory was particularly suitable to explore the experiences of parents of at-risk youth who were unable to conform to experienced hardships and roadblocks or change their academic experiences by becoming more engaged in their learning experience by means of dialogue and active participation (Freire, 1972). The use of Freire's theory shapes this study by providing a framework that places emphasis on the effects of educational involvement on academic performance (Parmar & Nathans, 2022), engaging parents in dialogue about students' education, thus enhancing educational empowerment. As Freire also theorizes the effects of a support system in the lives of the oppressed, research questions addressed the supportive role of the father of African American female at-risk youth and how their role affected academic achievement throughout this population. Freire's theory was especially relevant to exploring the

support system of African American female youth who, according to Green (2022), have been historically identified as an oppressed population, encountering different oppressive experiences within their communities and in the educational environment. Freire's insights shaped the questions that were asked by parents of at-risk students about their perceptions of and attitudes about academic achievement. Data analysis was informed by the theoretical focus on the effects of oppression. Additional details about the use of the conceptual framework are continued in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

To address the research questions, this was a qualitative study. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to focus and to gain an understanding of how people encounter and experience the world; their lived experiences (Ellis & Hart, 2023). Unlike a quantitative approach that would seek scaled data, such as preferences measured by a Likert Scale, a qualitative approach, as noted by Makateng and Mokala (2025), is subjective with individual reports of their patterns, behaviors, traits, and attitudes; what people do in certain situations.

A generic qualitative approach was selected as the best approach for this study. It was selected over other qualitative methods, such as a case study or visual method approach, as a case study would focus on one specific person, and a visual method would incorporate actively observing the behavior of participants. A generic qualitative study incorporates actual life situations, using participants' words as data (Ellis & Hart, 2023), and it offers the researcher actual occurrences of the individuals participating in the study. This approach supported the exploration of fathers' perceptions regarding the

academic achievement of their female high-school students who were considered at-risk and who live in inner-city, metropolitan settings. As a generic study focuses on the perceptions and attitudes of participants and the individual's interpretation and meaning of experience, this approach aided in understanding the phenomenon (Lim, 2025) of the experiences of parental warmth and involvement from the father, and how this affected the academic achievement amongst at-risk African American female youth. This approach also provided understanding of the father's perceptions of academic achievement through personal experience with their female, at-risk youth.

The research design included interviews with fathers of current high school students, enrolled in Grades 9 to 12, who were considered at-risk. Participants of the study were fathers of female youth who had one or more at-risk factors, for example, experienced school suspensions and expulsions, and failed in one or more subject areas. Female youth had behaviors that involved incidents of fighting, bullying, gang affiliation, and oppositional behavior in the classroom setting. In addition, students had records of failing grades within the past six months prior to the study. This population was accessed by engaging with Boys and Girls Club programs and community center programs, specific to at-risk female youth.

The data points from these sources, used to answer the proposed research questions, were interviews conducted via video conferencing. Participants answered questions related to their perceptions and described their attitudes toward academic achievement. Data analysis followed a basic thematic analysis approach, identifying common themes from answers to interview questions (Ahmed et al., 2025). Considering

accessibility, access to participants was challenging. It was necessary to contact youth programs to be permitted to engage with parents for contact and engagement in the study.

Definitions

The following terms were used operationally in this study:

Academic achievement: Academic success in an educational environment is measured by success in an individual's ability to accomplish a goal through skill or effort in the context of an educational setting (Sideridis & Alamri, 2023).

At-risk youth: A term used to describe youth who encounter difficulties and negative life experiences accompanied by risk factors experienced socially and environmentally, at home, in the community, and at school, displaying deviant, risk-taking behaviors that affect well-being and development (Celedonia et al., 2023).

Father: A paternal parental figure that is either socially or biologically related to a child, interacting in ways that provide and care for a child (Lut et al., 2022).

Parenting style: Method of parenting involving parental behavior and parental approach and involvement; includes parental warmth that includes support, acceptance, and care; identified as authoritative, permissive, and neglecting styles (Parmar & Nathans, 2022).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions relevant to this study. First, there were the underlying philosophical assumptions of qualitative research: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2023), qualitative research creates visibility of the world. Considering the nature of reality of individual perspective,

individuals have their own interpretation and meaning of the world and realities that exist in the world (Creswell & Poth, 2023), ontological assumptions were presumed. One assumption was that fathers in the study had knowledge of the academic achievement of their female youth regarding their awareness of how the youth were progressing in the educational setting. Another assumption was that fathers would be honest about the academic achievement and behavior of the youth, in addition to the assumption of the level of involvement these fathers had in the lives of the adolescent females. It was assumed that fathers would possess a degree of knowledge about the academic achievement of their youth, identical to what would be reported by teachers and educational staff.

Epistemological assumptions refer to individual sources of knowledge and suggest that the researcher depends upon the information provided by the participant, which may be different from their own or other participants. This study was based on the responses of fathers about what academic achievement means, from their perspective. The responses and the information provided relevance to the outcome of the study. Shar (2024) explained that in research, epistemology is the information that informs the research; *how* the researcher knows. In what ways does the researcher know this information? To obtain this knowledge, the researcher spends time with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2023), acquiring knowledge by asking questions, and depending on responses to answer questions relevant to the research. In this study, knowledge was obtained by taking time to interview fathers of African American at-risk, female youth.

Values also play a role in assumptions relevant to research. Axiological assumptions are identified with the researcher's values related to the study. The researcher is aware of their values and discusses personal values and related biases (Creswell & Poth, 2023). In this study, the assumption was that the researcher valued education, academic achievement, and the educational success of at-risk youth. As emphasized by Khalifa (2023), morals are apparent assumptions identified in a study, which can also be identified as a result of a participant's responses, thus shaping and framing the research.

The methodological assumptions of this study were identified through the means of data collection strategy. It was assumed that participants would respond to specific questions constructed for fathers that related to academic achievement and success in the educational environment. It was assumed that the identified questions would remain consistent throughout the study for each participant. It was a possibility that the method of data collection might have changed during the study to better understand the study's research problem while considering the most effective way to grasp a better understanding of what the researcher is studying; the participants' point of view and perception (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Khalifa, 2023).

These assumptions were necessary amongst the findings of this study, as the findings of this study supported an understanding of how the father's involvement in the education of female youth affects the educational success and academic achievement of African American female youth. It was assumed that participants in the study would report an array of different experiences that involved academic achievement (Creswell &

Poth, 2023). In addition, the assumptions of this study fostered increased knowledge and consideration of how the relationship between fathers and African American female youth affects the behaviors of these youth, in addition to perceived effects of how this relationship affects levels of academic achievement.

Scope and Delimitations

This generic qualitative study was to take place at a location identified as a Boys and Girls Club of America, with programming specific for females ages 12 to 18 who exhibit at-risk behaviors. To assist with the recruitment of volunteers for the study, it was planned that invitations that addressed fathers for participation in the study were to be sent to the homes of these youth. The Boys and Girls Club was identified as the research site because of the specific programming offered to the identified population. The focus of the academic achievement of at-risk female youth in relation to the meaning of academic achievement to the fathers of these youth was to gain an understanding of how the opinions and attitudes of academic achievement affect this population. An understanding of paternal figures who are identified as being actively involved assists in identifying the effects of achieved academics of a female population who have existing barriers to academic success.

Fathers of at-risk female youth were the focus of this study. Mothers were excluded as part of this research. Much research has examined mothers as involved in the lives of youth (Pistella et al., 2022; Tulagan & Eccles, 2021), with research concluding that mothers tend to be more involved than fathers (Milosavljevic Dukic et al., 2022).

Though this study focused on behaviors of female youth in relation to academic success achieved in an educational environment, social cognitive theory was not investigated. Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory explains that an individual's behavior, learning, and functioning are a result of behavioral and environmental influences (Taba et al., 2022). Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed was used as a framework for understanding how an individual's perception of the meaning of academic achievement can transform and influence lives with the support of those connected, such as parental figures of authority, such as fathers.

The outcome of this study did not transfer to a larger population of fathers who reported the personal meaning of academic achievement because of the individual opinions that were associated with this study. As discussed by Ahmed (2024), transferability was identified as the ability of the results of research to extend or transfer to other populations and settings. Potential transferability may be possible considering the number of themes identified from the results of the study.

Limitations

There were limitations to note for this study. The sample of the study included participants consisting of fathers of African American female at-risk youth. The information collected was not transferable to male youth or African American mothers. Transferability of this study was possible and occurred with the use of the same population. As participants were to be obtained via local community youth programming, such as the Boys and Girls Club of America, the results of the study were not dependable across a vast majority, as participants outside of community programming did not elicit

the same responses. In addition, various perceptions were gathered from participants regarding academic achievement. According to Jhangiani et al. (2022), people use individual expectations in judgment, thus resulting in differing perspectives and perceptions. As this study sought individual perceptions, the results were not dependable, as human perception varies.

Potential biases were identified. Biases can occur when the researcher introduces error into parts of the study, thus affecting the method or outcome of the study, via the method of design or data collection, resulting in poor quality of the research (Zahle, 2024). I have a personal history of working with at-risk female youth in a behavioral health setting. There were possible existing biases based on personal knowledge of experiences with this population. To address possible bias, interview questions were constructed to address only the ideas and perceptions revealed by the participants.

Significance

Oscos-Sanchez et al. (2021) found that prevention programs that involve parents and youth are beneficial in reducing violent behavior in schools and communities. Organizations that serve youth, such as Boys and Girls Clubs of America and Boys Town, may benefit from this research as insights about parental perceptions and attitudes can influence program development. Parents' self-reports serve as a resource to community and school programs that serve populations of youth residing within urban geographic locations of the southeastern region of the United States by providing information about possible barriers related to poor academic performance. This research contributes to the discipline of psychology by providing insights into familial perceptions

and the possible effects of those perceptions on others within the family unit, and it also informs schools in the development of various educator training programs. Information in this study contributes to positive social change by increasing resources for parents, parental support, increased scholarship, school policy, and improved graduation rates. With this information, youth with identified risk factors may become more successful, promoting promising futures for generations to come as research continues to develop within the field.

Summary

Risk factors of youth as a barrier to academic achievement continue to affect youth in the academic environment. Negative behavior and the prevalence of violence, and the use of drugs and alcohol affect racial demographics throughout the United States. The importance of familial involvement in academic achievement was reviewed, and the lack of knowledge about fathers' perceptions of academic achievement of African American female at-risk youth was identified. The theoretical framework of Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972) was explained, as it offers relevance in support of the shaping of this current study in terms of authoritative involvement in relation to academic performance. A generic qualitative approach was used to assess and understand the perceptions of father figures of African American at-risk female youth related to academic achievement. Assumptions based upon the reality of participants, in addition to personal values of the researcher and participant, and how methodology assisted in drawing conclusions of the study, were also discussed. In addition, the limitations of the study were identified related to issues of transferability to populations not identical to

participants that were used in this study. In Chapter 2, recent literature is reviewed that was pertinent to the understanding of the development and investigation of this current study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The relationships between youth academic achievement, youth behavior, and parental participation and support are essential in the success and educational attainment across populations of youth across the country (Culyba et al., 2022; Hyder & Anbar, 2025). The problem identified in this proposal was that little is known about the African American father's perceptions and attitudes about the academic achievement of their African American at-risk female youth (Hyder & Anbar, 2025; Thomas et al., 2022; Tulagan & Eccles, 2021). The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate perceptions and attitudes of fathers of at-risk female youth and how these perceptions and attitudes were related to the academic achievement of these youth in a focused urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States.

In this chapter, the literature search strategy is explained, and key concepts, such as *academic achievement* and *at-risk youth* are reviewed. I also address Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1972) and how this framework explains the experience of oppressive barriers and the residual effects of the relationship between authoritative support and academic success. Current studies related to African American parental involvement are reviewed, in addition to studies related to attitudes of academic achievement of Black American youth, their parents, and educational authority figures.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted several search attempts within various scholarly databases, such as EBSCO Discovery Service, ProQuest, Science Direct, Journal of Child and Family Studies, Journal of Youth and Adolescence, and Journal of Family Social Work, to locate research articles significant to this study. Research articles were peer-reviewed journal articles published within the previous five years. These databases were used to identify scholarly work that explored academic achievement within the African American community, in addition to the parental involvement and support of African American at-risk youth, and how this support reflected the historical educational lives of these parents involved in the lives of these youth. The key search terms and combinations of search terms included *academic achievement in African American youth, parents of at-risk youth, parental attitudes toward academic achievement, incarcerated fathers of at-risk youth, roadblocks of parental attitudes, barriers to academic achievement, socioeconomic status of delinquent youth, teens and academic achievement, parents of delinquent youth, parents of at-risk youth and education, youth and education, at-risk African American youth and education, African American youth and aggression, African American female adolescents, Freire theory,* and *fathers of at-risk females.* Academic achievement in the lives of African American families and youth was explored in comparison to risk factors and barriers of at-risk behavior and socioeconomic elements that affect academic achievement. The study terms were also investigated to identify the relationship within the theoretical framework of Freire's (1972) Pedagogy of the

Oppressed. The review of the literature was specific to the development of the current study in the identification of a social problem and the gap in the related existing research.

Theoretical Framework

This study intended to explore the perceptions and attitudes of academic achievement of fathers of African American at-risk female youth. Research has shown that perceptions of parents, which can involve criticism and opinion, can influence the student's functioning and academic achievement in a classroom setting. Researchers Hyder and Anbar (2025) and Ping et al. (2023) explored the effects of parental involvement and parental criticism, and both identified that academic achievement was influenced, either positively or negatively, in response to the parental authoritative involvement and opinion of youth success in the educational setting. As parents are identified as the first teachers of their child, the participation and engagement of parents are important to the overall success of a child, extending into their youth and beyond.

Paulo Freire's (1972) Pedagogy of the Oppressed focuses on the theory that true education cannot be accomplished until both student and teacher acknowledge the importance of working together to educate and that those considered lower status amongst their peers be empowered through their education. Freire's (1972) theory addresses how youth who are defined as oppressed and at-risk either learn to conform to hardships and setbacks, or these youth learn to come together to change their situation and change society. There was emphasis placed on how these individuals overcome obstacles despite hardships, stereotypes, and injustice. This framework theorizes that at-risk, oppressed youth have been singled out due to environment, behavior, and

socioeconomic status and emphasizes the necessity of growing to work together to overcome such obstacles and to change the world.

Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1972) provided a framework for this study, as it addressed how oppressed people experience oppression within the academic setting as a result of the perception that one lacks power or agency in one's own life and support from authority. Perceptions of the oppressed can result in an elimination or increase of oppression, and authoritative individuals, such as educators, further contribute to oppression. To contribute to the elimination of the social problem of oppression, it was essential that students consider how problems relate to their lives (Freire, 1972). An assumption appropriate to the application of this theory was that authoritative influences in the lives of at-risk youth extend beyond the involvement of the educator. The youth's parental figures also function as major influences. Studies have explored parental expectations of high-achieving high school students, for example. Malik (2021) found that fathers, in comparison to mothers, were more critical and had higher expectations for youth. Researchers Tulagan and Eccles (2021) conducted a study with over six hundred African American mothers of adolescent students, who varied in gender, family income, and maternal education. They found that these mothers had high expectations for their adolescent children and reported that families with higher socioeconomic status also had higher expectations for youth. An assumption that was drawn was that parental attitude reflecting low expectations from families with low socioeconomic status affects at-risk youth's academic achievement.

Freire's theory, when emphasizing the importance of student voice (Nkansah, 2025), explained that the quiet, passive student's failure to engage was contrary to an effective dialogue, emphasizing the importance of analytical, critical thinking while learning. To encourage and support active student voice, the importance of school authority and student interaction is pertinent. The importance of dialogue as a mutual process is essential between authority and the oppressed, fostering ownership of knowledge and conscious awareness toward self-empowerment (Nkansah, 2025). Pedagogy of the Oppressed highlights student engagement in the classroom setting as critical in understanding the students' perspective regarding teacher-student relationships and the effectiveness of teacher involvement as a tool of encouragement and empowerment (Bello, 2023).

Freire's pedagogy provides a framework for understanding how perception can form and transform lives with the support of those influentially connected, such as parental figures and others in authority. This study builds upon the conceptual framework as it builds upon the concept of how figures of authority affect the academic achievement of students. In this case, the authority figure to consider would be the male parental figure in the life of the oppressed, at-risk youth. The theory has influenced the research design, research questions, and interview questions with a focus on the perceptions of the youth's male parental authority figure.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Within the body of literature related to this topic, there were several research studies that have previously explored topics and concepts related to this study. The

literature includes previous research that significantly functions as a bridge of information leading to an examination of the perceptions and perceptions of academic achievement of father figures of at-risk African American female youth. The literature review provides a history of approaches to understanding the concepts related to topics of at-risk youth and characteristics of African American adolescent youth and the parents of these youth, as well as the role of the family. Literature about the involvement and presence of the Black father was be explored, in conjunction with African American parental involvement and support in the lives of youth and African American academic achievement.

At-Risk Youth and Behavior Across Race

In a qualitative study by Cinini and Mkhize (2023), juvenile delinquency and youth crime were explored. The researchers determined that at-risk youth encountered life-altering experiences that led to maladaptive practices and criminal activity, such as joining gangs, substance abuse, and internalizing behaviors, like self-mutilation and depression. The study revealed that negative behavior and encounters with other delinquent youth led to behaviors that involved the use of law enforcement. Researchers also concluded that youth behavior was associated with adverse situations encountered as a child, such as abusive adult relationships, childhood neglect, and exposure to family violence (Cinini & Mkhize, 2023). In addition, as related to youth behavior, adverse experiences encountered as a child have been linked to behaviors exhibited as an adolescent.

In a 2023 study, Jackson et al. (2023) concluded that there was a significant association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adolescent delinquent behavior. Thus, negative childhood experiences encountered by children are associated with juvenile behaviors that warrant attention by law enforcement. The behaviors identified in the study included property destruction, inability to exhibit self-control, substance abuse, and poor socialization skills, in addition to parent-child attachment as a mediator between adolescent troubled behavior and ACEs (Jackson et al., 2023). In terms of ACEs and race, Jones et al. (2022) used data involving 4,898 United States born children and determined that African Americans, compared to Hispanics and Whites, had the highest ACE score, as by the age of five having experienced four or more ACEs. In addition, socioeconomic status is associated with ACEs and delinquent youth behavior (Jackson et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2022).

Considering prevention of at-risk behavior demonstrated by youth, there is a discussion of the presence and involvement of parents. Yan and Augustine (2025) explored youth at-risk, delinquent behavior, and parental monitoring. Researchers found that arrests reported by youth were associated with membership among groups of students in Grades 8 to 12, in addition to participation in delinquent behaviors (Yan & Augustine, 2025). The amount of parental monitoring of youth behavior was determined by the type of delinquent behavior demonstrated by the youth.

In terms of at-risk youth, delinquent behavior is not the only qualifying factor that determines a youth as at-risk. In the discussion of academic achievement, the term at-risk youth also includes factors that are related to risks that lead to school dropout. The

National Center for Juvenile Justice, Puzzanchera et al. (2022) reported that, in the United States, in 2019, dropout rates were highest among the female population and highest compared to Whites. Furthermore, 3.7% of high school dropouts resided in the Southern region of the United States, compared to those who resided in Northeastern (4.5%), Midwestern (3.2%), and Western regions, with the Western region being the highest, with a 6% dropout rate (Puzzanchera et al., 2022).

Drug and Alcohol Use

Drug and alcohol usage amongst youth is another at-risk behavior that affects the trajectory of a youth's life and their ability to progress in academia. Within the body of literature, research has determined that alcohol and drug abuse is widespread within the adolescent population, and the type of parenting is a contributing factor. For example, Pistella et al. (2022), with a sample of 402 male and female adolescents, ages 14 to 19 years of age, found that helicopter parenting (inappropriate levels of involvement, affecting independence and resiliency) was associated with adolescent alcohol use. Research has determined that parental figures can be both involved at greater levels or less involved in the lives of their youth, yet youth can, despite involvement, present with unacceptable behaviors of drinking and drug use, in addition to sexual behavior, as cited in Pistella et al. (2022). Sexual behavior is an additional risk factor identified amongst the adolescent youth population.

Adolescent Sexual Activity

Sexual activity in adolescents has been linked to half of the United States' new cases of sexually transmitted infections (Logan-Greene et al., 2021). This was an

example of the heightened number of youth at-risk, as a result of sexual behavior. Research has explored the African American female adolescent population in relation to at-risk sexual behavior. For example, by conducting interviews in a juvenile detention center with African American female youth, 13 to 17 years of age, Logan-Greene et al. (2021) found that these youth were at an increased sexual risk, engaging in unprotected sex, intoxicated sex, and sexual engagement with sex trading. In addition, researchers have explored parental concern about youth at-risk behavior, with the report of mothers' concerns about behavior, such as sexual behavior of female and male youth, with little evidence of fathers' reports. Tulagan et al. (2021), used telephone interviews with mothers, and found that these mothers reported concerns about teenage pregnancy, unsafe sex, and oversexed male and female youth populations in the community. Socioeconomic status also plays a role in the lives of youth, as studies have provided evidence that African American parents from lower socioeconomic conditions have greater concern for sexual activity in girls, compared to boys, as males in these conditions were at greater risk for behavioral problems (Tulagan et al., 2021). In addition, research further compares the prevalence of at-risk behavior between male and female youth. For example, Culyba et al. (2022) found that, amongst male and female youth with an average age of 17, with female youth representing a little over half of the studied population, females reported committing more types of violence compared to the male population of the study.

Aggressive Behavior

As these behaviors are observed throughout the youth's community (Culyba et al., 2022), acts of aggression and physical fighting are also displayed in the school

setting. Aggressive behavior is another risk factor observed amongst youth, occurring in the forms of physical aggression and fighting, resulting in physical injuries. Ford et al. (2021) found that, compared to Hispanic female students, African American female students had the highest level of physical fights. In a study by Oscos-Sanchez et al. (2021), where participants reported violence in and out of school, it was concluded that Hispanic students displayed fewer acts of violence inside of school, compared to acts of violence outside of school. As cited in Green (2022), compared to White and Hispanic students, African American girls were more likely to be suspended from school and more likely to be criticized more harshly by school officials.

As engaged in by African American female students, several fights occur on school property (Ford et al., 2021), interfering with students' academic achievement and the ability to perform successfully while in the learning environment. Compared to males and compared to other races, African American girls are disproportionately suspended from school. African American girls are six times more likely to be suspended from school, compared to the rate of Caucasian girls, and greater than the rate of Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian boys (Green, 2022). African American female youth compared to White female youth, are more likely to be suspended from school for violent behavior (Green, 2022), labeled as "bad girls", displaying "unladylike" behavior, as termed by teachers. In addition, African American youth, male and female, also experience victimization through community violence, as this is also a predictor of adolescent delinquent behavior (Bountress et al., 2021).

As this study was designed to focus on the adolescent age group, one must consider dating relationships and the possible interactions within these relationships. Teen dating aggression is an additional topic to be explored when considering at-risk youth and their behavior. Datta et al. (2022) surveyed students in Grades 9 to 12, attending 320 Virginia high schools. In this study, findings indicated associations between teen dating aggression and marijuana, alcohol use, fighting, suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, and lower school grades and engagement in school. Teen dating experiences were necessary to consider when observing at-risk behaviors and academic progress amongst this age group.

Considering youth behavior and parenting styles, negative parenting styles can contribute to at-risk behavior demonstrated by youth (Ping et al., 2023). Negative parenting contributes to negative youth behavior that can create barriers to student success in the classroom. In a study conducted with Chinese participants, it was concluded that negative parenting styles, exhibited through frustration and violent behavior by fathers, led to child problem behavior (Ping et al., 2023). These behaviors included displays of aggression, passive violent behavior, and skipping class. Based on the findings of this study, negative parenting styles are a result of parental burnout and parenting stress, experienced by fathers (Ping et al., 2023).

Parental Involvement and Parental Warmth

Parental involvement plays an important role in the success of student academic achievement. Osborne et al. (2023) observed interactions between low-income African American and Latinx parents and their children. Parental involvement in the educational

setting also provides insight into student engagement and experiences in the school setting that can affect academic performance. The study focused on the effects of parent-child relationships and parenting behavior on academic achievement, in terms of parental interaction and involvement to counteract racial situations in the academic setting, as youth were at-risk for racialization (Osborne et al., 2023). It was found that parental interactions played a role in better academic achievement. In addition, some studies have identified that parenting styles in conjunction with parental involvement also affect the child's functioning and outcome in the educational setting. As their research focused on the relationship between parental warmth, parental involvement, and academic success among adolescents, Hyder and Anbar (2025) identified that parental warmth and involvement from parents influence the achievement of youth in the classroom. Parental support is ideal in the academic activities and goals of a child. In addition, parents also influence a student's interest in education; thus, the role of a parent in the educational success of the student is essential (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). In addition, Fatimaningrum (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 studies and concluded that there was a positive correlation in the relationship between academic success and parental involvement. From the research, it is evident that the way a parent rears and supports their child influences a child's academic functioning. As a parent engages in a child's academics, the more successful the student's performance.

Considering parental warmth (Parmar & Nathans, 2022), students demonstrated positive outcomes in the academic setting when parenting styles are identified as warm and supportive. In a study conducted in India, participants consisted of students in Grades

7 through 10. Involving student self-reports and questionnaires, students answered questions about parental involvement. Evidence from the study supported that the involvement of parents was positively correlated with academic achievement (Hyder & Anbar, 2025; Parmar & Nathans, 2022). Parental involvement was a predictor of academic achievement for the students in the study. For girls in the study, the involvement of parents was not a predictor of academic achievement, while parental warmth significantly predicted academic achievement (Parmar & Nathans, 2022). Thus, the girls in the study respond to and are affected by the style of parenting. Compared to girls, for boys, both parental involvement and parental warmth were significant predictors of academic achievement (Parmar & Nathans, 2022). It was concluded that a warm parenting style and active parental involvement increase the likelihood of a child's success. Thus, adolescent academic achievement is influenced by the involvement of parents in the life of a student.

Presence of the Father

From the research, it was evident that the presence of both parents could potentially yield academic success among youth. However, various studies also focused on the common fact that not all households function with both parents; either parent can be present or absent in the lives or educational success of their children. As researchers, Milosavljevic Dukic et al. (2022) found in their studies on parental engagement, fathers were less engaged in parent meetings, compared to mothers, and withdrew more from children than mothers. The results of this study demonstrate the lack of paternal involvement in the education of students. Nevertheless, Lazović et al. (2022) analyzed

nine studies by conducting a meta-analysis and concluded with results that showed a positive statistical relationship between a student's academic success and involvement of the student's father. This involvement included fathers' interaction with the student's school, in addition to assistance and interaction at home. Significance in father and child interaction promotes better academic performance in children (Lazović et al., 2022). The question is, just how involved are fathers or father figures in the lives of at-risk adolescent youth?

Additionally, Mancini et al. (2024), concluded that the presence and involvement of the father positively affected student performance. Students' grades were also affected by the involvement of the father. With data collected from 166 fathers in five Western countries, it was found that the presence and interaction between father and child predicted higher scores in reading and mathematics (Mancini et al., 2024).

Related to the effects of positive paternal involvement, Russell et al. (2024) identified father strengths among African American fathers enrolled in fatherhood programming. Semi-structured focus groups with 26 fathers were directed to explore both strengths and barriers experienced by fathers in these programs. A thematic analysis was conducted to determine that fathers exhibited strengths, such as listening skills and active involvement with families (Russell et al., 2024). Barriers to parental involvement and presence experienced by fathers in this study were also identified. These fathers experienced relationship strain, restricted custody of children, legal history, lack of model relationships, limited financial resources, and experienced trauma (Russell et al., 2024).

Taking into consideration the active, present father, research has examined the effects of co-parenting in the lives of children, with the active father who lives outside of the child's primary living arrangement. According to Altenburger (2022), the opinions and actions of a resident, active father are respected and considered to a greater extent compared to the actions and opinions of an absent, non-present father. The active father figure tends to be less undermined in a household where the mother is an active influence in the co-parenting relationship. When meeting the needs of a child, successful, supportive co-parenting is suggested (Altenburger, 2022).

Researchers have also explored these issues in relation to the non-resident African American father. As cited in Barcelona et al. (2023), more than half, about 70% of African American children are born to mothers who are not married, with many of these households having a father who does not reside in the home or is considered non-resident. The lack of co-residence in the home with both parents is crucial to a child's development. Children who reside with their fathers are less likely to encounter health and developmental issues, as parental involvement and co-residence with fathers is essential when considering these factors (Barcelona et al., 2023). In addition, in low-income households that do not have a resident father, within co-parenting, there is decreased paternal involvement (Altenburger, 2022).

According to Wang et al. (2023), with the use of over four thousand participants, it was found that, within low-income families, fathers who were non-resident readily judged and perceived the quality of the co-parenting relationship compared to resident, present fathers. Non-resident fathers valued positive co-parenting as it also motivated

interaction and involvement in the lives of their children (Wang et al., 2023). In addition, child gender also affects the parent-child relationship and interaction.

Using the framework of the family systems theory, the research also examined that fathers of girls were more concerned about interparental conflict and involvement, compared to resident fathers, as this was a result of the father's level of comfort and confidence in caring for girls compared to caring for boys (Wang et al., 2023). Considering the level of achievement of these youth, the higher level of achievement has also been examined in comparison to the level of involvement by parents. In a study conducted to examine the differences of parental expectations between mother and father, Liu and Chung (2022) found that fathers, compared to mothers, were less frequently engaged in home learning activities, while both father and mother held high expectations for academic achievement in the subject of reading. This history of research speaks to the effects of the involvement of fathers of those youth and their level of academic achievement. This present study was designed to explore the perceptions of fathers of youth who were at-risk.

Also, single resident fathers make an impact on the lives of youth. These fathers parent in the absence of the mother. Children raised by single fathers are at a higher risk for school problems, mental health problems, and substance use (Shipe et al., 2022). As single-father households have increased to 3.3 million during the year 2020 (Shipe et al., 2022), financial needs and barriers of single-father homes also increased.

Attitudes Towards Academic Achievement

Lomholt (2025), using thematic analysis, concluded that, to establish a learning environment rich in diversity, an awareness and perception of teacher and student needs were necessary for the success of the student. Understanding student needs for success and student attitudes related to academic achievement allows for achievement in the classroom. This study's findings highlighted the importance of teachers making accurate judgements about students' academic ability (Lomholt, 2025).

Liem et al. (2025) emphasized student academic motivational attitude as the hallmark of the building blocks of academic achievement, in addition to feelings of being connected and feelings of happiness. Motivation drives actions toward achieving goals inside and outside of the educational setting. In addition, students set goals that enhance educational motivation. Meeting the expectations of parents and teachers leads to self-determination and motivation toward reaching academic goals (Liem, 2025). As students develop attitudes of motivation that assist in attaining achievement in the classroom, social goals of relationship development and maintenance also contribute to educational success. To please parents and teachers, with the goal of looking good, is a motive for success in the classroom. These performance goals, set by students, can lead to excelling in specific subjects, such as mathematics (Liem et al., 2025). Pleasing others, and successfully meeting expectations of others, such as parents and teachers, by exhibiting positive performance in education, is a social goal that affects academic achievement, leading to connectedness (Liem et al., 2025). On the contrary, Varzaneh et al. (2024)

concluded that the desire and actions toward meeting parental and teacher expectations lead to anxiety and poor social skills.

Parental Expectations

Parental academic expectations affect academic achievement. Benner et al. (2021) concluded that the expectations of parents directly influence a child's academic achievement. When academic achievement is influenced by expectations of parents, the academic achievement of the student can be perceived as a result of parental involvement and influence of the parental relationship. Parental socioeconomic status also affects academic achievement. They (2022) further concluded that the socioeconomic status held by parents affects academic achievement, due to the higher academic expectations of parents with higher socioeconomic status. In addition, parents' expectations were more beneficial for students with higher socioeconomic status, compared to others (Benner et al., 2021). This leads to a supportive environment for students, producing an increased likelihood of academic success.

In addition, parents' concern about their children additionally impacts expectations. Concerns about a child's well-being outweigh academic concerns, according to Goldberg et al. (2021), who determined that concerned parents, with worries related to child behavior, were more concerned about the child's emotional and behavioral challenges than academic concerns. In addition, they found that male parents possessed difficulty with accepting differences in interests and academic achievement, varying from those of their children (Goldberg et al., 2021).

In addition, in a study conducted in India by Malik (2021), fathers' expectations were significantly related to students' academic achievement. As a student's performance is known to be a reflection of their ability, it is important to consider the student's parental influences. Compared to mothers, fathers' expectations are also positively related to academic success, exhibiting increased realistic expectations than mothers (Malik, 2021). This study was conducted in India, as there is a lack of recent research that includes a comparison of parental expectations of academic achievement among adolescent students, between mothers and fathers, that has been conducted in the United States.

Teacher Expectations

Teacher expectations have been questioned and explored to identify whether or not the expectations of teachers affect the academic achievement of students. In a systematic review of studies by Aydin and Ok (2022), 32 studies were reviewed. It was determined that factors, such as student skills, readiness, and intellectual ability, in addition to factors related to family and school policy, influenced teacher expectations of students in the classroom (Aydin & Ok, 2022). Researchers found that teachers held expectations and beliefs that not all students were able to learn all subjects and were not all capable of doing so (Aydin & Ok, 2022), in relation to their skill and level of ability. Teachers also believed that familial socioeconomic factors were indicators of lower performance in the classroom and that their economic status affected memory and attention (Aydin & Ok, 2022).

As teachers' expectations were also noted to be formed by school policy, it is apparent that school policy could also be a barrier to academic achievement. It is important that schools implement policy that addresses student barriers in school, such as bias portrayed by teachers toward students. Teacher biases can affect grading practices, thus decreasing the academic outcomes of students (Lomholt, 2025). Certain school policies require teachers to review school records, creating biases and judgments about student ability before creating expectations about student performance that result from experiences in the classroom setting (Aydin & Ok, 2022). In this study, race was not identified to be indicative of teacher perception or expectation.

In addition to teacher expectations in the classroom setting, there are parent perceptions of teacher expectations. In a study by Malone et al. (2023), eight families were interviewed to explore students' and their families' perceptions of teacher expectations of Black students in the educational setting, in addition to the school experiences that have led to these perceptions. The researchers found that participants believed that being "Black in America" required Black students to work harder than their racial counterparts. In addition, families in the study believed that Black students were expected to perform at mediocre levels, along with the perception that Whites are given advantages in the educational setting, according to Malone et al.. Their study concluded that both parents and students held the same beliefs and perceptions (Malone et al., 2023). Also, while reviewing this study, the difference in the number of participants between mother and father was also apparent. There was little representation of paternal

figures, with eight mothers and two fathers participating in this study (Malone et al., 2023).

Racial Barriers and Academic Achievement

Several studies compare educational engagement and achievement to behavioral engagement across race, concluding that behavior and academic achievement correlate significantly. It has been established that drug and alcohol use affect academic achievement amongst the adolescent population. This differs by race and ethnicity, and it affects academic achievement. In a study by Hjarnaa et al. (2023), adolescents who reported regular use of alcohol had lower grades overall. Thus, engaging in the use of substances affects the academic achievement of youth. Furthermore, as substance use and factors associated with race are combined, those experiencing racial barriers have lower academic achievement. For example, researchers Crueme et al. (2021) found that Black males had negative associations with behavior and academic performance in the school; however, combined with the effects of racism, this is a barrier to academic success.

In a study with 10,777 Black and White youth, Assari (2024) concluded that factors such as stress and socioeconomic status were indicators of substance use across the population of White youth. It was found that substance use exhibited by Black youth was less influenced by these factors, but instead, substance use was exacerbated by the effects of racism. An additional barrier considered within the Latino demographic is the lack of parental involvement. Ramos et al. (2023) concluded that, as a result of working several jobs, Latino parents participate less in the school activities of children, in addition to older children, such as teen siblings, having the obligation of helping with employment

and care of younger siblings. In addition to working multiple jobs, there are additional barriers experienced by Latino parents that prevent parental involvement in youth school programming. Fear related to immigration concerns, issues with childcare, and transportation shortages are also reasons for the lack of parental involvement in this population (Ramos et al., 2023). These barriers also limit parents' ability to engage in parent-specific programs hosted by the school.

Socioeconomic Barriers to Academic Success

Throughout the literature, several contributing factors to youth behavioral and parental involvement have been discussed in association with socioeconomic status. Youth and families encounter difficulty with parenting and behavior associated with financial constraints and the ability to provide for the family. Fathers experience disparities in support and involvement with family as related to socioeconomic barriers, in addition to the parental expectations, or the lack of them, that are attributed to youth (Benner et al., 2021; Lie et al., 2023). Not only do socioeconomic factors affect a parent's means to provide for the family, but they also affect youth behavior as a contributing factor to unsettling changes in youth behavior. Engagement in delinquent youth behavior, in addition to sexual activity among female youth, is also associated with familial socioeconomic class, as these youth reside in high-poverty communities (Jackson et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2022; Tulagan et al., 2021). While socioeconomic status and class have been known as contributor to these factors regarding youth and their families, they also exist as a barrier to academic achievement.

In a study by Munir et al. (2023), a correlation analysis examining the relationship between academic achievement and socioeconomic status determined that academic achievement was affected by socioeconomic status. Students who came from homes with a higher socioeconomic status demonstrated higher academic achievement (Munir et al., 2023). This implied access to improved academic resources. Not only is the status of the home an indicator of success in the academic environment, but it also indicates parental involvement, enhanced academic resources, and teacher quality (Aydin & Ok, 2022; Munir et al., 2023; Russell et al., 2024).

Summary and Conclusions

Academic achievement is a subject that continues to be explored across many demographic groups (Crueme et al., 2021). Throughout the research literature, the characteristics of at-risk youth and the role of the family (Pistella et al., 2022; Tulagan et al., 2021) were described in relation to the presence of parental figures (Barcelona et al., 2023). Among African American youth, females have an increase in sexual activity (Logan-Greene et al., 2021), while African American male adolescents, compared to females, are at a greater risk of behavioral problems.

In addition, parental support, parental involvement, and parenting styles play an extensive role in the academic progress of youth (Osborne et al., 2023; Parmar & Nathans, 2022). Youth living in households with a present paternal figure have higher academic achievement (Mancini et al., 2024; Tyrell & Masten, 2022). It is known that parental involvement and parental influence play major roles in the academic success and achievement of youth (Hyder & Anbar, 2025; Milosavljevic Dukic et al., 2022; Osborne

et al., 2023). It has also been shown that maladaptive behavior, such as drug usage and violence, also affects the academic achievement of youth (Pistella et al., 2022). Socioeconomic status is also a determinant of academic achievement and parental involvement, with those with a lower status demonstrating reduced success and lack of parental engagement (Munir et al., 2023; Ramos et al., 2023).

There was little research that examined the opinions and thoughts of academic achievement of male parental figures associated with at-risk African American female adolescents. This study was designed to find the meaning of academic achievement as defined by the fathers of female youth who engage in behavior that tends to limit success in the academic setting (Ford et al., 2021; Hyder & Anbar, 2025). As topics were explored within the literature review, a road map to the necessity and benefit of this study and its focus on the perceptions and attitudes of academic achievement of male parental figures of African American at-risk female youth was apparent.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of fathers of African American at-risk female youth that are related to academic achievement in an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States. Exploration of the perception of this population provided an increased level of insight into the thoughts, opinions, and attitudes of male parental figures in the lives of these youth. In this chapter, the research design and rationale of the study are addressed. The role of the researcher in the study, the methodology, including instrumentation, in addition to procedures for recruitment and issues of trustworthiness, are also described.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions were constructed to guide this study and were used to explore paternal points of view in relation to the educational achievement of African American female at-risk youth.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of academic achievement of fathers of at-risk female youth residing in urban areas in the Southeastern region of the United States?

RQ 2: How do fathers of at-risk female youth, residing in inner city environments in the Southeastern United States describe their attitudes about academic achievement?

The phenomena explored in this study were the perceptions of fathers of African American at-risk females toward academic achievement. African American girls often

had challenges in attaining academic achievement (Green, 2022; Logan-Greene, 2021). These research questions allowed further insight into the research phenomenon of this study, the perceptions of fathers of at-risk African American female youth about academic achievement. For example, according to Reeves and Kalkat (2023), in 2021, African American students, compared to other ethnicities, had lower rates of graduation. Among these students, African American females graduated at lower rates than males, among African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian ethnicities (Reeves & Kalkat, 2023). In addition, according to Muheriwa-Matemba et al. (2024), as African American female youth were at risk of low academic achievement, they also engaged in sexual activity at an early adolescent age. This places African American female youth at an increased risk of early pregnancy, further resulting in lower graduation rates.

This study was built upon an epistemological, generic qualitative research tradition of one-to-one interviews. A generic qualitative study takes into account the unique perspectives and practical life of the participants of the study (Ellis & Hart, 2023). For this study, I interviewed fathers of African American female youth. This satisfied the epistemological, philosophical tradition of understanding, as the information gathered from the interviews informed the research that was conducted (Shar, 2024). It has been described by researchers in the literature that the generic qualitative approach focuses on both the subjective and objective nature of human behavior, asking open-ended questions, taking into consideration human lived experiences, occurrences, and opinions (Makateng & Mokala, 2025). Thus, this qualitative research offered insights into the

perceptions of fathers of at-risk female youth that would not be obtained through a quantitative study or other qualitative approach.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher for this qualitative study, my role was to function as an instrument of the research. Yoon and Uliassi (2022) explained that the author of the study was the main instrument of the study, as the researcher has the responsibility of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. As the researcher is heavily involved in the research and data collection, potential biases must be monitored and taken into account. I had no previous personal or professional relationships that indicated power over the participants who were involved in the study. The researcher must manage any research bias. The use of self was necessary as it assisted with addressing potential biases of the researcher, in addition to assisting with the credibility and validity of the research. The use of self is a consciousness and awareness of self (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022), in addition to the methods used when considering use-of-self, where the researcher is intentionally self-conscious about personal ideas, values, prejudgments, and perceptions about the topic. These methods are known as bracketing and epoché. This study was not conducted in the researcher's work environment, nor had supervisory or power relationship differentials that existed during the study. Participants who were identified as having a conflict of interest were not allowed to engage in the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The identified population for this study was fathers of African American at-risk female youth living in urban areas in the Southeastern region of the United States. Purposive sampling method was used because I wanted to identify and select fathers of youth with specific behaviors and demographics. Ahmad and Wilkins (2024) suggest that purposive sampling, as a common approach in qualitative research, was useful in aligning the objective of the study with the sample. In addition, purposive sampling allows depth of information that increases understanding of the intent of the study (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024). Unlike the theoretical sampling method, for example, which is guided by the theoretical framework of a study, Tajik et al. (2024) emphasized that purposive sampling is an intentional sampling method of participants that is beneficial when answering the research questions.

To be selected as a participant in this study, participants identified as a father or male father figure in the life of an African American female youth exhibiting at-risk behavior. A father or father figure is one who is either biologically related to the female youth or who provides and cares for the youth. Between 10 to 12 participants were to be selected for this study. According to Sharma et al. (2024), in qualitative research, the sample size, as it relates to specific characteristics of the participants, or "sample specificity," is generally considered sufficient. This range of sample size was also used in consideration of project and data manageability, and the goal of the study (Sharma et al., 2024). The sample size is important to enable the researcher to reach saturation, as

saturation of the study is reached when the themes of the research become repetitive and new themes are no longer identified in the data (Sharma et al., 2024). Participants were recruited through public announcements at the Boys and Girls Club from programs from prevention programming that specifically serve female youth who exhibit at-risk behaviors, such as aggression and underage sexual activity. The sample size in relation to saturation was considered when selecting the sample of participants used in the research study. If the projected sample size did not allow for saturation, additional participants were recruited for the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument chosen for data collection for this study was participant interviews. As suggested by Engward et al. (2022), with careful planning, interviewing provides insight into the lives of the interviewee who has the most in-depth experience. The participants participated in individually scheduled interviews that were conducted by me, the researcher, with the use of video conferencing. Interviews were audio-recorded for data collection purposes. Video conferencing provided faster and more convenient approaches, user-friendly and affordable (De Villiers et al., 2022). Participants included ten fathers of female youth who answered questions related to their attitudes toward academic achievement to gain general insight into participant attitude and perception of academic achievement regarding the specifically identified population. Participant interview questions were designed to answer my research questions. The interview questions selected for this study were influenced by Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. As this framework emphasizes the experiences of oppressed youth within the academic

setting and the influence of authority in the lives of these youth, interview questions were developed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of figures of authority active in the lives of at-risk youth. Authority figures identified as father were selected to answer interview questions for this study, as the involvement of fathers was more critical to these youth (Tyrell & Masten, 2022). The interview questions are in the Appendix.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Ten participants were recruited and accessed by posting on the Facebook social media platform, in addition to the involvement of individuals sharing of the study flyer to independently owned businesses, where there was an influx of male traffic, such as barbershops and auto insurance companies. The selected number of participants for this study was considered sufficient, considering research quality, the research study, and research questions for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Participants of the study were fathers of female youth, enrolled in Grades 9 through 12, who had one or more at-risk factors, such as school suspensions and expulsions, and had failed in one or more subject areas. Behaviors included incidents of fighting, bullying, gang affiliation, and oppositional behavior in the classroom setting. Female students had records of failing grades within the past 6 months prior to the study. I collected the data by conducting interviews, as participants responded on video.

Data collection for each participant was scheduled to occur once per participant, over a two-week period, with interview dates selected by participants, according to individual availability. Participants were given the option of two to three time slots per day, within the two-week period, to enable participants to choose a date to schedule their

interviews. . At the end of the two weeks, due to few responses from volunteer participants, it was apparent that additional participants were needed. Within the following two-week period, I repeated the recruitment process for the additional participants needed.

According to Seelandt et al. (2021), debriefing is valuable and necessary as a result of interactions with participants, as events, such as interviews for research studies, affect how the interaction is remembered and interpreted. For debriefing purposes, I provided participants with my email address. Participants were allowed to schedule a time, via telephone, to answer any additional questions. Participants were also provided with the option to opt out of the debriefing, as a debriefing questionnaire with contact information was provided at the completion of each interview. If follow-up questions were necessary, participants were made aware by telephone or email. As part of the conclusion of the interview, participants were advised of the possibility that follow-up contacts would be made in the event that additional information was needed.

Data Analysis Plan

Each question asked during the study was specific to the research question of the study. All questions were designed to gather information about participants' thoughts, perceptions, and ideas related to academic achievement. Engward et al. (2022) discussed that qualitative interview questions align with the purpose of the study and with the research question. Answers to each question were coded into identified themes observed within the answers from each participant. I examined concepts, themes, and repeated patterns that appeared repeatedly throughout participant responses to interview questions.

I interpreted themes amongst experiences, views, perceptions, and opinions. Thematic analysis was used as the basis for the type of coding for the analysis of the data. As explained by researchers, themes identified within the research are identified as subjective messages received by the researcher that are communicated by participants (Ahmed et al., 2025). Themes identified in the data are summaries of participant actions as they experience or explain experiences related to the research (Ahmed et al., 2025). For this study, coding was conducted manually. Transcribed participant responses to interview questions were analyzed based on identified patterns and concepts within responses. By manually coding the data, I identified, line by line, participant codes and separated codes into themes. As explained by Bingham and Witkowsky (2021), reviewing interview responses and allowing codes, patterns, themes, and categories to be identified was inductive analysis within coding, as compared to deductive analysis, which allows the development of themes before data collection. For discrepant cases and data within the study, this was not used in the analysis but was noted in the discussion of the findings of the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Concerns of trustworthiness were considered throughout the study. Trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. According to Adler (2022), trustworthiness is evaluated by these four components.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is acquired by building rapport with participants and by engaging in multiple interviews with research participants (Ahmed, 2024). To

ensure credibility, I engaged participants in peer debriefing (Seelandt et al., 2021) to review responses to interview questions. Participants were asked to review transcripts of their interviews. I also described the approach to the analysis of the responses of the participants, also building trust with participants (Ahmed, 2024).

Transferability

Transferability is described as the external validity of the research and requires that interviews and interview responses reflect the lives of the participants, in addition to describing the criteria for participant selection (Ahmed, 2024). Drisko (2024) explained that transferability is the process by which information and findings obtained from a study can apply to others who have not been directly studied. I recruited father figures who were present in the lives of at-risk African American female youth. Each participant was asked questions about the experiences of academic achievement of these youth.

Dependability

Dependability suggests that findings and details of a study are consistent across data (Ahmed, 2024). Dependability allows the study to be replicated. As noted by Haq et. al. (2023), dependability is the consistency of the data. To ensure dependability, I asked each participant the exact interview questions. The use of triangulation included the recruitment of participants with various backgrounds to provide diverse samples (Drisko, 2024). Although participants had diverse backgrounds, interview questions remained the same. I created an interview script, which was used for each participant's interview.

Confirmability

Confirmability addresses whether the data includes biases of the researcher (Ahmed, 2024) and whether responses are reflective of participants' lived experiences. To address potential biases, I made notes in a separate journal that included personal reactions to participants' answers to interview questions. I was consistent in the use of the interview script to refrain from including personal responses to participant feedback.

Ethical Procedures

While following ethical procedures for this study, I abided by Walden University's IRB requirements when gaining access to participants and data for the study. According to Muzari et al. (2022), taking into consideration ethical procedures when conducting a study provides privacy, dignity, opinions, and protection of participants. The consent form for the study was submitted to Walden's IRB for approval. Once approved, the consent form was sent to qualified participants. Within the document of consent, I explained my responsibilities as a researcher when obtaining participant consent. Participant consent contained an explanation of the study's purpose and procedures, in addition to the risks and benefits of participation in the study.

Amongst the ethical procedures of consent, the voluntary nature of the study and the right of the participant termination of their participation were also explained. With the consent form, the participants voluntarily commit to participation, which includes the participant's signature, thus resulting in informed consent (Muzari et al., 2022). It was also ideal to obtain separate consent for interviewing and recording of the interview. As noted in a study by Thunberg and Arnell (2022), consent for both the interview and

recording of the interview was suggested, in addition to researcher explanation of the consent form to allow for any questions to be answered about the study. I ensured that, amongst the research procedures, I maintained participant privacy by securing audio and video recordings of participant interviews with encrypted software on a password-protected device, only accessible to me as the researcher. A confidentiality, privacy agreement was included in the letter of consent. Any data collected as a result of participant interviews was confidential and identified by number as an alternative to name identification. After a study is completed, data, including identifiers, is to be destroyed. Resnik et al. (2024) explained that the destruction of data can occur after no less than three years. The data for my study remained secure and encrypted with protection until the time designated to be destroyed.

Summary

Within this chapter of the study, my role as researcher as an instrument of the study was explored, taking note of personal biases, values, and prejudgments about the topic. The methodology, including participant selection, sampling, and the generic qualitative research approach, was described. Recruitment of participants for the study included engaging with local community programming and after-school programming, such as local Boys and Girls Clubs, to identify fathers of African American at-risk female youth who met inclusion criteria. Data collection for this study was through participant interviews, and interview questions were aligned with the study's theoretical framework.. Data trustworthiness and dependability of data were explored, explaining the process of how participant data would be checked for transferability. Ethical procedures and

concerns, along with IRB guidelines, were also addressed. The importance of participant consent was addressed, in addition to the process of data collection, privacy, and the time frame for data to be destroyed after study completion. In Chapter 4, the results of the study are presented.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore perceptions of fathers of African American at-risk female youth related to academic achievement in an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States. The perceptions, narratives, and experiences of fathers in relation to academic achievement in an inner-city environment were explored through semi-structured interviews. To guide this study, the following questions were used to explore paternal points of view:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of academic achievement of fathers of at-risk female youth residing in urban areas in the Southeastern region of the United States?

RQ 2: How do fathers of at-risk female youth, residing in inner city environments in the Southeastern United States describe their attitudes about academic achievement?

For the purpose of answering these research questions, six interview questions were developed. Each question allowed participants to respond with their experiences and opinions of the academic achievement of female youth, as a paternal figure in their lives.

In this chapter, the demographics of participants are described, the setting is reviewed, and the nature of the study, data collection, and data analysis are also presented. The trustworthiness of the study and the study results are also explained. A summary of the study concludes the chapter.

Setting

Before the beginning of the study, it was necessary that the recruitment process, to enable recruitment and selection of participants, be approved by the Walden University

Institutional Review Board. After approval by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB; #09-12-24-0972327), the recruitment process began to search for suitable volunteer participants. I began recruitment by contacting local Boys and Girls Club of America locations, to seek permission to post the study flyer with specific information to direct potential volunteers for participation in the study. From the flyer postings at local Boys and Girls Club locations, there were no responses to volunteer to participate in the study. I then began to contact local organizations that served populations similar to individuals discussed throughout the study, such as youth programs that catered to at-risk populations, in addition to organizations and programs that were in association with the adult male population, such as male mentorship programs and fatherhood associations. Again, I did not receive responses for participation even after several attempts to connect with these organizations and programs.

I then posted the flyer on the Facebook social media platform. This attempt received responses; however, some volunteers did not meet the qualifying criteria for the study. I began the process of individual networking with various individuals outside of larger organizations, and I finally recruited eight volunteers to participate in the study. There were more than eight individuals who volunteered to participate in the study; however, some individuals did not meet study inclusion criteria. These were to be of a resident Southeastern region of the United States, a paternal figure in the life of an African American female youth enrolled in Grades 9 through 12, and who had one or more at-risk behavioral factors. Each volunteer participant agreed to the required interview process, and they each received the approved consent form via email,

responding by replying “I consent” to the email. One participant did not report at-risk behaviors of their youth, so their information was not included in the data analysis.

Zoom was used to conduct and record interviews. I conducted the interviews from my home, free from distractions that could interfere with the quality of the recording of the interview. To transcribe interviews, I used Restream transcription software. Participants were interviewed in locations such as their place of employment or from their individual homes. They were advised beforehand to have a private space free of distractions. Before the beginning of each interview, I described the study and reminded participants that they were being recorded and that the maximum for the interview was sixty minutes.

Demographics

There were seven African American male participants included in the study. They each identified as active paternal figures. Six participants were biological fathers, and one was an uncle. They all resided in the Southeastern region of the United States, including Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Below, Table 1 presents demographic characteristics of each participant, with the identifier, PF (Paternal Figure), and an assigned number to conceal identity for confidentiality of the study.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Ethnicity	Paternal role	Location
PF1	African American	Father	Florida
PF2	African American	Father	Florida
PF3	African American	Father	Mississippi
PF4	African American	Father	Arkansas
PF5	African American	Father	Arkansas
PF6	African American	Father	Tennessee
PF7	African American	Uncle	Arkansas

Data Collection

Data were collected from eight volunteer participants using Zoom. I introduced myself as a Walden University doctoral student and reintroduced the study, as explained in the consent form before the scheduled interview, and the interview began. Participants were asked twelve questions, structured to obtain individual perceptions about the academic achievement of the young woman whom they parented.

Participant interviews were scheduled according to each participant's availability. Data was collected via Zoom. I conducted interviews with a laptop computer, while participants used their personal computer, laptop, or mobile device with access to the Zoom platform. To ensure access to the Zoom digital interviewing platform, I provided a Zoom application download link to each participant prior to the date and time of the

scheduled interview. Participants completed one interview, answering each interview question. Interviews generally lasted for a duration of twenty to thirty minutes. Each interview was audio recorded, automatically saved into a file, and password-protected within the Zoom application.

During the process of data collection, there were variations from the plan presented in Chapter 3. There were several attempts to recruit volunteers for participation in the study. Originally, the plan was to obtain volunteers who were recruited through public postings of the study flyer at local Boys and Girls locations. No one agreed to participate in the study from this location. There were attempts to reach out to volunteer participants by means of contacting community organizations and those in leadership of programs that engage similar populations addressed in the study. In addition, the study flyer was posted on Facebook social media. This approach attracted volunteers who resided outside the geographic study location. In terms of the projected sample size, the sample size decreased from 10 to 7. This was due to the lack of responses from potential volunteers. One participant's data was excluded due to their acknowledging the lack of at-risk behavior demonstrated by their youth. Additionally, unusual circumstances occurred during data collection. I was contacted by a potential volunteer, who attempted to disguise their voice and appearance when contacted for completion of an interview. As the Zoom communications platform allowed video engagement, it was apparent that the individual presented themselves on two occasions to participate in the study. This volunteer was informed that multiple interviews were not accepted as part of the study.

Data Analysis

I conducted a thematic analysis, in which themes were identified in reviewing repetitive patterns in participant responses during the interviews. Participant responses produced patterns that were coded into categories and produced themes in the research, allowing an inductive analysis, as themes developed from the participant responses during interviews (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). I did the data analysis manually without using any online platforms and used Microsoft Word to create tables that assisted in organizing data codes and categories, and developed themes. I re-read transcripts multiple times to identify codes, categories, and themes. I began by identifying codes from each participant's transcribed interview.

Individual codes include words such as *death, separation,* and *parent/child conflict*. I was able to put codes into categories, such as *familial changes.* There were six themes identified from the complete data analysis. The themes identified in the study were (1) poor engagement in academics, (2) above average performance compared to other peers, (3) changes in family unit as a common barrier to academic success, (4) concern with student behavior in school, (5) parental desire for student learning autonomy, and (6) school resources and school authority identified as supportive.

Table 2

Identified Themes

Poor engagement in academics
Above average performance compared to other peers
Changes in family unit as a common barrier to academic success
Concern with student behavior in school
Parental desire for student learning autonomy
School resources and school authority identified as supportive

Data from participant responses differing from patterned data included in the identified themes were not factored into the thematic analysis. For data not included in the complete analysis for reason of not meeting complete study criteria, this data was not included in the thematic analysis. This data, including the qualifying data used for the study, was retained and will be electronically secured for the required time frame.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Data produced in research must be trustworthy. Kocaman (2025) claimed that the trustworthiness of data is the critical foundation of the quality of qualitative research. A review of this study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was necessary to consider the trustworthiness of this study. A review of these components is how trustworthiness is evaluated (Adler, 2022).

Credibility

To establish credibility of the data, I implemented credibility strategies mentioned in Chapter 3. After transcribing the participant interviews, participants were sent an email including an attachment of their transcribed interview. This was necessary to assist with credibility of the study, because as noted by Rachmat and Fadillah (2025), credibility reflects the actuality of the reality of the participants' responses when engaged with the researcher. Participants were asked to review the transcript of the responses during their interview. Participants were encouraged to follow up and to respond to the email with any concerns or questions regarding the transcript. In addition, a brief explanation of the process of coding and thematic data analysis was included in the email to provide details of how the information provided in the interview was included in the analysis of data.

Transferability

Transferability of the study was met as participants were knowledgeable of interview questions, as participants were asked questions about female youth with whom they fathered or were in close association or interaction. Transferability of the study was implemented as participants of the study were well knowledgeable when answering questions about their youth and academic achievement (Ahmed, 2024; Drisko, 2024), as participants fit the criteria for the study, providing responses that reflect their personal lives, and their reality (Ahmed, 2024.).

Dependability

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I ensured dependability by asking each participant the same interview question. I used an interview script to conduct interviews with

participants. Interview questions remained the same throughout the complete data collection process. At times during the interviews, some participants asked for clarification of questions, so some questions were reworded. Participants were also asked to elaborate on their responses. As the same questions were asked to each participant, this allowed data to be consistent and relevant to the research questions (Haq et al., 2023). The interview questions remained the same and were replicated throughout the study; this intentional procedure increased dependability in the data received as a result of the combination of responses from the interviews (Ahmed, 2024).

Confirmability

To establish confirmability, I used the interview script to attempt to prevent biases when engaging in the interview process, as participants answered questions and explained their experiences. The script was very helpful in assisting in the elimination of personal, researcher bias, and control of my perception when receiving responses from participants (Ahmed, 2024; Haq et al., 2023). As mentioned in Chapter 3, a notepad, in addition to a blank Microsoft Word document, was readily available to record any personal opinions and note-taking outside of the interview script. The script was very useful in ensuring confirmability, that the notepad and blank document were not used for any personal comments outside of what was intended for the interview questions.

Results

This section presents the results of this study in answering the following the corresponding research questions. The research questions were, “What are the perceptions of academic achievement of fathers of at-risk female youth residing in urban

areas in the Southeastern region of the United States?" and "How do fathers of at-risk female youth, residing in inner city environments in Southeastern United States describe their attitudes about academic achievement?" The results of this study were produced by thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is conducted by generating codes from the transcribed interviews conducted with research participants, categorizing codes, and identifying and naming patterns in identified themes (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Patterns that could be coded into categories were produced from participant responses, which yielded themes identified throughout the research data. This allowed an inductive analysis, as themes developed from the responses of participants during interviews (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). To organize the data, tables were created with Microsoft Word that listed codes that were put into categories, which later revealed developed themes.

There were six themes identified from the perceptions of fathers of African American at-risk female youth related to academic achievement. The themes identified in the study were (a) poor engagement in academics, (b) above average performance compared to other peers, (c) changes in family unit as a common barrier to academic success, (d) concern with student behavior in school, (e) parental desire for student learning autonomy, and (f) school resources and school authority identified as supportive. The identified themes, the description of the themes, and presenting data, in the form of participant quotes from the transcribed interviews, are identified in the next section. Table 3 lists the themes and the corresponding number of participants who referenced the associated theme, and the number of times referenced.

Table 3

Themes and References

Themes	Participants	References
Poor engagement in academics	4	6
Above average performance compared to other peers	4	5
Changes in family unit as a common barrier to academic success	4	5
Concern with student behavior in school	2	5
Parental desire for student learning autonomy	5	6
School resources and school authority identified as supportive	5	6

Theme 1: Poor Engagement in Academics

This theme was identified by asking the first interview question, "How do you view your child's level of academic achievement?" While answering this question, participants shared their thoughts regarding how they believed their youth performed academically. Participants discussed performance in the classroom and described engagement in academics, commonly describing the youth's level of performance as poor or less than average. As participants discussed the youth's levels of academic achievement, they explained their rationale for their description of academic achievement. Participants believed that youth needed additional skills in the classroom, in addition to the youth's level of engagement in their academic studies, that resulted in an inability to function at a greater level.

Participants sometimes described youth as unmotivated, apathetic, and disinterested when engaged in the academic setting. PF6 related his youth's engagement in school to poor self-application. PF6 stated: "I think she's a decent student. I think she's probably about a C plus student. And I think that's good, but I don't think she really doing a whole lot of applying herself."

PF3 discussed concerns regarding his youth's level of academic achievement, relating her level of achievement to her lack of motivation: "She's smart. She's just unmotivated when it comes to school. She doesn't really like school a lot, so I don't think she applies herself as much as she could because she just doesn't like school." He later stated, "We've afforded her with some of the best opportunities that you can put in front of a child and, you know, whatever she doesn't take advantage of is just because she lacks that inward motivation." PF3 continued to elaborate upon his youth's level of engagement in the academic setting, comparing her level of engagement to his level of engagement in his history of school attendance:

> I don't know if it this is a generational thing or what, but she just has a very apathetic attitude towards school. She has no desire, or no self-motivation when it comes to school and wanting to just obtain knowledge, and you know, she's not a bookworm like I was. I enjoyed school, I always wanted to be the best in class, and maybe that was just that inward motivation. But, yeah, she doesn't have that. So that's unfortunate.

PF3 also discussed personal rationale, with reasoning why his youth may perform at an expected lower level as it relates to poor engagement in the academic setting. He

further commented, describing a correlation between the level of engagement in school to current generation of youth: “I recognize that more times that, her lower grades are because she just doesn’t apply herself. She’s lazy too. So, it’s just maybe, a generational thing or her being a teenager or whatever the case is.” Poor engagement in academics was also explained as a low level of academic achievement. PF5 stated, “Her academic level is a little low. They got more common sense than book sense.”

PF2 described concerns of the level of academic achievement and engagement as it relates to the amount of access allowed to engage successfully in the academic setting. PF2 explained:

> Sometimes it’s kind of been a little bit challenging because, as a child, sometimes you just have difficulty knowing everything that was being taught in the classroom. So sometimes, my child finds it difficult and requires extra access to have a plain knowledge of what was being said in class in the classroom.

Theme 2: Average Performance Compared to Other Peers

The theme Above Average Performance Compared to Other Peers was identified as participants described their youth’s level of academic achievement compared to other peers. Participants were able to discuss their perceptions of the comparison of at-risk youth’s academic achievement compared to other peers in their school setting. Youth were described as outspoken and outstanding, with greater than average performance, as compared to their fellow cohorts. PF3 recognized his youth’s grade accomplishments as a measurement of performance, in addition to the encouragement to improve. He stated: “I

think she's an above average student. Most of her grades are As. She'll have a B here or there. I'll try to push her to, you know, bring those Bs to an A."

PF2 also commented on grade performance, but mentioned the youth's social characteristics to measure performance, "Grades are okay. She's outstanding, and she's outspoken." PF1 reflected on the level of effort in comparison between his youth and his youth's fellow peers. PF1 stated, "Compared to her fellow peers she is not really fully competing with them. I would say her peers are doing 90% and she is doing 100%." PF6 described leadership ability, in relation to performance, as compared to other peers. He commented, "She's kind of like the leader of the pack. She standouts, and I think most of the girls that she probably hang out with, they probably look up to her."

Theme 3: Changes In Family Unit as a Common Barrier to Academic Success

Family influences and parental engagement are thought to significantly affect the academic performance of a student while in an academic setting (Parmar & Nathans, 2022). This theme emerged when participants answered the interview question that asked about identified barriers and roadblocks preventing their child's academic success. PF1 noted the death of his youth's mother as a barrier to academic success. He stated, "She doesn't have her mom anymore and I know that takes a toll on her. She was really close with her mom before she lost her." PF4 answered the interview question by mentioning how changes and alterations in the structure of the family unit influence performance in school, stating, "I saw that it was when she lost some of her space, that's when she started acting out shortly after that; her living space."

Problematic outcomes and challenges have been identified in single-parent households where there is parental separation or divorce (Jackson et al., 2023; Parmar & Nathans, 2022). PF6 answered the question by discussing how family and parental separation posed as a barrier to his youth's academic progress. He stated:

> Me and her mama ain't really, you know, like we used to be, and, you know, I think she old enough to understand that everybody don't really always get along and stay together. But maybe a couple of years ago, you know, when it was fresh, it might have kinda intruded on her, trying to be more of a good student. I think it just kinda, you know, you kinda worry about your mom and your daddy. And that kinda gets in the way. If I could say that roadblock, I say that's probably what that is, the roadblock of us not being together. And so, we've been kinda separated for all this time. I think she understands.

The quality of the parent-child relationship is a great indicator of academic success and achievement (Parmar & Nathans, 2022). As a response to being questioned about barriers to academic achievement, PF8 identified the parent-child relationship as a barrier to the academic success of his youth, commenting on the interview question, stating, "Arguing with her mother and frustration between a child and parent."

Theme 4: Concern With Student Behavior in School

As participants were questioned about identified concerning behaviors demonstrated by their youth, the theme of concerns with behaviors demonstrated in school emerged. Participants were concerned about the reported behaviors shown while

in the school setting. PF2 disclosed that as a result of bullying by peers, his daughter began to display unwanted behaviors while at school. He stated:

> She was being bullied by her peers in the classroom. That affected her, negatively and emotionally, mentally. She couldn't concentrate on her studies. And she was always, having an anxiety, at that period, and she's not understanding because of the anxiety.

PF3 also identified behavioral concerns, as related to a lack of association with others, while in the school setting. PF3 noted, "I would say she's a very quiet student. It's very hard for her to open up." PF4 discussed behaviors exhibited in the classroom that warranted consequences initiated by the school. He stated:

> There are some behaviors that I've had to address, that resulted in school suspension, and that's due to the network of friends that the child is dealing with. My child was having a problem lashing out and being mean to staff and other students. It stemmed from an issue that she had at home.

Theme 5: Parental Desire for Student Learning Autonomy

This identified theme emerged from asking participants what they would change about their child's academic achievement. Participants answered in the context of a desire for an increase in the level of performance and an increase in desire for academic success; for youth to take the initiative, while being proactive in learning and improvement in academic achievement. PF3 discussed his desire for his daughter to work to improve in academia.

> I would want her to try to be the best student that she could be. I know there's so many different opportunities and ways you can make money and be successful in this day and age, especially with the adding in the social media - the advent of social media and the access that they have to Internet, phones, all this technology I think that that has something to do with it as well because when we were in school, we didn't have those.

When asked about what he would change about his daughter's academic achievement, PF1 recalled the level of academic performance once demonstrated, stating, "She once excelled at a greater level, before things happened with her mother." PF2 stated, "What I feel that can be changed is, having a strengthening up on the foundational skills for my child in terms of focusing on developing and essential literacy and skills as these are critical building blocks for future academics for a child." PF6 noted a desire for his daughter to improve her grades, commenting, "Be a little bit more, on to her about, you know, really, really trying to be a better student. You know, get her grades up higher than they is, you know." PF8 emphasized his desire for his youth to increase their level of study for better grades. He responded, "That's probably study more. I mean, really, really, really study more and study harder. Okay. You know, you know, try to get a future goal."

Theme 6: School Resources and School Authority Identified as Supportive

This theme was identified within responses to two interview questions. The questions inquired about programs beneficial to their child's academic progress, in addition to the role that figures of authority played in the lives of these youth. Participants

were able to identify programs and school resources that assisted youth. Participants also discussed the support received from school personnel. PF2 stated: “Programs that helped my child’s academic progress are tutoring programs, mentoring programs, and summer learning programs. She has teachers, teachers who have tried to help her.” PF1 commented: She goes to see her school counselor; some teachers really take care of her. Her school counselor advises teachers to give her some preparation.

In response to school resources and school programming, such as extracurricular school programming.” PF3 replied, “We just keep her in honors classes and just try to make sure that she does extracurriculars at the school, so she’s a little bit more engaged in doing something other than just going to school and coming home”. Further considering resources available to students, PF5 identified students themselves as resourceful to one another, as it pertained to his child’s academic success. He stated, “Just picking up another trait from another kid, is one thing I can say.” PF6 identified school programs and teachers beneficial to his youth’s academic success. He stated:

> I think that lunch program really helped out (in her academic success). I think that that’s one program that helped out, I believe, and I think she; I think she probably got some after school stuff. I heard her one time talk about this teacher with her name, Miss S. She said she was always there to help her. I think it’s, you know, those teachers that don’t come off being too strict; they have an opportunity to be a confidante or a friend that they can talk to. They have that kinda open connection, they’d be more helpful to the students. She had one teacher that was, you know, old. I think she was a nasty teacher. She was kinda mean to her.

PF8 presented vacillating opinions of supportive authority, commenting that schoolteachers can be either supportive or discouraging. He commented:

> Kinda, it could be good or bad. We get a teacher who's going to stay on her positively, and don't give her a chance to throw the towel in or give up. Just encourage her. You know, that's a good part. Or, you get a teacher, you know, who don't you don't ask too much from me. You know? I'm done with you. You know? Throw up your hands; over with her.

Summary

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore perceptions of fathers of African American at-risk female youth related to academic achievement in an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States. Data was collected through interviews from seven African American males who were parental figures to at-risk female youth. The research questions explored their perceptions of the academic achievement of girls, in addition to descriptions of their attitudes about academic achievement. Participants described their attitudes and opinions about the success of these youth while in school and while engaging with peers and figures of authority. Six themes emerged: (1) poor engagement in academics, (2) above average performance compared to other peers, (3) changes in family unit as a common barrier to academic success, (4) concern with student behavior in school, (5) parental desire for student learning autonomy, and (6) school resources and school authority identified as supportive. In Chapter 5, interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study,

recommendations for further research, implications of the study, implications to include implications of positive social change, and conclusion are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of fathers of African American at-risk female youth. These perceptions were related to the academic achievement of these youth who resided in urban areas in the Southeastern region of the United States. The exploration of the perceptions of this population provided increased insight into the experiences, thoughts, and attitudes of male parental figures in the lives of these youth. Data collection for this study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with volunteer participants. Data were analyzed and answered the research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of academic achievement of fathers of at-risk female youth residing in urban areas in the Southeastern region of the United States?
2. How do fathers of at-risk female youth, residing in inner city environments in the Southeastern United States describe their attitudes about academic achievement?

After review of the existing literature, there was little information about fathers' perceptions of the academic achievement of African American female at-risk youth. The information obtained in this study may assist schools and programs that assist at-risk youth in addressing concerns with academic achievement among this population. From this research, the data produced a total of six themes. Amongst these themes, fathers identified a need for improvement in academic performance, with a desire for student

autonomy when learning, in addition to concerns with school behavior, and changes in the family unit as a barrier to academic success.

Interpretation of the Findings

A generic qualitative approach was used to gain knowledge of the perceptions and opinions of African American fathers, as they relate to the academic achievement of at-risk female youth. This study extends the knowledge of the discipline by addressing the gap in the lack of literature addressing perceptions of African American fathers, as it pertains to the academic achievement of female youth. The findings from this study primarily confirm knowledge found within the literature about parental involvement and the academic success of youth (Hyder & Anbar, 2025; Milosavljevic Dukic et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the results of this study highlight the perceptions of academic achievement as expressed by fathers present in the lives of female youth. In general, each theme that emerged from this present study emphasizes insights cited in previously reviewed literature. These insights include barriers to academic achievement, parental involvement and expectations, and opinions about student behavior in school (Altenburger, 2023; Ford et al., 2021; Pistella et al.,2022; Shipe et al., 2022). However, this small study does offer a closer look at the role of father figures specifically, which has received very little focus.

Theme 1: Poor Engagement in Academics

In this study, fathers described the academic performance of their youth as poor and cited low motivation in school, in addition to a lack of self-application in the school setting. This finding extends knowledge within the discipline as existing literature notes

that an attitude of motivation in education is necessary for academic achievement (Liem, 2025). Participants additionally noted concerns with the youth's challenges in the classroom due to difficulty understanding classwork and low academic levels, related to reading and mathematics. Fathers also view youth as apathetic when learning, without motivation or desire to engage in learning. These youth are viewed as smart but disinterested in education. This also confirms that fathers have high expectations for their youth and youth academic achievement, as previous literature explains that fathers demonstrate more critical parenting styles (Malik, 2021; Ping et al., 2023). In this study, though fathers perceived poor engagement, they also viewed their youth as exhibiting above-average performance compared to other peers in school.

Theme 2: Average Performance Compared to Other Peers

Participants discussed their opinions about youth academic performance compared to their peers. They identified their youth's performance as above average, with little to no competition from fellow peers. While seemingly contradictory in relation to Theme 1, participants labeled youth as outstanding, noting that they stand out amongst others. This theme confirmed existing knowledge in the discipline, as literature explains that within parent-child relationships, parenting and parental interactions contribute to higher levels of academic achievement (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). The fathers in this study presented as active in the lives of their youth, thus having an existing, active relationship with their youth, influencing their level of academic achievement. Their views of performance compared to others could be identified as contrary to their views of youth engagement in the academic setting; however, these views could be related to the high

expectations exhibited by fathers (Malik, 2021). Other participants identified their youth as even or on the same academic level of achievement as others.

Theme 3: Changes In Family Unit as a Common Barrier to Academic Success

This study's findings indicated that fathers of at-risk African American female youth believe that changes and alterations to the family unit are a cause for barriers to student academic achievement and advancement in school. Participants identified specific occurrences, such as grief due to parent death, in addition to parent separation. Participants identified parental separation as a barrier to academic success, and this further confirms previous research found in the literature that suggests that involvement from both parents contributes to academic success (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). Though both parents may engage in co-parenting, in situations where there is a death of a parent, not only does parental separation occur, but the loss also affects the youth emotionally, further contributing to barriers to academic success. This study further confirms the importance of the influence of parent-child relationships (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). Participants discussed how disruption of the parent-child relationship, such as conflict, interfered with academic success, causing frustration and distraction. In addition, findings from this study also further confirm previous literature that states the value that non-resident fathers place on positive co-parenting (Wang et al., 2023). For participants who did not reside in the homes with the youth, these participants emphasized the importance of their interaction with the youth's mother when addressing the youth's behavior or performance and academic success in school. Participants also discussed their effort to be involved and knowledgeable of their youth's academic progress.

Theme 4: Concern With Student Behavior in School

Results from this study show participants' concern for their youth's behavior in the school setting. Fathers presented their concern for how youth presented themselves while engaging with others while in school, emphasizing how other individuals can influence their child's performance. Participants discussed how the youth's social network caused distracted behavior, including behavior resulting from being bullied by others. Chen et al. (2025) suggested that as students are bullied by others, bullied students display behaviors that are a result of low-self efficacy, depression, and hopelessness. This finding contributes to the discipline of literature as it extends knowledge further, related to student behavior that relates to bullying victimization. In addition, other similar findings from the study emphasize displayed behavior that requires disciplinary action, such as student suspension from school. This finding confirms previously published literature, as research has identified that African American girls have a higher likelihood of being suspended from school (Green, 2022). It is also noted, in this study, that those youth suspended from experience negative confrontation with teachers, resulting in unhealthy student-teacher relationships. This also confirms literature, as studies have previously noted that African American girls who are suspended from school are also more likely to experience higher levels of criticism from school figures of authority (Green, 2022).

Theme 5: Parental Desire for Student Learning Autonomy

Participants in this study expressed high expectations for their youth. They emphasized their desire for their child to demonstrate increased initiative in their learning

and growth in areas of success in the academic setting. Fathers desired to see increased skill development and improvement in class, making statements such as “I want her to be the best that she can be.” These expressions of expectations also demonstrated fathers’ acts of support and encouragement for their youth. These findings confirm previous literature reviewed in the literature, as compared to mothers, fathers have higher expectations for youth performance in academics and are more critical of youth performance (Malik, 2021). Fathers emphasized the desire for increased focus and skill development, in addition to a desire for youth to utilize everyday use of tools available to them, including mobile devices and social media, to assist in learning and skills development. In this study, fathers also desire to be more involved and encouraging when describing student academic autonomy.

Theme 6: School Resources and School Authority Identified as Supportive

In this study, participants identified and discussed school authority and resources as supportive of their youth’s academic achievement. Participants demonstrated their ability to identify school resources, such as extra-curricular activities, mentoring, and summer programming. In addition, participants discussed specific encounters with school personnel who actively supported their youth with their academic achievement, such as teachers, school counselors, and athletic coaches. The findings of this study extend and contribute to existing knowledge in the reviewed literature. Fathers in this study, both those who acknowledged separation from the home and those who actively resided in the home with their youth, demonstrated knowledge of resources and authority figures who positively support youth in their academics. As non-resident fathers in low-income homes

are identified as being less involved in the lives of youth (Altenburger, 2022), fathers in this study presented as active, though socioeconomic status amongst their demographics was not considered as a factor in this study.

The findings of this study align with Freire's (1972) theoretical framework, the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and illustrate how the perceptions of authority, such as parental figures, can form and transform lives, with the support of influentially connected individuals, such as teachers. As fathers discussed their perceptions of the academic achievement of their youth, they were able to identify supportive school figures of authority and their supportive impact on the lives of their youth. As teachers were acknowledged as supportive to the youth of the participants, these findings connect to Freire's concepts about pedagogy, as it focuses on the theory that true education is not accomplished until both the student and educator recognize the importance of collaboration in the educational setting. As teachers assist and support students, students perform at above-average levels. Freire's theory also addresses how youth who are defined and identified as oppressed and at-risk learn to conform to hardships and setbacks. In this study, in instances where fathers identified students who experience barriers, such as parental separation, fathers nevertheless identify these students with above-average performance, further connecting to the theoretical framework. Also, fathers emphasized working with other peers to benefit and learn while in the school setting. As Freire's framework suggests, oppressed, at-risk youth learn to come together to change their situation. The insights from participants in this study demonstrate that

youth identified as at-risk due to race and gender, though despite barriers, continue to demonstrate the ability to perform at higher academic levels than their peers.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study included the parental status, which focused on fathers and not mothers, in addition to answering questions only about female youth, as opposed to the male youth population. An additional limitation of the study is that participants were solely African American. Limitations involving the geographic location from which participants resided were apparent, as participants only resided in a small portion of the Southeastern region of the United States. Also, as individual perceptions were collected, various perceptions present as a limitation, as opinions are of limited consistency. Additionally, my own biases serve as a limitation when studying female youth who have been identified as at-risk. To ensure that my interest and history with working with at-risk youth did not impose on the responses of participants, it was crucial that I was consistent with using the interview questions as a guided format to interview participants.

Recommendations

This study presented the perceptions of fathers pertaining to the academic achievement of African American female youth who were identified as at-risk. Each participant expressed their thoughts about the youth's experiences in the school setting and their level of academic achievement. It is recommended that further research is focused on the key points identified throughout this study. Participants believed that youth were poorly engaged in the school setting, displaying a lack of motivation and a lack of interest in learning. As fathers identified poor engagement, they also identified

that despite disinterest in education, African American at-risk female youth performed above average, compared to their peers. An additional highlight of this study is the perception that alterations to the family unit presented themselves as a common barrier to success demonstrated by these youth. As fathers showed concern with the behavior demonstrated by their youth while in school, these fathers also desired for their youth to exhibit autonomy in their learning. Available school resources and school authoritative personnel were identified as supportive and beneficial to the youth of the participants. It is recommended that further research engage in exploration of each of this study's thematic components with identified limitations of parental status, race, and geographic location.

Implications

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on the role of parental figures in the lives of at-risk female youth. Findings from this study highlight the ideas and attitudes of fathers as they relate to the academic achievement of female youth. As these youth have been identified as at-risk, the findings of this study may serve as a means to contribute to a body of knowledge that can enhance positive social change. Focusing on the role of fathers also suggests a broader exploration into a topic that may promote social change.

As noted in Reupert (2023), research that makes a social impact must address challenges and needs in society. The potential for positive social change, as related to this study, may be expanded across organizational, familial, and individual levels. Organizations that serve at-risk female youth may be influenced by the findings in this

study, as organization become knowledgeable about barriers to youth success, such as the barrier of changes in the family unit, highlighted by participants in this study. Organizations serving youth can provide support in the event of a family's disruption, such as the death of a parent or divorce. These organizations can assist the youth with the necessary resources that contribute to the youth's academic success.

In addition, organizations that serve teachers and other educational figures of authority may apply insights about the needs of African American at-risk female youth and youth in similar situations. Individuals, such as teachers and educators, those seeking information regarding the teaching and support of female youth, can become more aware of the reasons that contribute to the academic success or the lack of when considering youth's academic achievement. This study provides knowledge across a vast range of entities where impact can be made for social change in populations related to those focused upon in this study.

Freire's (1972) Pedagogy of the Oppressed emphasized the importance of teaching the oppressed, how an oppressed population engages in learning, and how those in authority influence the oppressed. Those considered or identified as oppressed, such as at-risk youth, have historically gained attention for poor academic achievement in the school setting, which results from a variety of barriers, such as race, behavior, and familial status (Culyba et al., 2022; Pistella et al., 2022). The presentation of the perception of fathers, also identified as authoritative figures in the lives of these youth, illuminated Freire's point in his framework, to become more active with the use of autonomy in one's educational success, dismantling social prejudices and injustices

coined by an identity of oppression. This framework challenges the student, teacher, and parent to consider their role in the educational process and how to contribute and to engage in the success of student learning, while eliminating prejudices associated with the identity of oppression.

It is recommended that practitioners in the discipline of education consider studies that have further enlightened knowledge of how students function within the educational setting. Door (2025) emphasizes that teacher development is crucial and critical in the learning and educational success of students. The development of educators in the area of increasing understanding of barriers to education from the lens of the parent enables teachers to gain insight through another lens into how parents view their child's level of achievement and what these parents see as barriers and support in their education. Educational practitioners can also benefit from this study by gaining knowledge of what education looks like for and to those identified as at-risk and oppressed. Educators must be sensitive to the emotional needs and experiences of others (Door, 2025), taking into consideration the student as a whole being, being "fully human" (Freire, 1972) in their experiences as a student and in life.

Conclusion

This study's objective was to identify the meaning of academic achievement as perceived by the fathers of female youth whose identity as "at-risk" presented as a potential barrier to academic achievement. From the interview responses of paternal figures of African American at-risk female youth, it was shown that despite experiences of barriers resulting from changes in the family unit, school behavior that warranted

concern, in addition to poor engagement in academics, these youth are perceived as demonstrating above average performance in school. Not only are fathers of at-risk African American female youth able to identify the educational needs of youth, but fathers of these youth also demonstrate a desire for female youth to excel in their learning and to have a voice and input in their academic achievement and growth. As educators gain a broader knowledge of what is necessary for the enhancement of this population's education and as they gain insight into what parents desire for students, academic achievement can be successful in the eyes of those who find it difficult or impossible. As educators, students, and parents engage and work together for the success of youth, the trajectory of the academic success of African American at-risk female youth and other demographics alike can be enhanced and demonstrate positive social change for generations to come.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

1. How do you view your child's level of academic achievement?
2. What roadblocks and barriers, if any, can you identify that prevent your child's academic success?
3. What, if anything, would you change about your child's academic achievement?
4. What types of programs do you think have helped in your child's academic success?
5. What role do you believe figures of authority, such as teachers and school personnel, play in your child's level of academic achievement?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your participation.