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Rachel E. Kohrman Ramos

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THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILD REPORTS OF PARENTAL WARMTH AND PERSONALITY DISPOSITIONS AND THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Leadership and Education in

the Adrian Dominican School of Education of

Barry University

by

Rachel E. Kohrman Ramos, M.S.

* * * * *

Barry University

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Area of Specialization: Exceptional Student Education

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This work is dedicated to Joni Kopke and Patrice Watts.

Joni and Patrice lovingly spent their days enriching the lives
of their families and each child they drew to them.
In their spirit, this research begins to look for tools for other
families to enrich the lives of their children as well.
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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILD REPORTS OF PARENTAL WARMTH AND PERSONALITY DISPOSITIONS AND THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Rachel E. Kohrman Ramos

Barry University, 2006

Dissertation Chairperson: Dr. Catherine Roberts

Ronald Rohner (1975), the author of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory), suggests that 26% of the variability of children's overall psychological adjustment can be accounted for by how they perceive their parents to accept or reject them. His personality subtheory includes personality dispositions as a mediating factor of whether children perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected. Although the associations between parental warmth, children's personality dispositions and children's success have been widely studied, few investigations have focused on students with learning disabilities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships of three aspects of the childhood experience of students with learning disabilities: their perceptions of their parents' overall warmth, their perceptions of aspects of their own personality dispositions and their academic achievement. The results of this study support Rohner's theory. The data indicated significant relationships between parental warmth and academic success as measured by three years of norm referenced test scores and final grade point averages. Other significant pairings were children's personality dispositions and academic success, and children's personality dispositions and parental warmth. The results of subscale pairings signify parental behaviors that influence a child's feelings of security and may help support a child's positive self-concept and, consequently, his or her academic success. It is hoped that these findings will be used to inform the creation of parenting workshops to assist families who want to help their children succeed.

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I was hard-wired to attempt my Ph.D. With the help of so many supporters, I have actually accomplished the task. As a child, while the mothers of most of my friends stayed home with their kids, I went to a wonderful day care center, where I was inspired and cared for each day by my now dear friends Steve Kopke, and Tobi and Darry Dusbiber. Meanwhile, my mother set out to complete her Master's degree and then her doctorate. I grew up under her desk, making file labels for her as she counseled college students on writing, attended classes and formed lasting and meaningful relationships with professors, mentors and friends at Michigan State University. I sat with my father as he hosted young medical students at our home, mentoring them through the medical career that gave him so much satisfaction and success. I was fed and nourished, everyday, with news and opinions and wordplay and irony as wonderful relatives and family friends, themselves from all disciplines, well-traveled and inquisitive, came through my life sharing their diverse beliefs about education, culture, music, the arts and family. I grew up wanting to be their peer, wanting to solve world problems, create new sonatas, design groundbreaking college courses, write beautiful poetry, and take the perfect photograph. I was surrounded by high standards, exciting ideas and the idea that "impossible" was only an illusion.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Teachers report that when working with children, regardless of their academic ability, they see a relationship between the students' level of success in school and the quality of their home life as the students report it. Understanding this relationship in all children is of interest not only to teachers who want to improve their classroom environment and teaching techniques, but it may also make a potentially important contribution to the development of the basic understanding of how to help certain children who have learning disabilities and as a result have difficulty in achieving grade-level success.

This study is focused on students with learning disabilities. A student with a specific learning disability (LD) is one who, as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990: 1997) "has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more" academic areas, including written expression, reading and/or mathematic calculation. In the current iteration of IDEA, implemented in 2004, schools are not required to use this discrepancy model and can cite the student's failure to respond to scientifically proven educational interventions to make a learning disability determination. The "learning disability" classification is relatively new in the world of special education (Bender, 2001; Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2005) and the population of students who are diagnosed with learning disabilities is growing (IDEA, 2004; Kavale & Forness, 1997; Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2000). When Public Law (PL) 94-142 or IDEA, formerly the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was originally authorized in 1975, the purpose of its

creation was to "assure that all children with disabilities have available to them…a free appropriate public education which emphasized special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs." (20 U.S.C. 1401c, 2004). The legislation required states to serve all children with learning disabilities. At that time, approximately 2 – 3.5 % of children with learning disabilities were served by the legislation, and by the 1990s the number had increased almost ten-fold (Bender, 2001). Between 1992 and 2001, the number of students diagnosed with specific learning disabilities jumped 28.5 percent, representing half of all children served by IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). One possible reason for the growing population of students with learning disabilities is the nature of the changing economy that has inevitably altered the society's priorities for education. The perception, treatment, and classification of students with learning disabilities have changed, also.

In 1900, more than a third of all workers were in farming, whereas by the 1980s fewer than four percent of the working population had jobs in the agricultural field (Lavin & Hyllegard, 1992). In the decades following World War II, a shift occurred from manufacturing to service work, heralding a change from an industrial to a postindustrial, information society (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). During this time, clerical and sales jobs almost tripled, and white-collar jobs in professional, technical and managerial sectors increased from 10 to almost 30 percent of the workforce (Lavin & Hyllegard). The new jobs created, and continue to require, collaboration and critical thinking. As the school systems have changed to teach these skills, more children who had graduated in the past having learned only basic skills (those necessary to work blue collar jobs), were increasingly left behind, unable to keep up with those working on new critical thinking

skills (Skrtic, 1991). With a more complex skill–driven society, in which the possession of reading and comprehension skills and specialized training are imperative, the model of schooling has changed. The factory model, in which seat-time equals a diploma and where children are moved through the system regardless of academic achievement, has changed to a model based on standards, testing and sharply increased accountability for student performance by administrators, teachers and school support personnel (Education Commission of the States, 1999). It is in this environment of accountability that so many more students were and are being identified as having learning deficits as well as other classifications of disabilities. Once students with learning difficulties began to be identified, the need for schools to provide services became apparent.

As the new environment became apparent and the population of students unable to adapt to the needs of the changing workforce grew, researchers, parents and teachers groups began to coalesce to understand how to best address the needs of this burgeoning population. On April 6, 1963, a group of parents sponsored a conference at which professionals with a wide range of experiences working with children came together to explore ways in which children with learning problems could be helped in the United States school systems. At this conference, as frameworks for legislation were proposed, and theories, diagnostic procedures and educational practices were shared, Dr. Samuel Kirk first coined the term “Learning Disabilities (LD)” (Bender, 2001; Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2005). Until that time, when a consensus was reached about common characteristics for an LD classification, and differentiations were made from other classifications, many children with these learning deficits were characterized with children diagnosed with mental retardation and often were

institutionalized in the early part of the 20th century; others were discounted as unteachable and sent home with few suggestions for parents who had hoped schooling could help their child (Kavale & Forness, 1997).

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was revised for the third time since 1975, in response to the ever-evolving research and understanding of students with learning disabilities. However, as this population of students with learning disabilities continues to mature, and becomes a more or less capable part of the workforce, many questions still require attention.

Before suggesting new areas for attention, it is important to review and understand the extent of learning disabilities, the children and others whom it affects, and the associated consequences for the affected children and the society.

Students with Learning Disabilities

As many as one out of every five people in the U.S. has a learning disability or a behavioral disorder such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder that affects their learning progress. Almost 3 million children (ages 6 through 21) have some form of a learning disability and receive special education in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Estimates are that children with learning disabilities or ADHD compose between 10% - 15% of the school-age population and represent over half the children who receive special education services in the United States (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), 2005). As defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997, a student with "specific learning disabilities" (so named because the learning disability is specific in each child and varies between children) must meet both inclusionary and exclusionary criteria

(Turnbull & Turnbull, 2000). One of the inclusionary criteria requires that the child's disorder is in one or more of psychological processes used to understand written or oral language. It can be recognized as a student's inability or diminished ability to listen, speak, read, write or do mathematical calculations. This classification can also include perceptual disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, and dyslexia. The exclusionary criteria are ones that further specify that the learning disability is not a result of physical disabilities, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or "environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage" (p.146). (In the 2004 amendments to IDEA, the last exclusionary condition has been removed as a factor in decision-making).

The regulations of the current iteration of IDEA (2004) allow, but do not require as in the 1997 version, an evaluation team to determine that a child has a specific learning disability if the child does not achieve commensurate with his or her age and ability levels in one or more of the areas listed when provided with learning experiences appropriate for the child's age and ability levels; the team must find that a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the previously stated areas (34 C.F.R. % 300.54(a)(1). Also, as with the definition of specific learning disabilities, the exclusionary criteria are the same. Typically, the discrepancy is determined by administering an IQ test, (such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4th edition) (Wechsler, 1991), the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (Coles, 1978; Ysseldyke, 1983) which produces a score for expected achievement, an operational definition of intelligence. A score for actual student achievement is obtained by administering one or two of several achievement tests. Another way to anecdotally identify a student with learning disabilities

is in the observation that their basic abilities differ and present a mismatch between the student and the environment in which he/she learns (Kavale & Forness, 1997).

Academic Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities

Children with learning disabilities may share several of a variety of academic challenges. These include confusing symbols, such as reversing letters or numbers, or confusing math symbols. Difficulties with reading and its essential elements are also common in students with learning disabilities, such as phonemic awareness, word segmentation, letter recognition, event sequencing, and comprehension (Lerner, 1997; Smith, 1998; Stringer, Morton & Bonikowski, 1999). In addition, students with learning disabilities often have difficulty expressing themselves through writing, and its components, including spelling, writing complete thoughts, clear handwriting, and idea organization. Socially, students with learning disabilities may exhibit an inability to follow the social rules of conversation such as turn-taking and correctly judging the culturally appropriate amount of physical space between themselves and others. Often, too, they may have trouble understanding and /or distinguishing jokes and sarcasm (Gettinger & Koscik, 2001; Gresham & Reschly, 1986; Kavale & Forness, 1996; NICHCY, 2005). These effects of having a learning disability on a child can be psychologically disabling as well. Children with learning and/or attention disorders may have trouble making friends (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; Ochoa & Olivarez, 1995, Swanson & Malone, 1992). Some children may have impulsive, hostile or withdrawn behaviors that are off-putting to others. Other learning disabled children's social difficulties stem from their problems with reading facial expressions and interpreting others' tones of

voice. When they misunderstand situations and act inappropriately, they, in turn, are misunderstood and less likely to be befriended.

Unfortunately, the more these children fail in academic tasks, the less likely they are to maintain a high level of self-esteem as their academic difficulties combine with problems socializing (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995; McKamey, 1991; Sharma, 2004; Vaughn, 1991). These accumulated problems create defeatism which often spirals into a cycle of frustration, acting out and punishment which can seem endless to the children and their families (Waggoner & Wilgosh, 1990). This cycle, too, is indicative of a population of children who have an external locus of control, a sense that events that happen to them are out of their control and that negative events, in particular, will happen whether they put forth effort to prevent them or not (Bender, 2001; Brooks, 2004; Cartledge, 2002; McClure, 1985; Sideridis, 2003; Valas, 2001; Zsolnai, 2002).

These characteristics of students with learning disabilities are discussed and considered in the effort to understand the over-arching categories of a child with learning disabilities' psychological profile: their sense of self esteem, self adequacy, independence, emotional stability, emotional responsiveness, and world view.

Efforts to Address Learning Disabilities

With the high societal costs of not taking care of and addressing the needs of children with learning disabilities, researchers, public officials, educators and health care workers have tried to implement programs, new standards and communication systems to assist students with learning disabilities in their efforts to make academic progress. At the federal level, President George W. Bush championed and approved the funding for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002 which underlines the need for

“accountability, flexibility, parent involvement, and evidence-based instruction in the education of all students” (Wagner, Newman, Cameto & Levine, 2005) Though NCLB’s main route to accountability relies on a school’s overall performance on standardized tests, this act paralleled similar initiatives focused on improving the educational outcomes for students who receive special education services, found in the IDEA Amendments of 2004.

The NCLB Act mandates that all students with learning disabilities be included in mainstream classrooms instead of pull-out classes with resource teachers as had been implemented previously (Wagner et al., 2005).   Inclusion, in which students are encouraged to participate in regular education classes with a resource teacher in the room with them for certain subjects in addition to the regular education teacher (Kochhar et al., 2000), leaves some of the needs of students with LD unmet. While some studies suggest that ending the practice of grouping the students in different classes based on their label removes the stigma for these students (Adelman, 1996), the risk is that students with LD no longer receive a functional curriculum that includes life skills, or social skills instruction to help them navigate through everyday interpersonal tasks (Carta & Greenwood, 1997) unless the mainstream teacher attempts to provide structure through cooperative grouping, for example (Stevens & Salisbury, 1997).

Research shows many sources of causes for the difficulties encountered by students with learning disabilities that are rooted both in the institutions of education and in societal institutions. As noted above, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 was established during the presidency of George W. Bush in an attempt to remedy some of the issues concerning funding and assessments and include several well-intended federal

mandates that teachers have little choice but to comply with, regardless of their perceived relevance in different types of education. For this reason, as they are being mandated, a researcher in search of creative interventions to ameliorate the problem of teaching, caring for and mentoring students with learning disabilities is smart to look past assessment or even institutional answers.

Family and the Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities

A social system to consider that strongly influences a child's academic and social success and is less susceptible to governance by the federal lawmakers is the family and the home in which a child lives. Though many parents themselves, have not, in their history, had good luck understanding or succeeding in the educational system, they have unique perspectives on their child's behaviors and personal characteristics that no teacher or administrator can learn from knowing the students for only several hours per week.

Many families, once they are educated about the meaning of special education labels and the services that can be provided through special education for their children, could help make the referral, assessment and placement processes smoother and less traumatic for their children. In a study on the theories that low-income Hispanic parents have about the problems of disability labeling, Beth Harry (1992) found that when these parents are involved in the special education process, they tend to resent the language with which educators and administrators speak about their children. For example, they tend to "reject retardation-related labels. Thus, parents' disagreements do not necessarily mean they do not recognize their children's difficulties, but rather that they interpret and name them differently"(p. 36). The parents' discomforts are in keeping with a common sense understanding that parents would want to protect their children and family from

undue stigma. Harry continues, noting it is the parents who, by following their familial instincts, point up a major problem in today's special education model. Currently, the main effect of the system in place is often to "locate the source of failure in the child" (p.37). In doing this, the educational system removes challenging students from the general education setting so that they do not remain as mirrors to teachers who are feeling overwhelmed by the diversity of behaviors, values, and norms represented in their classroom (Podell & Soodak, 1993). When such types of referrals occur, parents can be instrumental in monitoring and assisting the placement process. John Jackson, the national director of education for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), says "parents need to advocate whether or not their children need special education….If they don't need it, they should fight that classification. If they do need it, they should make sure they have all the services they need" (Moriarty & Fine, 2001). He continues, "Special education is not a final resting place for students. It should, in some cases, put them on an accelerated plan to get them back into regular education."

Teachers who enhance and continue their own education and monitor current research are aware of the institutional and societal pressures that lead to overrepresentation of minorities, as well as males, and students from families living in poverty in special education. Individual teache's classroom management styles can be one form of expression of the teacher's desire to avoid or lessen these pitfalls to the greatest extent possible. Professional and practical experiences suggest, however, that the factor that can make the most difference in a child's life is family support and participation (Busch, Pederson, Espin & Weissenburger, 2001). The greatest successes

with students often occur with the collaboration of the child's primary caretakers, appropriate assessments, educational interventions, and behavioral modifications. Research shows significant differences in a child's attitude and academic achievement when parents become more involved in the child's school experiences, whether through teacher and school support or through alleviations of stressors at home (Bursuck, Harniss, Epstein, Polloway, Jayanthi, & Wissinger, 1999; Manning & Lee, 2001; Varela, Vernberg, Sanchez-Sosa, Riveros, Mitchell, & Mashunkashey, 2004.) In fact, Ronald Rohner & Khaleque (2005), the author of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory) suggests that 26 % of the variability of children's overall psychological adjustment can be accounted for by the level at which they perceive their parents to accept or reject them. His personality subtheory extends this statement to include children's personality dispositions as a mediating factor in how they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected and, in turn, with what level of effectiveness they are able to proceed through their lives.

It is imperative then to look more closely at the relationship between students and their primary caregivers to understand the nature of the relationship and its potent effect on student social and academic achievement. Understanding this relationship, particularly in families where children are having learning difficulties, will inform educators and educational administrators of ways in which they can support, nurture and encourage parents to participate in their children's educational success.

Purpose of the Study

Most parents want the best education for their children. Parents of children with learning disabilities, in particular, often struggle to find ways of helping their children

with their academic challenges. They frequently feel that they could have done more in the past to help their children avoid academic problems or are afraid to help their children for fear that their inexperience in education will harm more than help. They are left to wonder what interventions could most effectively help their child make academic progress. One possible factor in children's school success is their perception of the treatment that they receive from their parents or caregivers. Years of research on parental acceptance and rejection have shown that the level of warmth of the parent-child relationship has powerful effects on a child's view of himself, and in turn, his ability to achieve success both academically and socially (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003; Shek, 1998; Shumow, Vandell, & Posner, 1998).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate three aspects of the childhood experience of students with learning disabilities; parental warmth, academic success, and child's personality disposition. The following questions will guide this study.

1. Do students with learning disabilities who report higher parental warmth report greater academic success as expressed by higher grades and test scores?
2. Do students with greater reported psychological adjustment report greater academic success as expressed by higher grades and test scores?
3. Do students who report greater psychological adjustment report higher parental warmth?
4. Do students who report greater psychological adjustment exhibit greater changes in test scores and grades over time?

5. Do students who report higher parental warmth exhibit greater changes in test scores and grades over time?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will add to the field of knowledge of parenting and parent training programs in schools. The results are meant to suggest possible types of parental behaviors that add to children's feelings of security and safety and, in turn, help strengthen their concept of self esteem, which has been shown to facilitate their success at school. These indicators may be added to information for parents who are seeking help for their children through family support services. This information can also be used to create parenting workshops to assist families who want to help their children succeed academically. Although the general association of parenting and children's success has been widely studied and published and hundreds of specific studies have been done to support parental acceptance-rejection research, none have particularly focused on students with learning disabilities. This research will bring new information to help teachers, as well as parents and children affected by the academic and social problems of learning disabilities.

Definition of Terms

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. A psychiatric condition characterized by a combination of inattention/distractibility, impulsivity and disinhibition, or hyperactivity (American Psychological Association, 1994).

Emotional Stability. Individual's steadiness of mood, his or her ability to withstand minor setbacks, failures, difficulties and other stresses without becoming upset emotionally (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Independence. An individual's lack of reliance on constant positive response, emotional support, encouragement, reassurance and comfort from others (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Intelligence. The capacity of adaptation to one's environment, which, in humans, is usually highly dependent on one's facility with language (Bender, 2001).

Learned Helplessness. A learned lack of motivation related to a high external locus of control (Bender, 2001).

Locus of Control . The perception of control over one's fate – usually discussed in terms of internal control (where one's own actions determine one's fate) or external control (where environmental conditions determine one's fate) (Bender, 2001).

Mainstream Modifications. Refers to modifications in instructional technique that may facilitate education of some students with learning disabilities (Bender, 2001).

PAQ-The Personality Assessment Questionnaire A self-report questionnaire designed to measure the seven personality dispositions most central to the personality subtheory of PARTheory (Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory), created by Ronald Rohner. The seven dispositions are Hostility/Aggression, Dependency, Negative Self-Esteem, Negative Self-Adequacy, Emotional Unresponsiveness, Emotional Instability and Negative Worldview (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

PARQ – The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire A self-report questionnaire assessing the individuals' perceptions of their childhood experiences with their parents or parent figures, particularly focused on parental acceptance and rejection (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Psychostimulants. Psychotropic drugs that stimulate neurological functioning (Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy, 2005).

Resilience. Resilience is operationally defined in the present study as a continuum of coping in the face of sustained or acutely negative or stressful circumstances or psychosocial conditions demonstrated to cause stress (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).

Risk Factors. In the context of developmental psychology, risk factors refer to adverse circumstances or events that jeopardize a child's development and chances of achieving good long-term outcomes. Examples of risk factors include neglect, abuse, violence, substance abuse, mental illness, depression, familial stress and disability (Cerin, 2002).

Self-Adequacy. Judgments people make about their own ability or capacity to meet task-oriented, everyday demands of daily life (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Self-Esteem. The overall emotional judgment individuals make about themselves in terms of worth or value within the context of their environment (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Social Desirability. Social desirability is the tendency for individuals to respond in a socially desirable fashion rather than giving their true feelings or responses to an item (Chen, Dai, Spector, & Jex, 1997).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) - Free or Reduced Lunch: Free and reduced meals are provided for children from households whose income is at or below Federal income eligibility guidelines and is used in the present study to denote low SES (Palm Beach County Public Schools [PBCPS], 2003).

Specific Learning Disability (LD). A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using mathematical calculation, mathematical

reasoning, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, oral expression and written expression. A diagnosis for a child who exhibits a significant discrepancy between their estimated intellectual potential and actual level of performance or who fails to respond to scientifically proven educational interventions (Bender, 2001).

Standardized Assessment. A form of measurement that compares an equivalent individual's score to the normative group's performance on the same measure (Chen, Dai, Spector, & Jex, 1997).

World View – A person's overall assessment of life and the world in which he/she lives, as being more or less positive or negative (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Academic Success and Students with Learning Disabilities

Only in this generation has the import of recognizing and identifying individuals with learning disabilities (LD) been recognized worldwide (Gersons-Wolfensberger & Ruijssenaars, 1997), though students with similar learning challenges have been part of formal educational systems as long as those systems have existed. In the last twenty years, the number of students identified with learning disabilities has jumped from 1.2 million in 1979-1980 to 2.8 million in 1998-1999. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In fact, approximately five to seven and a half percent of the school-age population is identified as having a learning disability. Possible reasons for this huge growth in identification of LD include the acknowledgement of the significant academic and social problems experienced by people with LD (Meadan & Halle, 2004), the greater social acceptance of LD over other categorizing of special education (such as mental retardation, the identification of which has decreased significantly in the same period that LD has increased), and the fact that literacy is now a necessary skill in both the work and home environment (Gresham, MacMillan, & Bocian, 1997; MacMillan, Gresham, & Bocian, 1998; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Regardless of the reasons for the increase, Chambers, Parrish, & Harr, (2002) say that policymakers and educators often must consider it carefully first as a financial issue. The cost of providing special education services to a student is almost twice that of regular education students (on average $12,000 for a special education student and $ 6,500 for a student in general education.) Because of the great financial, psychological and academic stresses that result from

identifying an individual with learning disabilities, it is important not only to ensure that the student is appropriately identified but that when they are, all efforts are made to help them manage their challenges with as much effective support as possible. It is necessary then, to understand the nature of the disability, its effects, its possible predictors, and possible interventions. These can be found in society, the family, and within the individual to help remedy the frequently debilitating experiences of those with learning disabilities.

Demographics of Students with Learning Disabilities

To further understand the nature of the population of children with learning disabilities, one must consider several variables and the ways in which these demographic factors have changed over the last fifteen years.

Data has shown that the number of minority children placed in special education in the public school system is disproportionate to the numbers of minority children in the population (Artiles & Trent, 1994). There is an overrepresentation of minority children in all categories of special education except in the programs for gifted students where the numbers are disproportionately low. This disproportionality has been documented for more than 30 years (National Research Council [NRC], 2002). A review of data from the Office of Special Education Programs from the U.S. Department of Education shows that African-American students, for example, who made up 14.8 % of the population accounted for 20.2 % of the students in programs for students with disabilities. This data shows that black students were 1.3 times as likely as White students to be identified as having learning disabilities (NRC, 2002). In Baltimore, Maryland, a review of test scores revealed that while African-American and Hispanic student groups improved their

test scores from 2003, almost 50 percent of 8th graders still left middle school with only basic levels in mathematics while 80 percent of their white and Asian-American counterparts left middle school with advanced or proficient scores. Another issue that must be considered when looking at reasons for overrepresentation of minorities in special education is the effect that childhood poverty has on these disproportionate numbers (Kay, 2005). These numbers reflect the school reports throughout the country. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that the average 8th grade minority student performs at approximately the level of the average 4th grade white student (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003) and that although minority students are found at all levels of the achievement scale, a preponderance of these children are represented at the bottom part of the scale (Barton, 2004).

Although the race of a child may prove to be a predictor of whether they are more likely to be classified as having a learning disability, research shows that gender, too, plays a role. The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) reports that boys earn 70 percent of Ds and Fs and fewer than half of the A grades; boys account for two-thirds of learning disability diagnoses, and boys represent 90 percent of discipline referrals. Also, males make up less than 40 percent of college students (Gurian, Henley, & Trueman, 2001). This trend has been reported for many years. In data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) collected on adolescents both in 1987 and in 2002, males were overrepresented (with the assumption that males are generally 50 % of the population) among youth receiving special education relative to the youth in the general population (69 % and 67 %, respectively) (Wagner et al., 2005). This held true

for elementary–age students and among infants and toddlers as well (61 %) (Wagner, 2002).

The overrepresentation of minorities in special education is further intensified by the effects of childhood poverty, which is also high among minority populations, especially children (Kay, 2005). These numbers are reflected in school reports throughout the country. According to demographer Harold Hodgkinson, 40 % of all American children are living in poverty (compared to 25 % in 1984 (Education Commission of the States, 1999). In 2002, 16.7 % of America's children under 18 years of age were living in poverty and 61.9 % of those children were African-American (32.3 %) or Hispanic (28.6 %). The United States Department of Education's Report to Congress (1997), notes that increased childhood poverty has implications for trends in special education: "As poverty among children has increased in the United States, the number of children with disabilities and receiving special education has also increased" (p.i-20). Further, Fujiura & Yamaki (2000), in a review of several studies, found that children living under poverty are more likely to be exposed to conditions that predict disability status, such as asthma, chronic illness, environmental trauma, learning problems, and low birth weight. Linking these findings to data that quantifies the number of minorities living in poverty paints a fairly convincing picture of a population severely at risk for being labeled with a disability.

High Societal Costs

The marginalizing effect of having a learning disability on a section of the American population creates high societal costs. As of 1997, 35 percent of children with learning disabilities dropped out of high school. This is twice the rate of students without

LD. Of those who did graduate, less than two percent attended a four-year college, despite the fact that many are above average in intelligence (Wagner et al., 2005). Snow, Wallace and Munro (2001) suggest that students with learning disabilities are particularly subject to the temptation of dropping out. In spite of the fact that many of these students, by the nature of their disability have trouble establishing and maintaining a social network, they are usually mainstreamed into a regular school setting without extra support in social skills education and without the protection of a small-group setting with close teacher supervision and guidance.

Incarceration. Students with learning disabilities, as a result of being a large part of the drop-out population are at a high risk of incarceration. Of the approximate 41 percent of inmates in the nation's federal and state prisons and local jails who had not completed high school, 66 percent of them reported having a diagnosed learning disability (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). An estimated 420,600 state prison inmates in 1997, compared to 193,000 in 1991, did not have a high school education or a GED (a 33% increase over 6 years). In federal prisons, almost twice as many fit that category. When asked, approximately one third of jail inmates and a sixth of probationers said the main reason they quit school was because of academic problems, behavior problems or they lost interest. About one fifth of jail inmates and two-fifths of probationers gave economic reasons for leaving school, primarily going to work, joining the military, or needing money (U.S Department of Justice). As of May, 2005 the cost of housing one inmate in a bureau of Prisons facility cost $23, 205.59, approximately $ 20,000.00 more than the cost of supervision by a probation officer or rehabilitation counselor (Newsletter of the Federal Courts, 2005).

*Drug Abuse. C*hildren with learning disabilities also experience a higher drug and alcohol abuse risk than their nondisabled peers (McCombs, 2004). Risk factors for drug abuse in school-age children interact with the behavioral effects of learning disabilities – low self-esteem, academic problems, loneliness, depression and the desire to be socially accepted (Weinberg & Glantz, 1999). These risk factors are in addition to the likelihood of other risk factors found less frequently when compared with students who have never received special education classes. Students with learning disabilities are more likely to live in single-parent homes, have a family member with an alcohol or drug problem, have witnessed or experienced physical or sexual abuse and have experienced poor emotional health. All of these are identified risk factors for substance abuse. Also, a child with learning disabilities is twice as likely to suffer Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University [CASA])2005). People with these diagnoses may often experience obsessive-compulsive disorders, anxiety and depression, and low self-esteem which may lead them to use drugs as medication to feel more relaxed so they can fit into their peer group (Ackerman, Holloway, & Youngdahl, 2001). Additionally, medications such as Ritalin, prescribed to treat ADHD can be abused or over-prescribed (McCombs, 2004). This has been documented especially in affluent areas of the United States where one group of researchers theorized that HMOs with a large patient base prescribe psychostimulant drug treatments because they are cheaper than counseling (myDNA, 2005).

Gang Involvement and Violence. Children with learning disabilities often display the psychological traits that put them at a heightened risk to become involved in gangs. Delinquency, low self-esteem, and difficulty with maintaining a healthy social network

are key factors identified by researchers as ones that play a role in a person's likelihood to become part of a gang (Li, Stanton, Pack, Harris, Cottrell & Burns, 2002; Stoiber & Good, 1998; USA Today, 1993) African-American and Hispanic males with school and family problems are particularly vulnerable (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001; Curry & Spergel, 1992; Frauenglass, Routh, Pantin & Mason, 1997). These two groups are also most likely to be the perpetrators and/or the victims of violence. Adolescents and adults ages 18-22 experienced the highest rates of victimization in 1996. Males were 3.4 times as likely to be murdered in 2002, and 4 in 10 serving a sentence for a violent offense had dropped out of school (U.S Department of Justice, 2004).

Teen Pregnancy. Female students with learning disabilities are also at an elevated risk to become teenage mothers. As males are overrepresented in the population of students diagnosed for learning disabilities, females are underrepresented and less likely to be diagnosed or provided services they need to participate effectively in school (Seiler, 2001). Although a study done at Yale University in Connecticut found that boys and girls are equally likely to have reading disabilities, boys are three times as likely to be evaluated and treated (S.E. Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Escobar, 1990). As discussed previously, adolescents with learning disabilities are more likely than those without to have cognitive difficulties, have difficulty with social skills, experience poor self-esteem and poor body image (Shapland, 2000). Girls with disabilities, in particular, are also twice as likely as girls without disabilities to experience physical and sexual abuse. The presence of each of these elements, combined with the fact that teens with disabilities are less likely to receive information on sexuality and reproductive health, position young women with learning disabilities in a category of high risk for becoming

teenage mothers (Fiduccia & Wolfe, 1999). In the Transition Study of Special Education Students (1987-1993), young women in the study who were out of school three to five years were mothers at the rate of 41 % compared to 28 % in the general population (Wagner, et al., 2005).

The Dilemma of Labeling

Students with learning disabilities have many challenges to overcome. Many studies demonstrate that being labeled with a learning disability can be injurious to a child's sense of self-esteem (MacMaster, Donovan, & MacIntyre, 2002), and to their treatment by significant others, teachers and peers (Gresham et al., 1997). Yet this creates a dilemma because, while educators generally wish to avoid labels to ensure that the child receives the necessary services within a school system, the label must be placed (Wilson, 2000). More than 60 % of students with learning disabilities have significant problems in mathematics (Light & DeFries, 1995) and 75-80 % of students classified as learning disabled have their basic deficits in oral and written language (Hall & Moats, 1999). It is interesting to note that a learning disability proposes challenges even to students who are both gifted and talented *and* have a learning disability. In a study of these "twice-exceptional students", Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz (2005) found that the presence of the learning disability precluded the student from receiving appropriate advanced instruction in their areas of strength, which is also true for those students with LD who are not necessarily gifted but have strengths in some subjects.

The Twenty-Fourth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) demonstrated that

the population of students with disabilities has changed dramatically in the last three decades along with the general population of schools. Between 1987 and 2001, the Hispanic population of students with disabilities grew from nine percent to fourteen percent. More than four times the number of students in 1987 did not use English as the primary language in the home in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education). Therefore, in addition to facing challenges posed by having a disability, students are now faced with difficulties in overcoming language and cultural differences (Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez, & Blacher, 2005).

The psychological toll taken on students with learning disabilities can be great. Robert Brooks (2004) reports that in an interview, one child with learning disabilities said "It (learning disability) makes me feel terrible. It makes me realize that there is a barrier that stops me from having a happy and successful future". Brooks notes that in his interviews with students with learning disabilities, they all seem to have lost the gift of hope. Unfortunately, research shows that these students who struggle in school and feel as if they will not succeed are generally accurate about their reduced chances for success in life due to lack of academic achievement. Martinez, DeGarmo and Eddy (2004) report that lack of school success is highly associated with delinquency and that students who drop out from school can expect lower incomes, a higher rate of unemployment and greater chances of becoming part of the adult corrections system. Also, Holmberg (1985) found that in a longitudinal study of 15 year-olds, truancy, placement in a special education classes, and dropping out of school early were strong predictors for substance abuse. Harald Valas (2001) compared behavioral outcomes of students with learning disabilities and students who were *low-achieving* but did not have a special education

diagnosis. He found that both groups, by virtue of experiencing repeated failures in academic situations reported lower academic expectations, lower self-esteem, and more depressive tendencies. However, the LD students exhibited additional learned helplessness behaviors, likely due to their identification to teachers and their sense of stigmatization due to the label.

Despite the bleak outlook that many researchers have signaled for students who do not achieve academic success in school, two different reports on a 20-year longitudinal study in California identify additional factors for policymakers and educators to consider when creating prognoses for children with learning disabilities.

At the Frostig Center in Pasadena, students with learning disabilities who attended the school between 1958 and 1965 were surveyed twice over twenty years, with a focus on their life success, including educational achievement, employment, family and other social relationships and life satisfaction identifiers. Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins and Herman (1999) found, from both quantitative and qualitative data, that “the stress of having a learning disability was the major influence on the participants’ lives, far outweighing other events or conditions” particularly during their childhood and during their adolescence (p.44). They also found, though, that partly due to the added instruction they received because they had been identified as needing help, more than half of the participants were leading successful and fulfilling lives even though their earlier academic challenges persisted. Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind and Herman (2003) furthered their inquiries to investigate additional variables that predicted the successful outcomes for adults with learning disabilities. The commonalities among the successful adults were both a product of the former students’ psychological management as well as

sociological factors. They included self-awareness, their acceptance of personal limitations and strengths, their active searches for services outside of school including counseling and job placement assistance, and positive feelings about their family members due to strong family support.

Several authors have noted that most children who perform poorly in school continue to perform poorly, from as early as first grade through high school (e.g. Dauber, Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). Catterall (1998) found that not all children continue on a downward spiral of achievement throughout their academic life. Some children who started school with below-level achievement do set themselves apart from the general trendsetters and reverse their academic direction (Cappella & Weinstein, 2001).

Other researchers note that the increase of students identified with learning disabilities, along with their diminished prospects based on being labeled, has become a major social issue (Tallal, 2000) that must and can be addressed in several ways: through research in neurobiology (Benasich, 1999), psychological intervention, and understanding of sociological phenomenon at play in the schools, families and peer groups of students with these learning challenges (Higgins, Raskind, Goldberg, & Herman, 2002) . Neurobiologists seek to find links between a student's learning deficits and comorbid neurological irregularities in their brains that set them apart from students who are able to perform on target developmentally and consequently academically. (Rueda et al., 2003). To understand the psychological effects of having a learning disability, many psychologists and educators seek to find how having learning challenges affects students' personality dispositions – how they feel about themselves and how they view the world. Based on this, students with learning disabilities can be taught "success

attributes", a set of personal characteristics, behaviors, attitudes and conditions that help them lead positive lives (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, and Herman, 2002). The understanding of the social systems in place in the environment in which a student with LD lives is also critical to establish the contributing factors and /or causal direction of their disability. These include age of onset, gender, income, health status, and family characteristics.

Predictors of Academic Success

Other authors assert that academic success is such a strong predictor for success in life, it is important to identify the factors and facilitate the services or events that serve as predictors of academic success to all learners both with and without learning disabilities. These predictors are found in the home, school, and in society.

The Home. In the home, several factors may play a role in determining the academic success of children. These factors include gender, sibling order, family values, and family resources. McHale, Updegraff, Jackson-Newsom, Tucker, and Crouter (2000), studied parents' differential treatment of siblings and found that a basic reason for differential parental involvement and for the allocating of chores, for example, is the siblings' sex differences. These results were consistent with findings of siblings' impressions that sex differences are a central reason for differential treatment in a family. In earlier research, Plomin and Daniels (1987) found that siblings in families who reported stark differences in treatment from their parents as compared to other families were also more different in their personality and interests. Earlier, Grotevant (1978) with similar findings, suggested that these differences may occur because of what siblings learn in their different family experiences and how they perceive the social comparisons

occurring in the family. McHale and colleagues confirm this as their research also demonstrated that siblings who received relatively less parental warmth reported lower self esteem and less positive relationships with their siblings than those who experienced favorable or equal treatment. They also found that sibling order was related to parental warmth and involvement with age as a mediating factor, that is firstborn and second born adolescents reported more favorable treatment. The authors hypothesize that this is true because adolescence is the stage in which children increasingly focus on dynamics outside of the family, and begin to make comparisons between their family and others'.

The School. Studies of schools show, in addition, that a responsive, warm classroom environment promotes students' academic success (Pellerin, 2005; Voelkl, 1995) and that students in classes with low teacher-student ratio performed better on literacy skills and displayed less externalizing, negative behaviors (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2004). Staying at one school for the majority of elementary school appeared to be a predictor for academic success as well (Costello, Keeler & Angold, 2001). In a study that investigated students in transition, (Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell & Feinman, 1994) showed that the likelihood of academic success for students who transferred from one school to another due to family mobility, particularly in early adolescence, sharply decreased. Students who move to a new school are usually out of step with what is being taught in the new class and lose learning time as they may not have been studying the new teacher's curriculum before they moved (Barton, 2004). A recent study in Kentucky indicated that students who moved frequently between schools scored lower on school tests and that students from single-parent homes living in high-poverty areas changed schools most often (Metropolitan Housing Council, 2004, U.S.

GAO, 1994). However, in the case of a study by Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2004), in which African-American students were given vouchers to move from high poverty neighborhoods and schools to lower-poverty neighborhoods and schools, adolescent boys, in particular, showed more progress academically; they note that another characteristic of schools-- improved school safety-- partially accounted for the change.

For students with LD, within the classroom, those who are motivated, work hard and put forth effort are judged by their teachers as motivated and academically competent regardless of being labeled as having a disability (Meltzer, Katzir-Cohen, Miller, & Roditi, 2001; Miller, Meltzer, Katzir-Cohen, & Houser, Jr., 2001). Academic motivation, therefore, may counteract the negative halo effect that often biases teachers' perceptions of students with LD. In contrast, students with LD who had negative academic self-perceptions that hampered their motivation were judged by their teachers as making limited effort and as achieving below expectations in comparison with their peers. Meltzer, Katzir-Cohen, Miller, Reddy, & Roditi (2004) suggest that these findings may indicate that students with LD find that their perceptions of themselves strongly predict the judgments teachers make of them.(In turn, the warmth projected by a teacher toward the student stokes a student's increased participation in school, as shown in research by Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Voelkl, 1995.) However, research by Meltzer, Reddy, and others (2004) is consistent with other research that shows that the academic self-perceptions of students with LD do not predict their ability or willingness to apply themselves effectively to nonacademic areas such as art, sports, and other hobbies, and therefore is specific to academic areas (McPhail & Stone, 1995). Teacher perceptions, however, may vary in different cultures. In survey research

conducted in the Nara Prefecture of Japan, Kataoka, van Kraayenoord, and Elkins (2004) found that teachers felt that the fact that they did not have more time to devote to each student, one-on-one, most probably contributed to the students having a learning disability. Contrasting this view, studies from Australia indicated that teachers there discussed causes within the student that contributed to their disability (Snow et al., 2001; Westwood, 1995). Many studies from the United States and Europe list family, school, and societal factors as primary contributing factors to students having learning disabilities (e.g. Becker & Luthar, 2002; Luster & MacAdoo, 1994; Martinez et al., 2004; Petrill & Deater-Deckard, 2004; Stoiber & Good, 1998; Valas, 2001).

In the school setting, there are several specific tasks that intensify the academic experience for students with learning disabilities. Lancaster, Mellard, and Hoffman (2001) reported that the largest obstacle for students with LD was test anxiety, which in turn, exacerbated their continuing frustration with school, their lack of concentration and their problems with recalling information, often due to distraction. Cartledge (2002), found that extensive suspensions and other punitive practices also worsen students' problems in school, as the time away deprived the students of the opportunity to stay current with material covered and to feel like a cohesive part of the classroom environment. The results of one study indicate that this is a particular problem for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Lo and Cartledge (2002) studied two elementary urban schools and found that out-of –school suspensions in the largely black school (21.94 %) greatly exceeded those for the predominantly white school (8.1 %) during the same eight month period. They further discovered that, of those students who were suspended, most continued to receive disciplinary action in the schools, 3 of

which resulted in expulsion. This indicated that the original suspensions were not effective in altering the behavior that caused it initially. Many students with LD often are impulsive, slow to respond to the teacher, have difficulty staying still, have underdeveloped social skills (Sutton, Cowen, Crean, & Wyman, 1999), and become very frustrated as information washes over them that they are unable to comprehend. These are difficult characteristics for a teacher to manage, and the expression of them by the student, increases the likelihood that the teacher will initiate the process of referral, labeling, and special education placement. Often, teachers believe that special education is the place to put a student who doesn't produce work of quality commensurate to that of the other students in the classroom (Meyer & Patton, 2002). These teacher beliefs are often converted to anecdotal records made by the teacher and mentioned earlier as a part of a Child Study Team's documentation about a child. This documentation then can help Team members justify initiation of further testing and application of exclusionary and inclusionary testing, known as the "deficit" or "discrepancy" models, as a method of assessing whether a child should receive special education services.

Several authors seek to develop a new model of identifying children with learning disabilities to both avoid the pitfalls of over-identifying minorities and boys (Shaywitz et al., 1990) for special education and for using special education as a dumping ground for students with behavioral problems, as well as to insure that the remedies given to those students are appropriate to their needs and are effective interventions that help them learn (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Reschly, Tilly, & Grimes, 2000; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Lyon, 2000).

They propose a model, based on a student's response to intervention (RTI) *prior to* referral which is based on a risk model rather than a deficit model. The risk model puts the onus of screening for referral on the teacher (Gresham et al., 1997) who must wait for a student to have extreme difficulties with their class work before they begin the process of getting help for the student from others outside of the classroom. Vaughn and Fuchs (2003) identify the problems with this system including late identification for students with special needs (the so-called "wait to fail" model), inaccurate, subjective observation of the teacher, and use of identification indicators that are unrelated to academic instruction, such as the behavior management problems the teacher may be having with the student. The RTI method would provide early screening beginning in kindergarten (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Speece, 2002), and implemented strategies based on the students needs as shown on these assessments, and then, if there is no response to these remedial interventions, would the student be referred for further testing and possible identification as having a learning disability (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, Kouzekanani, Bryant, Dickson, & Blozis, 2003).

Beyond changing the method of identification of students with learning disabilities, research demonstrates several other interventions that can be provided in the schools to improve the academic success of students with learning disabilities. One study noted that inclusive programs, in which students with learning disabilities remain in the general education classroom for instruction, are beneficial for most students with disabilities (Salend & Duhaney,1999). Inclusion not only keeps them from suffering the stigma of being pulled out of class by a resource room teacher and consequently broadcasting their need for special educational services, but also results in their increased

social acceptance, wider friendship networks, and higher self-esteem (Vaughn, Elbaum, & Boardman, 2001). In contrast, however, some parents of students with LD have the opposite concern, that their child needs the additional support of a resource classroom with less children and more personalized instruction (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). In a comprehensive review of the literature about this controversial issue of inclusion, Elbaum (2002) and McLeskey, Hoppey, Williamson, & Rentz (2004) conclude that evidence largely supports the idea that students with LD should remain in the general education classroom for most of the day (Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Elbaum, 1998; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Zigmond et al., 1995). In addition, however, it is noted that when a pull-out class is found to be beneficial for a student, research recommends that the sessions should be well-designed, in a small group, brief and intensive (Madden & Slavin, 2000; Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, et al., 2003).

Other researchers recommend specific interventions to increase academic success for students with learning disabilities. These include the provision of scripted, high-paced, dynamic lessons using direct instruction procedures (Gersten, Becker, & Heiry, 1984). Direct instruction lessons have high rates of oral and written response from the students and are so tightly designed that the students are constantly engaged in the group activity and have little opportunity for wandering off-task or straying from attention (Cartledge, 2002). In addition others suggest several other practices that appear to be effective in helping students with learning disabilities succeed. These include mnemonic instruction, graphic organizers, peer teaching, and guided notes (Anderson, Yilmaz, & Wasburn-Moses, 2004); the provision of moral education and problem-solving

(Nordmann, 2001); cooperative learning (McMaster & Fuchs, 2002); task difficulty control, self-questioning and other metacognitive strategies (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003) analysis and review of homework (Bursuck et al.,1999) and teaching students to set up their goals, monitor, regulate and review them (Sideridis & Tsorbatzoudis, 2003).

Societal Factors. While problems in the schools contribute to the general achievement gap experienced by minority and students from high-poverty family backgrounds, research shows that these societal factors play a large role in predicting a students' academic success as well. Rothstein (2004a) suggests that while schools are being mobilized to combat their previous failures, "most of the social-class difference in average academic potential exists by the time children are 3 years old." He believes that interventions to strengthen the early childhood programs and out-of-school programs are where policy efforts should be concentrated, and in fact, a major predictor for a child's cognitive ability is the family context within which they are raised. Luster and McAdoo (1994) found that children who performed poorly on cognitive competence tests tended to have mothers who themselves had low IQ scores and fewer years of schooling compared to students who performed well on the tests. They were also more likely to come from high poverty neighborhoods, had larger families and reported less supportive home settings.

Despite efforts to improve low academic performance among economically disadvantaged students, the substantial gap still exists (NCES, 2003; Valencia & Suzuki, 2000). A 1995 study by Hart and Risley found that mothers on welfare spoke an average of 600 words to their children per hour as compared to working class mothers who used 1,300 words and professional mothers who spoke more than 2,000 words per hour. As a

result, four-year old children of professional mothers had vocabularies twice as large as those of non-working mothers on welfare. Because there is a disproportionate representation of minorities among the lower socioeconomic strata in the United States, disadvantage in family, education, the workforce, and healthcare most often affects people who are non-White and impoverished (McLoyd & Wilson, 1990). Social factors affect how a minority, economically disadvantaged child views work as well (Petrill & Deater-Deckard, 2004). Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown (1992) note that daily experiences of discrimination and possible daily experiences of racial discrimination cause a student to believe that hard work in school is irrelevant to their success (Lerman, 1996) and that working hard will have little effect on their economic status in the future (Midgeley, 1993). Poverty and social attitudes are also environmental factors that predispose students with learning disabilities to having substance abuse disorders (Weinberg & Glantz, 1999). Poverty has also been linked to gang involvement (Tatum, 1996) which in turn, is a strong predictor for students choosing to drop out of school (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001).

Many children from poor families also suffer from stressors that impede their ability to concentrate in school and focus on academic achievement. These stressors include parental unemployment, poor nutrition, family substance abuse, health concerns and lack of access to medical and psychological health services (Felner, Brand, & DuBois, 1995; Garrett, Ng'andu, & Ferron, 1994). Health issues include excessive exposure to lead poisons from old paint in houses built before 1978 (U.S. GAO, 1994), vision problems (possibly impaired by excessive TV watching in poorly educated families, which does not develop hand-eye coordination or depth perception) (NCES,

2003), and asthma, which is most prevalent in urban, poor, single-parent families (Forrest, Starfield, Riley, & Kang, 1997). Not surprisingly, asthma is exacerbated by low-grade heating oil, bus and car fumes, secondhand smoke, and allergic reactions to mold – all elements prevalent in low-income, urban housing (Rothstein, 2004b).

One buffer that several authors report that protects students who live in poverty from academic failure is a "kin" or relative support system available to the family or to the child. These support figures may serve as mentors for school or employment advice or as a source of financial assistance and moral support (Hashima & Amato, 1994; Kenny, Gallagher, Alvarez-Salvat & Silsby, 2002; McCabe & Clark, 1999; Middlemiss, 2003).

Parental Warmth As Common Denominator. While it is clear that many authors have focused on predictors of academic success for students with learning disabilities found in the home, the school and in society as a whole, in each of these realms, the quality of the role of *the parent* at home is critical to predicting a student's academic outcomes.

This fact increases the vulnerability of certain students because researchers assert that interventions created for students with learning disabilities to improve in school are meaningless unless the interventions are long enough and consistently delivered. And yet, this is a problem when parents are unstable and must move betweens school districts often (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). A students' attendance, largely affected by a parent's valuing of education and their stability at home have also been shown to have a significant relationship to achievement (Voelkl, 1995); absences from school were found to be associated with lower achievement (deJung & Duckworth, 1986) and prevented

teachers from developing meaningful student-teacher relationships that gave the students a sense of belonging and acceptance in the schools that is critical to their school success (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Kramer, 1991; Newmann et al., 1992). In fact, other research investigators show that parental encouragement is the primary mediator between the connection between the social class of the family and student academic performance (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992) and is a protective influence against a student's engagement in problem behaviors such as early substance abuse, gang involvement and early sexual experimentation (Black, Ricardo, & Stanton, 1997; Melby & Conger, 1996; Smith & Krohn, 1995).

Theoretical Models of Parenting

There are many different theories that relate to elements of family interactions and parenting. Common to all of these theories on parenting are facets of the relationship between the parent and child and its consequences for the child, which are later defined in Rohner's Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (1975) as "parental warmth". Revisiting the theories described using the construct of "parental warmth" and looking at its presence or absence adds a unifying element to the theories. These three theories that serve as the underpinnings for this research are attachment theory, social cognitive learning theory and symbolic interaction theory.

Attachment Theory. According to attachment theory, attachment relationships serve a broad-based adaptive function over a life-span rather than in one specific period of development (Humber & Moss, 2005). Attachment theorists suggest that the development between infant and mother is a secure base relationship from which infants can explore, grow and learn about their environment and the people surrounding them

(Posada, Carboness, Alzate, & Plata, 2004). Attachment theory is useful for understanding intergenerational continuity in parenting (Paley et al, 2005). Bowlby (1973) proposed that an adult's ability to form affectional bonds is dependent on an individual's early experiences with his or her parents. He believed that the continuity between early experiences with caregivers and later functioning in close relationships is maintained through working models of attachment relationships. Working models are schema that reflect beliefs about how dependably and sensitively others will respond to one's needs and how worthy the individual feels about such responses. Consistent, warm parenting is expected then, to give rise to secure working models, while negative, harsh parenting is expected to initiate insecure working models. These beginning relationships are thought to color all relationships after childhood and may bias individuals to recreate similar relationships to those they had as children (Paley et al., 2005). Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) introduced the experimental "Strange Situation Procedure" to understand attachment in infants aims to assess differences in quality of attachment by the use of two short separation periods and reunions between parents and their 12-month old infants in a laboratory setting. Although all children are expected to react emotionally when separated from their primary caretaker, they vary in their responses in the face of this scenario (Shamir-Essakow, Ungerer, & Rapee, 2005). The researchers categorized the babies' behavior during the "Strange Situation Procedure" through three types of attachment; secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent. They related these patterns of attachment to the early care the infants had received at home (Ainsworth et al.,1978).

Symbolic Interaction Theory. A second theory key to this research is Symbolic Interaction Theory originally discussed by C.H. Cooley (1902). The key hypothesis of this "theory of the looking glass self" is that how one is perceived by significant others determines one's view of oneself. These beliefs are called "metaperceptions" because they are "pereceptions of perceptions". The validity of Cooley's theory hinges on the accuracy of people's metaperceptions. The notion of the looking-glass self is a key factor in the development of an individual's self-concept. Symbolic interaction theorists believe that people observe how they are viewed by important people in their lives and construct their self-image from these observations. In other words, people see themselves through the eyes of others. In this process, there are three elements. The first element is the other person's actual perception of the individual. The second element is the individual's perception of how the other person views them, or their metaperspective. The third element is their self-perception, created as a result of the first two elements.

Symbolic Interaction Theory states that people pick up signals about how other people view them, internalize this view, and make it their view of themselves. The role of parents then is very powerful in how a person perceives him or herself. If the parent gives a child positive messages, indicating that the child is caring and intelligent, for example, the child incorporates this view into his or her self perception. On the other hand, if the parent delivers negative signals, making the child feel stupid and neglected, the child will perceive him or herself in a negative light, believing that he or she is not worth being cared for (Cook & Douglas, 1998). Symbolic Interaction Theory assumes that individuals are relatively accurate when judging what others' think of them based on verbal and non-verbal communication. The theory assumes that individuals'

metaperceptions will be positively correlated with the perceptions of themselves by others (Felson, 1980).

Cognitive Learning Theory. The third conceptualization is social cognitive learning theory, first conceived by Bandura in 1963. It has its origins in the operant behavior learning theory of B.F.Skinner (1945) in that it is interested in behavior acquisition and change (Grusec,1992). Bandura moved away from mechanistic conditioning and toward the effects of modeling for information processing (Klassen, 2002), underlining that social learning can result from observing others (Bandura, 1977). Just as Symbolic Interaction Theory posits that an individual forms a sense of self based on others' perceptions, social learning theory emphasizes that an individual's behaviors are the results of environmental impact. Bandura's expanded definition now includes a model of the interaction between environment, interpersonal factors and behaviors. Bandura (1982) relates his theory of self-efficacy clearly to the parent-child relationship. He defines self-efficacy as a process of evaluation by which the level of interactions between the parent and the child are measured by how competent the parent feels in that relationship. The more confident the parent feels, the more warm and nurturing the parent is expected to be. These sensitive or hostile behaviors also serve as a model for children (Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000). This theory focuses largely on the parent and resultant effects on the child.

Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theories

In addition to these three basic conceptualizations, another group of theories emphasize parental acceptance-rejection. The seminal work of Schaefer and his associates resulted in the creation of the widely used Schaefer's Children's Report of

Parent's Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) (Schaefer, 1959, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann,1970). The Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire by Roe & Siegelmann (1963) and his colleagues is also well-known and used in the parental acceptance–rejection studies.

Baumrind's Parenting Styles. Baumrind's (1966) conceptual model introduces parenting prototypes, including the concepts of authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and rejecting/neglecting styles of parenting. In 1967, Baumrind's extensive research with preschool children and their families led her and a colleague to create a delineation of family interaction into 3 types of parenting style (Baumrind & Black, 1967). The *authoritarian* style of parenting defines parents who attempt to shape and control their children, are very strict and expect their children to respect authority and follow rules without question. The *authoritative* style of parenting is less restrictive and defines parents who allow children to participate in family decision-making. Although there is the full expectation of following the rules, the parents provide rationales for the rules and respond to the child's needs. The parents encourage independence and individuality in their children and recognize the rights of both the parent and the child. The third type of parenting Baumrind discusses is *permissive* parenting, which is a looser form of parenting in which the parents are tolerant and accepting towards the child's wishes, use as little punishment as possible, make few demands on, and set very few rules for the child. Permissive parents allow children to self-regulate their behavior and provide very little supervision (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). Maccoby and Martin (1983) defined a fourth parenting style which is a form of the permissive parenting style. The *neglectful* parenting style defines parents who are uninvolved in their

children's lives, are less demanding, and less responsive to their children's needs. These parents are more worried about their personal problems than those of their children and do not monitor their children's activities or behavior (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997).

Rohner's Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory and the "Warmth Dimension"
Ronald Rohner & Khaleque (2005) carries this conceptualization of parenting style further with his Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory). In this he attempts to predict and explain major causes, consequences, and correlates of parental acceptance and rejection within the American culture as well as cultures worldwide. His theory states that together, parental acceptance and rejection form the warmth dimension of parenting. The warmth dimension refers to the quality of the bond between parents and their children and to the physical and verbal behaviors parents use to express their feelings. His theory has similar categories to Baumrind's referring to parental behavior: Warmth/Affection, Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect, and Undifferentiated Rejection. PARTheory has a personality subtheory that attempts to predict and explain major personality or psychological consequences of perceived parental acceptance and rejection.

Discussion by Rohner and several other researchers support the use of PARTheory and the surveying of children to answer the research questions of this study which look at the relationships between parental warmth, child personality dispositions and academic success. The goal of the survey is to understand a child's perception of the ways in which his or her parents treat them; therefore only children are reported for this study. This decision was made for several reasons. Kagan (1978) says that it is not a

specific set of actions by a parent that constitute parental acceptance or rejection, but what a child believes has transpired. This belief is bolstered by the main tenets of Cooley's Symbolic Interaction Theory as well. Also, in a study by Feinberg, Neiderhiser, Howe, and Hetherington (2001) agreement among reporters on features of family life is considered to be low. Because a child reacts to his or her beliefs, and not what is deemed as objective reality, the self-reporting element is crucial. Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, (2003) show that even the pain of *perceived* rejection is very real, as evidenced in brain imaging (MRI) studies that reveal that specific parts of the brain are activated when people feel rejected (just as they are when people feel actual physical pain). Additionally, the PARQ surveys have components that are designed for children to understand clearly and are not just adaptations of surveys originally written for adults (Kagan, 1978; Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). Rohner and Khaleque also note that with the parent survey there is a risk of a social desirability response bias because they know what society thinks are acceptable responses regarding the treatment of their children and are less likely than children, who are not as experienced at deception, to be completely honest in their responses. There is evidence in studies of the impact of social desirability in research findings from several countries including the United States, Finland, and Pakistan (Rohner, 1975; Rohner et al., 2005).

Rohner and Khaleque show that the PARTheory is testable through the use of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire and its companion survey, the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ) that asks the child questions about their personality dispositions. Both surveys are specifically designed for pre-adolescent children, about whom this study has questions. Also, they report research in over 116 different cultures

around the world, done in order to understand diverse populations (2005). The surveys are designed for a diverse set of participants which is appropriate for the environment in which it will be administered, the center of an urban area that is a portal to the United States for immigrants from all over the world. The population for the proposed study consists mostly of children of first-generation immigrants from over 40 countries reflected in the school district.

Finally, Rohner and Khaleque (2005) include a personality component as part of the PARTheory which will add important information to that collected from the surveys regarding parental acceptance-rejection (the warmth factor). It is hoped that this information will provide implications for remediation and policy-making in programs for students with learning disabilities and their families. To that end, it is important to review research on how parenting affects a child's personality dispositions.

Parental Warmth and Child's Personality Dispositions

Authors discuss students' dispositions that affect and are affected by their academic achievement and are first affected by and often formed due to the style of parenting they experience. Research by Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) and Moss, Cyr and Dubois-Comtois, (2004) show strong correlations between a child's quality of parent attachment and his or her overall security. A secure child in the academic setting, as measured by teacher reports and peer–ratings, succeeds socially, emotionally, academically, and exhibits admirable and productive behavior (Granot & Mayseless, 2001).

Rohner's (1975) PARTheory proposes that a child's perception of parental acceptance or rejection, the warmth factor, is extremely important in shaping the child's

emotional and behavioral characteristics Rohner delineates personality domains under the umbrella terms of self esteem, self adequacy, independence, emotional stability, emotional responsiveness, and world view.

Self-Esteem. Self-esteem, according to Rohner and Khaleque's Handbook for the Study of Parental Acceptance and Rejection (2005) is one expression of a child's self evaluation as postulated in the personality subtheory of PARTheory. It refers to the global emotional judgment individuals make about themselves in terms of worth or value. Individuals with positive self-esteem like their own character and are approving of, are accepting of and are comfortable with themselves. A person with positive self-esteem respects themselves and considers themselves worthy of respect. Persons with negative self-esteem feel inferior to others, feel worthy of condemnation, and devalue and disapprove of themselves (p.372).

Self-Adequacy. Self-adequacy is the second expression of self-evaluation according to Rohner & Khaleque (2005). Self-adequacy is the total of judgments people make about their ability and competence to meet the requirements of daily living tasks. Those with a sense of positive self-adequacy view themselves as being able to deal well with problems, can accomplish things they decide to do, feel self-confident, and socially flexible. Individuals who have feelings of negative self-adequacy perceive themselves as unable to accomplish day-to-day tasks and feel insecure about their ability to interact with others comfortably, as well as to compete successfully with others (p.371).

Independence. Independence is defined by Rohner & Khaleque (2005) as an individual's ability to operate successfully in the world without the constant need for positive response from others in order to be motivated. An independent person is

someone who appreciates and needs emotional support, encouragement and reassurance from time to time, but does not rely on these methods of social support to supplant his or her own self-confidence. Rohner and Khaleque distinguish between positive feelings of independence and defensive independence, in which a person purposefully distances themselves from others to keep from having to have normal social interaction due to self-doubt, fear of rejection, and feelings of social inadequacy (p. 364).

Emotional Stability. Rohner and Khaleque define emotional stability as a person's ability to control his or her moods, handle small setbacks in daily life, recover from disappointment, and work through failures. An emotionally stable person can tolerate most stresses without extreme anger, frustration, nervousness, tension or anger. After disappointments, emotionally stable individuals are able to "bounce back" and revert to their previous state of consistent mood and behavior. A person who is emotionally unstable generally experiences wide mood swings and tends to behave unpredictably, often without outside provocation (p.363).

Emotional Responsiveness. Emotional responsiveness is defined by Rohner & Khaleque (2005) as a person's ability to express their emotions and feelings openly to others. A person who is emotionally responsive is able to spontaneously express care for others, either physically or verbally, as a part of a warm, involved, lasting, non-defensive set of attachments with others. Individuals who are emotionally unresponsive are emotionally wary, and insulate themselves from others in an effort to restrict their attachments and to maintain distance from intimate bonds. It is possible for emotionally unresponsive persons to be friendly, but they will not move beyond surface acquaintances and exhibit little intimacy or warmth (p. 362).

Worldview. The last element of the personality subtheory of Ronald Rohner's PARTheory is worldview (1975). A person's worldview is his or her overall evaluation of life, the world they live in and even, the universe. An individual with a negative worldview believes that life is essentially a threatening, hostile, dangerous prospect and that the world is an unpleasant, insecure, and uncertain place. A person with a positive view, on the other hand, believes that life is essentially good, friendly, happy, secure and stable. Rohner says that worldview is not based on a person's knowledge of world events, politics, or economic realities but is a judgment that is made about the quality of existence.

Parental Influences on Self Esteem. Researchers in the psychological, sociological and educational development of children associate each of these personality dispositions with parental influence. The relationship of parental influence on self esteem has interested many researchers. They note that perceived positive parenting styles and self-esteem are closely linked throughout a child's life, from preschool (Coplan, Findlay & Nelson, 2004; Warash & Markstrom, 2001), pre-adolescence (Morvitz & Motta, 1992), and adolescence and young adulthood (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Furnham & Cheng, 2000; Kawash & Kozeluk, 1990; Mayseless, Scharf , & Sholt, 2003; Sheehan & Noller, 2002). Other studies confirm this link with African-American children and their mothers (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Brody, Murry, Kim, & Brown, 2002; Govender & Moodley, 2004), fathers and their children (how a paternal figure affected their self-esteem attitudes related to gender (Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001)) and in the relationship between both Mexican-American and European-American children and their parents (Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002). McCord (1997) discusses the effects on self-

esteem of a child as a result of corporal punishment. She suggests that punishment by parents that is punitive and without explanation is detrimental to a child who cannot understand how to modify his or her behavior. She notes further that this effect was prevalent in most studies but that culture modified the degree to which the children's self-esteem was affected by corporal punishment.

A review by Barber and Harmon (2002) of several studies shows that parental psychological control (e.g. parental behavior that is intrusive and manipulative of a child's thoughts and feelings) is associated with several negative outcomes in children and adolescents, including depression, anxiety, and overall low self-esteem. Gray and Steinberg (1999) and Pettit and Laird (2002) both found that this high level of psychological control was only associated with delinquent behavior if the involvement of the parent exercising the psychological control was low overall. Riaz (2003) studying 100 families in Pakistan using Rohner's Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ), found that according to the children in each family, moderation in behavior control by parents added to their perception of parental warmth in the family which made the children feel more accepted and have higher self-esteem. Additionally, Aunola and Nurmi (2004) note that the reciprocal nature of the influence between parents and children has been questioned in several reviews (Bell, 1968; Harris, 1995; Kerr, Statin, Biesecker, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2003) prompting them to examine whether the success of a child may increase parents' trust in their children and lead to decreased parental control and increased affection. Pomerantz & Eaton (2001) also question, in contrast, if the lack of a child's success in school, for example, may lead to a parent worrying more about a child, resulting in an increase in the control a parent wields over a child's activities. In

their research of 210 five and six year old Finnish children, they found no evidence that the performance and success, or lack of it, of the child in school had any effect on the mothers' parenting styles, but in fact, the parenting was the driving factor behind the child's behavior. However, Waggoner and Wilgosh (1990) conducted a qualitative study of parents of children with learning disabilities based on unknown causes and found that the self-esteem *of the parents* was greatly affected by the uncertainty resulting from lack of information and the batteries of assessments that their children were ushered through to help establish a diagnosis.

Caldera and Hart (2004), in a study looking at the effects of outside-the-home child care on the self-esteem of children, note that when parents are involved and invested, child care notwithstanding (Belsky & Rovine, 1988), the child has a more secure attachment with their mothers and has higher self-esteem (Egeland & Hiester, 1995). In a study of the effects of parent's conditional acceptance of a child based on their performance or behavior, Assor, Roth, and Deci (2004) found that this socializing practice by parents predicted resentment of children toward their parents, as well as lower self-esteem. Baldwin and Sinclair (1996), in an earlier study, provoked this research as their findings which demonstrated that a child's perception of interpersonal acceptance as conditional on his or her performance was associated with vulnerable self-esteem.

Parental Influences on Self-Adequacy. Parents also have direct effects on a children's belief that they can accomplish tasks presented to them and can maintain their independence in social settings as well (Fletcher & Shaw, 2000; Kochanska, Padavich, & Koenig, 1996; Koenig, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2000; Laible, 2004; Lieberman, Doyle,& Markiewicz, 1999; Roberts, 1999; Scaramella, Conger, & Simons, 1999). Also, how

parents view their own parenting may play a direct role in their own child's development and the child's sense of self-adequacy (Bornstein, 2002). Both Eccles and Harold (1996) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that a parent's confidence in their ability to bring about positive change in their child's academic performance caused them to become more involved in the child's school activities, which, in turn, predicted a child's academic success. Further, parents who believe themselves to be competent can be expected to act in more psychologically warm, beneficial ways with their children (Bandura, 1997). The parents provide strong role models for self-adequacy to children who tend to then feel better about their competence in daily tasks (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001), which, in turn, makes parents feel as though they are doing a good job (Bornstein, Hendricks, Hahn, Haynes, Painter, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2003). Conversely, the presence of feelings of negative self adequacy is more likely in less-educated, poor families. Often, the educational level and social status of school workers intimidate undereducated parents from families with low socioeconomic status (Comer, 2005). Because of unpredictable and inflexible work schedules and limited access to professional support systems (Collignon, Men , & Tan, 2001; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Machida, Taylor, & Kim, 2002; Weiss et al., 2003) and because these parents are often overworked and stressed by the challenges in keeping their family safe and healthy, low-income parents need very strong reasons and hard-to-come-by assistance to become involved in their child's school experience (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). The strongest motivators appear to be invitations from the teacher, the school staff, and the student; all give the parent the sense that they are an integral part of the child's success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parental Influences on Independence. Baumrind's authoritative parenting model, in which parents exert moderate control, with rules and requirements for behavior, coupled with warmth, is shown in several studies to be a parenting style that produces children and adolescents with a healthy developing sense of independence and autonomy, particularly with a positive psychological orientation toward work. These findings applied to European-American elementary school and college students, rural African-American families with adolescents, and 925 adults in mainland China who recalled their parents' practices. (Bednar & Fisher, 2003; Brody et al., 2002; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). However, perceptions of parental control vary among cultures. Among adolescents in Korea, the United States' population's tendency to view strict control as a form of parental rejection is reversed. In Korea, the cultural ideology is to defer to elders in all matters, including career choice, choice of spouse, schooling choices, etc. (Koh, 1981). In Korea, the individual is viewed as only a small part of the family and therefore must act in the family's interests (Kim, 1977). Because of these beliefs based on Confucian ideology, children who experience a strict father and a mother with warmth do not view strict control as negative (Rohner & Pettingill, 1985). This study of supposedly "Asian" characteristics of parental perceptions is contradicted by the study of Stewart, Rao, Bond, McBride-Chang, Fielding, and Kennard (1998) in which Hong Kong Chinese adolescent girls report, like American children, that their parents' restrictive control was viewed negatively and correlated negatively to self-esteem and well-being.

Barber and Buehler (1996) show that another combination of parenting traits, high psychological control and high affection, though including warmth, can be extremely detrimental to a child. This combinations causes over identification between

parent and child and discourages the individuation of the child by way of intrusive and overbearing communication from the parent. This can be detrimental to the child who must learn to make decisions on their own (Aunola & Nurmi, 2004) such as when students with learning disabilities must go to college and know how to advocate for themselves to receive appropriate help, classwork, and housing (Smith, English, & Vasek, 2002).

Parental Influences on Emotional Stability. According to Bowlby (1973), caregivers who constantly recognize and respond sensitively to a child's needs for comfort, security, and individuation contribute to a greater sense of emotional stability in the child , reducing anxiety and contributing to their sense of competence in interacting with the world (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Further, resilience, defined as the ability of a child to bounce back from adversity and work through difficult environmental, school, and home challenges (Kenny et al., 2002), is most predicted by a positive relationship with a caring adult (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). However, Bennett, Elliott, and Peters (2005) found that good behavior in the classroom and appropriate school supplies can boost resiliency by allowing children to overcome certain deficiencies at home.

Several studies demonstrate that parental warmth, combined with low hostility and child management practices, inhibit the damaging internalizing and externalizing problems often seen as children grow up and become more susceptible to peer pressure, risk-taking behaviors, aggression, and the temptation to distance oneself from reasoning and protection within the family (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Conger, Ge, Elder, Jr., Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Scaramella et al., 1999; Sutton et al., 1999). Bifulco and others (2002) also note that the intergenerational transmission of risk is very high when parents

are emotionally unstable. A study by Kashdan and colleagues (2004), indicated that parental anxiety was negatively associated with parental warmth and positive parental involvement, and that characteristics of oppositional defiant disorder were present in the children of parents who were under social distress, and these characteristics along with their parents emotional problems, negatively affected family functioning.

Parental Influences on Emotional Responsiveness. Emotional responsiveness in a child is often measured by their abilities to express emotion appropriately in social situations and to process their emotions healthfully (Eisenberger et al., 2003). Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, (1978) show this ability to be mediated by a child's secure attachment with their mother Even situationally induced responses by the mother resulted in the child's greater cooperation and physical expression toward the mother (Parpal & Maccoby, 1985) and the mother and child's shared cooperation with each other's needs or bids for affection (Kochanska, 1997). Ainsworth and others (1978) note that shared affect, or mutual emotional responsiveness, is one of the indicators of secure attachment. Eisenberg and colleagues investigated the relationship between positive emotional expressivity and parental warmth and found that they were correlated, with a child's ego control as a mediator. As a result of parental warmth, researchers found that children who express positive emotion or lower levels of negative emotion tend to be liked by peers and to be relatively well adjusted. Roberts (1999) examined results in a study on emotional expressivity separately because boys and girls are thought to experience somewhat different emotional socialization patterns, especially in middle childhood (Brody, 1985). These differences would match a child's tendency to interpret and display

emotional experiences in gender-stereotypic ways (Strayer & Roberts, 1997; Underwood, Hurly, Johanson, & Moseley, 1998).

Parental Influences on Worldview. Many studies show associations between parental psychological and behavioral control and internalized and externalized child behaviors which in turn improves or clouds a child's world view (Barber et al., 1994; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Kochanska, Murray, Jacques, Koenig, & Vandegeest, 1996; Sutton et al., 1999). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) found that, according to Bowlby's attachment theory (1973), children over time internalize experiences with their caretakers so that their relationship helps them form the type of relationships and views they have of others outside of the family. For example, a study of Mexican American males by Adler, Ovando, and Hocevar, (1984) found that the family members of gang-involved youth were less likely to participate in family events together, such as eating meals or family outings; therefore they were less likely to express positive feelings toward one another and were then more likely to have negative feelings about the world in general (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). In another study examining the family experiences of many different cultural groups, Mexican-Americans adolescents, who view the family as the primary and critical source of personal support, (Diaz-Guererro, 1975) were found to have the highest rates of depressive symptoms (Roberts & Sobhan, 1992). It is not surprising then to find that in a 1995 study by Gonzalez-Forteza and Andrade of Mexican adolescent girls, higher parental warmth and supportive interactions were significantly associated with lower level of depressed mood and negative world view (Gil-Rivas, Greenberger, Chen, & Montero y Lopez-Lena, 2003).

Academic Success and Child's Personality Dispositions

With this understanding of the development of personality dispositions, it is important to consider the literature on its relationship to academic success.

Academic Success and Self-Esteem. Neiss, Sedikides and Stevenson, (2002) assert that self esteem, the "affective or evaluative appraisal of the self", or an individual's judgment of his or her self-worth (Rosenberg, 1979), plays a large role in a student's achievement in school. As self esteem increases in children, teachers see that students are more likely to take risks and attempt to work on more difficult material. Teachers plan lessons such as free writing activities for students with learning challenges where they can gain confidence in themselves (Stringer et al., 1999). Maintaining high self-esteem is a particular problem for children with learning disabilities in that the mere life event of being diagnosed and given a label increases a child's poor self-concept which magnifies the effect of and often predicts academic failure (MacMaster et al., 2002). Low self-esteem is often associated with emotional behavioral and academic problems in school aged children (King & Daniel, 1996) and a number of other studies suggest an increased risk of low self-esteem in children with learning disabilities (MacMaster et al. A large number of studies, however, have shown that even though most students with learning disabilities have lower academic self-esteem than their non-LD peers (Bear, Minke, & Manning, 2002; Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003; La Greca & Stone, 1990; Leadbeater, Blatt, & Quinlan, 1995; Paterson, Pryor, & Field, 1995; Serafica & Harway, 1979; Thompson Prout, Marcal & Marcal, 1992; Zeleke, 2004), students with learning disabilities show positive academic self-concepts and even tend to overrate their academic performance as related to teachers' ratings (Stone, 1997; Stone & May, 2002). Another study by Liddell

and Davidson (2004) shows that this overrating may help students with learning disabilities. It showed that student confidence in performing a specific skill was not associated with actual academic measure of performance. Students perform better on those skills that they value and this may be influenced by a motivation to perform based on their belief that they will do well on a particular task.

Another obstacle to children with learning disabilities attaining high self-esteem and maintaining academic motivation is the often lowered expectations of teachers as a result of their label (Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan, 1996; Eccles, Lord, Roeser, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1997) and the student's consequent lowered academic attitudes (Dweck, 2000). Becker and Luthar (2002) note that unfortunately, without positive attitudes and a healthy self-esteem, students are less prepared for transitions to the next grade or from one school to another. Elbaum (2002) also states that self-concept is multidimensional (Marsh & Hattie, 1996) and includes not only academic but also social competence (Vaughn & Hogan, 1990). The absence of social competence, Bracken (1986) states, has been associated with many developmental and clinical behaviors, including learned helplessness and depression. Wong and Donahue (2002) agree, stating that studies consistently have shown students with learning disabilities to be at a greater risk than their peers for problems in the social domain. This is important, Bryan (2003) points out, because often, to a child, social issues are often more important to them than the academic goals of the teacher, the classroom, or the school. When these students don't feel accepted or have no friends, or are subjected to bullying or teasing, academic learning will assuredly suffer. One additional consideration regarding a child's self-esteem is that the students' grade level and age may affect self-concept. Research has

revealed age-related differences in overall competence (Marsh, 1989). This factor may come into play most as more students are retained for academic reasons and are older than other students in the classroom (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2001).

Academic Success and Self-Adequacy. Self adequacy, a sense students have that they are prepared and able to accomplish tasks set before them, predicts success as well (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). In 2004, Liddell and Davidson showed that students who believed they could accomplish a certain skill because they had done well on similar tasks in the past, performed better on those tasks than on tasks they had never seen before that were of similar difficulty. This research indicates that people may naturally value those subjects at which they excel and this valuation provides intrinsic motivation for task accomplishment (Zsolnai, 2002). In a study on Chinese children, who are in one of the most competitive education systems in the world, Chang, McBride-Chang, Stewart and Au (2003) found that children who felt they were prepared for the demanding nature of their educational programs experienced greater life satisfaction over time beyond satisfaction of their actual school performance.

In contrast, Montague and Applegate (2000) found that with some students with LD, even if certain tasks are within their capability, they may perceive them as being too difficult, lack the confidence to try the tasks, and eventually attribute their failure to complete the tasks to their low abilities. These students, due to their negative self-adequacy, tend to guess more often, give up easily and more quickly, and thereby create a self-fulfilling prophecy by getting low grades due to the lack of care they take with their work, not their inability to understand (Montague & van Garderen, 2003). The experience of being labeled as students with LD as well as the experience of having

academic difficulties combine to cause many students to exhibit negative self-adequacy and feel that they are less smart or stupid (Meadan & Halle, 2004). Other studies have found that students with LD experience negative feelings about their disability because they don't feel competent to fit in; they experience a social stigma related directly to their label (Barga, 1996; Reid & Button, 1995).Vaughn, Gersten & Chard (2000) note that in order to make educational interventions for negative self-adequacy effective, strategies must be used to enhance task persistence and to moderate the difficulty of the tasks. In a NICHD study about the effects of class size reduction, students felt better about their work in reading, likely because the teacher had more time to work in small groups and to tailor the curriculum to the child's needs (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2004). In a 20-year study by Raskind et al., successful adults with learning disabilities were asked how they were able to overcome the challenges of having a learning disability. Their responses had several characteristics in common, one of which was a strong sense of positive self-adequacy; in addition, they believed they had the power to control their future and affect the outcome of their lives. Also, they all had the ability to make decisions and act on their decisions to control their life.

Academic Success and Independence. Other personality predictors shown for academic success include independence and the support for this autonomy by teachers (Wong, Wiest, & Cusick, 2002). In a study about the use of process writing with students with learning disabilities, Stringer and colleagues (1999) note that the teacher who allows and encourages children to collaborate in their writing enhances the children's autonomy. This writing process encourages autonomy by asking the children to think for themselves and to decide how they want to best complete the assignment. Although the child is

expected to consider the teacher's point of view, autonomy is the ability to do this while at the same time monitoring and controlling oneself. (Kamii, 1985; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Once students gain the confidence and pride that results from creating these pieces of writing (MacInnis & Hemming, 1995), they begin to be willing to take risks (Scala, 1993); once they become academic risk-takers, they are willing to work on more difficult material and seek out more challenging academic opportunities (Salvage & Breeze, 1991).

Academic Success and Emotional Stability. In the 20–year longitudinal study of individuals with learning disabilities at the Frostig Center in Pasadena, California, Raskind et al. (2002) found that personal attitudes and behaviors, more than socioeconomic status, age, gender or ethnicity, predicted their life success. Emotional stability is cited as one of the most important factors. Adults who were interviewed attributed success to their ability to regulate their emotions when frustrated while learning new tasks at jobs or in school. Coplan et al. (2004) write that children and adolescents who are emotionally unstable due to negative self-esteem and negative self-adequacy are at risk for depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, and academic failure (Marsh, Ellis, & Craven, 2002). Also, students who are emotionally unstable are at risk for abusing drugs (Snow et al., 2001). According to Bellcher and Shinitzky (1998) and Fuller (1998), factors such as resilience and academic achievement are seen as buffers and protection against drug-related consequences.

Academic Success and Emotional Responsiveness. Sharma (2004) compared students with and without LD and found that the student with LD display greater social and emotional maladaptive behaviors as they age; yet the causal direction is unclear. The

frustrating academic failures of children with LD might influence their lack of emotional responsiveness and emotional instability; or their inability to express emotions appropriately and to control their moods may have a debilitating effect on their academic achievement. In a study by Hart, Hofmann, Edelstein, and Keller (1997) children who were resilient and were able to maintain emotional stability also had higher levels of academic achievement and lower levels of concentration problems. These children had also developed sophisticated reasoning about friendship via healthy emotional responsiveness. Therefore, students' self-perceptions may directly influence the way they approach a task and the amount of effort they use to complete a task.

Academic Success and Worldview. Usually, students with LD tend to attribute failure to a lack of ability and success to luck or other external factors. This external locus of control is found less often in students without LD (Grimes, 1981). This belief that when positive things happen it is because of luck or external factors is pervasive in populations of students with learning disabilities. Several researchers found that an internal locus of control or a positive world view, is highly correlated with an individual's feelings of competence, goal setting behaviors, high sense of self-efficacy, need for achievement, self assessment and self-realization (Blanchard-Fields & Irion, 1988; Eisenman & Tascione, 2002; Feather & Volkmer, 1988; Kliewer, 1991; Phillips & Gully, 1997; Wilhite, 1990). Further, several authors note that a positive world view is often highly correlated with a child's sense of self-adequacy and self-esteem.(Palladino, Poli, Masi & Marcheschi, 2000; Strauman, 2002).

Sideridis and Tsorbatzoudis (2003) compared goal orientation of students with and without LD. They found that students with LD do not hold a "healthy" multiple goal

orientation. Instead they demonstrate the helpless pattern (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) which is defined by avoidance of challenges, less commitment, avoidance of work, and negative affectivity (Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Nolen, 1988); they exhibit learned helplessness, a state provoked by a child's sense that he or she is unable to accomplish tasks, and that the world is a painful place that will not deliver rewards, regardless of the effort one puts into a task. McClure (1985) says that this state of uncontrollable conditions must be understood in order to plan therapeutic interventions. Sideridis (2003) found that helpless behavior occurs because of avoidance motivation on the part of the child with LD following the induction of failure. They exhibit low self-esteem, a negative world view, hopelessness, and an external locus of control (Raskind et al., 1999).

Parental Warmth and Academic Success

Research on the relationship of parenting and academic success reflect the extreme complexity of the interaction which varies by the gender of parent, the gender of the child, the age of the child, the culture and acculturation of the family, social class, etc.

Becker and Luthar (2002) assert that parents are the significant variable in students' lives that can serve as the catalyst for a positive or negative school experience.The relationship parents have with their children and the influence parents hold is extremely complex (Pinderhughes et al., 2001). In one longitudinal study of more than 1000 children entering school, sensitive maternal behavior was the most prevalent and strongest predictive variable of social and academic outcomes in the early school period (NICHD, 2002). Early parent-child interactions seem to predict children's first successes in adapting to the requirements in school, as well as their long-term social and

academic success in school through third-grade (Pianta & Harbers, 1996; Pianta, Smith, & Reeve, 1991) and through sixth grade (Estrada, Arsenio, Hess, & Holloway, 1987). In a program for at-risk African-American boys, Harvey and Hill (2004) report that gains in self-esteem and self-worth reflected on post-test surveys were strongly related to the parent-child empowerment component of the program. The variables that differed between successful children and their less-successful peers in several studies were all elements in the home that are controlled by the parents: maternal involvement and positive interactions with their mother, the availability of developmentally appropriate toys and learning activities in the home, environment predictability; and a strong language and literacy environment (Allen and Sethi, 2004; Callanan & Sabbagh, 2004 ; Luster et al., 2004; Petrill, et al., 2004).

Research also shows that parents not only affect their children's academic performance by way of their home environment, but also through parenting *style*. In fact, one study shows that the positive value of parental involvement in a child's life is a key contributor to a child's success (Desimone, 1999; Keith, Keith, Quirk, Sperduto, Santillo & Killings, 1998; Muller, 1993; Shaver & Walls, 1998), however, it is mitigated by parenting style, indicating that efforts aimed at increasing academic achievement solely through increased parental involvement may not be sufficiently effective (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Heaven and Newbury (2004), in a study of 347 Australian high school students found that parental conscientiousness and parenting style were significant predictors of student-rated academic performance.

Parenting style has been defined as parents' behaviors and characteristics that describe their interactions with their children over a wide range of situations and create a

climate of interaction for the parent-child relationship (Aunola & Nurmi, 2004; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Mize & Pettit, 1997). Although there are many aspects of parenting to consider when looking at influences on children, parenting style is one of the most researched variables (Baumrind, 1989; Steinberg, 2001). Children raised in authoritative homes, in which the parents set limits but also are understanding, warm and communicative, demonstrate higher levels of competence, achievement, social development, self-esteem, and mental health compared to children raised in purely permissive or purely authoritarian homes (Pittman & Chase-Lansdale, 2001).

Several studies, based on a European American sample have shown that parental warmth and behavioral control (such as is used in the authoritative parenting style defined by Baumrind) are positively correlated with a child's high academic performance and that harsh, authoritarian parenting, as well as permissive/neglectful parenting that show a lack of both parental involvement and behavioral control are associated with low school performance (Chen et al., 2000; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Kenny et al., 2002; Morrison, Rimm-Kaufmann, & Pianta, 2003; Shumow et al., 1998; Steinberg et al., 1989) The results of studies of children from other cultures and from racial minorities in the United States have varied (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Kim & Chung, 2003; Luster & McAdoo, 1996; Maton, Hrabowski, & Greif, 1998; Smetana, 2000; Steinberg et al., 1992). For example, in a sample of Hispanic students who were attending Yale University, although most of them had experienced most aspects of authoritarian parenting (as is often the norm in first-generation Hispanic families), the factors that most predicted their academic success were strong parental commitment to education, parental facilitation of the child's autonomy, a number and variety of parental

supportive expressions for educational goals, and the parents' allowances for the child to bond with mentors and role models outside of the family who also valued education (Ceballo, 2004). Also, Manley (1977) noted that parental warmth seems to operate differently upon the academic achievement of girls and boys. Moderate, but not high maternal warmth, and even some hostility, was shown to be related to strong achievement in girls, while high maternal warmth and nurturance were associated with strong achievement orientation in boys.

In addition to the extensive research on parenting style, research does note the effect that parental involvement has on students' academic success as well (Epstein, 1991; Fan, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005; Keith et al., 1998; Paratore et al., 1999). For example, Steinberg and colleagues (1992) found, when studying a sample of 6400 American teenagers, that the negative impact of the authoritarian parenting style on adolescent achievement was mediated by the positive effect of parental involvement in schooling. In another study by Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline, & Russell (1994), parental support was a significant predictor of college grade point average in two independent samples. Also, the role of the parents was found to be significant to the success of students with LD who are transitioning from high school to college (Smith et al., 2002). Callanan and Sabbagh (2004) found that parents contributed significantly to young children's acquisition of language skills and helped guide them to understand word meanings. Sheldon Horowitz, M.D. (2004), a physician with expertise in child development from the National Center for Learning Disabilities, points to the Center's belief that the parents, when trained to advocate for their children and when educated in their children's abilities and challenges, can make the difference in the effectiveness of

medical and educational programs. When coupled with affection, a mother's psychological control over her child has been shown to be correlated to a student's improved mathematical performance (Aunola & Nurmi, 2004). Also, in a study by Drummond & Stipek (2004), a survey of 234 parents in a low-income, urban neighborhood revealed that parents who reported being very involved in their child's education had students with rising grades. In a longitudinal study of mother-child interactions from school entry through middle school, Morrison et al. (2003) found their results indicated that the quality of mother-child interactions were associated with later academic performance and social behavior. These results were true even when societal and personal factors such as ethnicity, gender, maternal education and child's cognitive ability were controlled.

It is evident that the study of learning disabilities has grown extensively in the last 50 years. In an effort to understand the nature of academic success and the difficulties that many children face in the educational system, psychologists, sociologists, and educators continue to explore ways to support the students in the school, in society as a whole, and in the home. Findings from the data collected in this study can add to this body of research and further inform the ways in which parents can effect the academic success of LD students and, in turn, students' perceptions of themselves in the process.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the strength of relationships among the variables of student academic success, their personality dispositions and their self-reported parental warmth utilizing regression analysis. Fourth and fifth grade students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities were included in this study.

Two different types of data were employed: 1) data collected from existing data sets including school achievement data reported as a moving average as reflected on two standardized state exams over three years; and 2) point-of-time data from students' self-report on two separate instruments and a personal information form.

Participants

One hundred and thirty fourth and fifth grade students from five urban elementary schools in southeast Florida were asked to participate in this study. These students were selected from general education classes as well as resource rooms or pull-out classes for students with learning disabilities (LD). Among those, 98 participated in this study. A student with a learning disability is one who, as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities with Education Act (IDEA, 1990: 1997) "has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more" academic areas, including written expression, reading and/or mathematic calculation. In the current 2004 iteration of IDEA, schools are not required to use this discrepancy model and can use other methods such as observation of response to instruction to make a learning disability determination.

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) gives performance ratings to schools based on their pupils' academic performance and progress (FLDOE, 2002) The

schools participating were stratified by performance rating (one "A" or "B" school, a "C" school, and one "D" or "F" school).

Measures

Two standardized instruments were used for this study:

1. PARQ – Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005)
2. PAQ – Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005)

Participants were asked to fill out a one-page Personal Information Form before the two surveys were administered to provide the following data: age, gender, ethnicity, primary language spoken at home, birth date, religion and school grade.

The Child Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ), developed by Ronald Rohner (2005) is a self-report instrument designed to measure a child's perceptions of parental acceptance and rejection. The survey items consist of 60 statements concerning parent behavior toward the child (e.g. my mother forgets important things I think she should remember). Rohner & Khaleque (2005) describe parental acceptance –rejection as a "bipolar dimension" in which acceptance defines one end of the continuum and parental rejection defines the other. The PARQ measures responses on four scales: warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect and undifferentiated rejection. For the purposes of this study, the students completed the "Child: Mother" form and the "Child: Father" forms of the questionnaire for each of their parents or caretakers. Students who did not have information on either parent were allowed to read books or draw with materials provided at the survey site while that survey was administered. The PARQ is available in two forms, the standard form

contains 60 items and the abbreviated form contains 24 items. The standard form has been used in several hundred studies in the United States and worldwide and its reliability and validity have been tested far more than in the short form. Therefore, the standard form was administered orally to the students with a short break given at the midpoint of the survey. The PARQ consists of questions regarding each parent to which the response options are “Almost Always True”, “Sometimes True”, “Rarely True”, and “Almost Never True”.

The PARQ demonstrates an internal consistency (Cronbach’s coefficient alpha) of .87. Convergent validity of the instrument using Schaefer’s Behavior Inventory (1965) and Bronfenbrenner’s Parental Behavior Questionnaire (was .64 or greater for each scale on the PARQ (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

The second instrument used in this study was Rohner’s Child Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ), a self-report questionnaire designed to assess a child’s perceptions of himself/herself regarding seven personality dispositions: hostility and aggression, dependency, self-esteem, self-adequacy, emotional responsiveness, emotional stability and worldview. Ronald Rohner developed the questionnaire in 1971. Together, these scales were used to measure the student’s overall psychological stability. There are 42 items, six items per scale. The items are phrased in the present tense and ask the respondents to think about their actual feelings, not those that they wish for. The instructions direct the survey administrator to remind the students that there is no right or wrong answer. The child version is designed to be used with students from seven to twelve years old (2005).

Tests of reliability and validity of the PAQ were completed in 1975 and 1976 from samples of 220 fourth and fifth grade students, mirroring the intended sample of students for this study. The various scales of the PAQ demonstrate internal consistency ranging from .46 to .74 with a mean reliability of .63. Convergent validity for the instrument was calculated using three scales from Lorr and Youniss (1973) Interpersonal Style Inventory and one each from Shostrom's (1966) Personal Orientation Inventory, Buss and Durkee's (1957) hostility inventory, and Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale inventory. An external validation scale for one scale, Emotional Unresponsiveness, was unavailable for assessing the convergent validity. For the child version of the PAQ, results show that, with the exception of the Negative Self-Adequacy scale which correlated with its criterion scale at the $p < .05$ level, all scales were significantly ($p < .001$) related to their respective validation scales. Ronald Rohner, the author of the PAQ, noted that Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory proved to be inadequate as a comparison to the Negative Self-Adequacy scale, reporting that in 1975, when the convergent validity was calculated, more appropriate comparative scales were not available (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

In addition to these instruments, the participants' norm-referenced test scores from 2004 and 2005 were collected from students' files. The norm-referenced test (NRT) is the Stanford Achievement Test Series, Tenth Edition [Stanford 10](2005). The Stanford 10 demonstrates an internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficient alpha) of .94.

To assess total progress made from one year to the next, a change score was computed by converting percentile scores utilized by Stanford 10 (a component of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test battery) to *t* scores, which are more suitable for

analysis of academic growth or regression. Percentile ranking, as the name implies, is a system of ranking that has inconsistent interval properties. Percentile ranks underestimate large differences in the tails of the distribution and overestimate small differences in the middle of the distribution. The interval property of a measure is critical in the computation and interpretation of most statistics; thus, transformation to a normally distributed scale was conducted to permit meaningful analysis of the transformed scores. Therefore, the academic percentile scores were converted to their corresponding *t* scores and change scores were computed using *t* scores, which have a mean of 50 and a SD of 10.

Data Security

Each student had school identification numbers written on their surveys along with their birth date. The information was provided so that test scores and survey responses could be linked for data analysis purposes and were available only to the research team. All of the data remained confidential and were not released to any other persons, including administrators, teachers or parents. Paper files were kept in a locked cabinet under the supervision of the primary investigator at a neutral site when not in use by authorized members from the research team. Computer files were password protected and stored without information that could allow individual students to be identified.

Procedures

Each school participating in the study was identified based on representative samples of urban schools, and stratified by the school performance ratings A-B, C, and D-F, as previously described. After receiving formal permission from the Institutional Review Board of Barry University and Miami-Dade County's Research Review

Committee (Appendices C and D), a meeting in person with each principal from the chosen schools was scheduled to request permission to identify potential eligible students at each school. With the principal's permission, each leader of the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) department, by school, was contacted to identify eligible student candidates for the study.

The ESE teachers and teachers of the general education students were provided with consent/assent letters (Appendix E) that were sent home to parents of eligible student participants. Letters were sent to all fourth and fifth grade students who met the criteria to ensure the greatest participation possible. Letters were written in English, Spanish, and Creole. Consent/assent letters gained permission for both surveying of students and collection of student data (including demographic data, test scores and grades over 3 years.) The ESE teachers were provided with gift cards to thank them for allotting time in their schedule to contact the families of the students with learning disabilities to encourage them to complete the forms. Students who returned the form with a signature giving *or* denying consent, were given a pizza luncheon on the day that the survey was administered.

After the teachers received the forms from the students, they wrote each child's school identification number on each of the forms, placed them in envelopes provided, and returned them to the ESE leader. In addition to the trained teacher/researchers, the ESE teachers usually assigned to the participating students were asked to stay during the length of the survey activities to assure that the students were comfortable and were given individualized clarifications and help if necessary. The surveys were administered at each school site, with the assistance of teachers trained in the survey protocol. On the day

of the survey, the following protocol was utilized. The survey team (the primary investigator, three education interns and a state-certified teacher unaffiliated with the participating schools) arrived at the school by 9:00 am and met with the school principal to review the day's procedures. The ESE coordinator had a list of the students whose parents had given consent for their children to participate in the study and had prearranged with homeroom teachers to release them from their usual schedules in order to meet in a central school area such as the media center at the start of the school day. A follow-up to the consent/assent letter was sent home with the participating students the night before the administration of the survey to remind the students of the schedule the following day and to encourage each child to attend school on time and to eat breakfast before the survey was to be given.

After the students assembled and were given an opportunity to use the restroom and get a drink of water, the survey team members asked the students to complete the Personal Information Form (PIF) while the ESE teachers filled in only the student's school identification number at the top of the PIFs as they were completed. The students were assured that their individual answers would be kept confidential and would not be shared with their teachers, school administrators, or parents. To ensure that reading level was not a mediating factor in student responses, the instructions and individual items for each instrument and the demographic data form were read aloud by members of the research team.

Members of the research team then read the directions of the PARQ – Mother survey (Appendix A) and asked the students to complete the sample item and answered any questions they may have had. The students first then answered the 60-item PARQ

survey for their mothers; the questions were read to them. Then they were given a 15-minute break to stretch, use the restroom, and drink water. The students were reconvened to complete the 60- item PARQ survey for their fathers (Appendix A), again having the questions read to them. After completing these two portions, the students were invited to participate in the pizza luncheon with the students who brought the permission forms back but without consent to participate in the study. After the 45-minute lunch period with time allowed for a bathroom break, the second portion of the survey experience was begun. During this session, the students completed the 42-item PAQ survey (Appendix B) and were given a snack when they were finished.

Risks and Benefits

The research team requested that a school counselor be available during the survey in the event that any of the students had any difficulty with the process or the nature of the questions. This is a safeguard provided, though Ronald Rohner, the author of the PARQ survey noted that the risks to the participant are minimal and that the probability of harm or discomfort related to the self-report questionnaires are not greater than those ordinarily encountered during daily life events or during the performance of routine psychological examinations or tests. According to his research at the Ronald and Nancy Rohner Center for the Study of Parental Acceptance and Rejection at the University of Connecticut, it was unusual to receive adverse reports from adults or children who had taken these surveys. In fact, they found that participation in PARTheory research is most often seen as a pleasant, or at least a neutral experience (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

Power Analysis

Studies with similar populations are often vulnerable to loss of validity due to a high participant attrition rate (Maryuma & Deno, 1992). Given conservative effect sizes from comparative studies using a *p* level of .05, a projected sample size after attrition(which is expected to be as high as 50 %) of approximately 75 students with learning disabilities needed to be surveyed, with power exceeding .80.

The major limitation in the design of this study is in the sampling method. Due to the large size of the school district sampled, it was necessary to use a convenience sample of schools in the district rather than a random sample to facilitate timely data collection. Nonetheless, this study stands as one of the first of its kind to investigate the relationships between parental warmth, academic success and the personality dispositions of students with learning disabilities. It should, therefore, inform future research into these questions using larger random samples of students.

Chapter Four

Results

Demographic Results of the Sample Population

Participation from 130 students and their primary care givers was solicited. There was a 75% return rate (*N*=98). Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the student participants by level of school. Approximately 60% of the student sample was male. The large majority of the participants in the study identified themselves as Hispanic (76%), while White, African American and Asian American students each represented less than 10% of the sample. Spanish was the dominant language spoken at home among the participants and their primary care givers (71%), followed distantly by English (16%) and Haitian Creole (10%).

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants by Level of School

		A & B Schools		C Schools		D & F Schools		Total	
		n	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*	Percent	*n*	Percent
Gender	Male	23	23%	19	19%	16	16%	58	59%
	Female	13	13%	12	12%	15	15%	40	41%
Ethnicity	African American	2	2%	1	1%	1	1%	4	4%
	Asian American	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
	White	9	9%	0	0%	0	0%	9	9%
	Hispanic	22	22%	29	30%	24	24%	75	76%
	Other	2	2%	1	1%	6	6%	9	9%
Language	English	13	13%	1	1%	2	2%	16	16%
	Spanish	16	16%	29	30%	25	26%	70	71%
	Haitian Creole	6	6%	1	1%	3	3%	10	10%
	unspecified	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	2	2%

The midpoints for the Mother and Father Total PARQ Scores, the Child PAQ Total Score and their expected values (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Expected and Derived Midpoints of PARQ and PAQ Total Scores

	Expected Midpoint	Obtained Midpoint
Mother Total PARQ Score	150	126
Father Total PARQ Score	150	133
Child Total PAQ Score	105	91.5

Scores on the standard PARQ range from 60 (revealing maximum perceived acceptance) to 240 (revealing maximum perceived rejection). Rohner & Khaleque (2005) reported that the PARQ was designed so that scores at or above a midpoint of 150 reveal the perceived experience of qualitatively more rejection than acceptance and although a score of 140 is indicative of serious rejection, it does not reflect more rejection than acceptance. Similarly the total scores on the PAQ range from a low of 42, revealing excellent psychological adjustment, to a high of 168, revealing overall serious psychological maladjustment. Rohner and Khaleque reported that scores at or above the test midpoint on the Child PAQ of 105 indicate more overall maladjustment than adjustment. The obtained midpoints resulting from the data collected in this sample are lower than the midpoints obtained from Rohner's extensive studies in the United States (2005).

Means and Standard Deviations for the PARQ scores for mothers and fathers are reported in Table 3. An independent t-test was conducted to explore whether mothers differed significantly from fathers in their PARQ scores, as perceived by their children.

Results indicated that mothers were significantly warmer than fathers, t (90) = 3.742, p<.01.

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations for Total PARQ Scores- Mother and Father.

	M	SD
Father Total PARQ Score	97.48	26.611
Mother Total PARQ Score	89.51	25.041

Research Question 1

The analysis of Research Question 1 focused on whether higher parental warmth was significantly related to child's academic success. Regression analyses were employed to determine the impact of parental warmth on academic success in school, as measured by math test scores, reading test scores, and GPA. The following relationships were evident and are illustrated in Table 4. Fathers' parental warmth expressed by the Total PARQ-Father score and mothers' parental warmth as expressed by the Total PARQ-Mother were found to be related to the child's academic success as expressed by student NRT Reading scores in 2004, $R^2 = .124$, $F(2,79) = 5.574$, $p<.01$. Both measures accounted for about 12 % of the variance in reading test scores. A similar, though less robust relationship was found between both parental warmth measures and 2004 NRT Math scores, $R^2 = 09$, $F(2,79)=3.665$, $p<.05$. Thus, both parental warmth measures accounted for 9 % of the variance in math test scores. A closer analysis of the data revealed that several of the parent subscales of the PARQ survey were significantly related to indicators of academic success. The Father – Hostility/Aggression subscale was related to the 2005 student NRT scores in reading, $R^2 = .07$, $F(1,84) = 6.621$, $p<.01$. The

Mother-Undifferentiated Rejection subscale was related both to the 2005 student NRT reading test scores, $R^2=.097$, $F(1,84) = 8.980$, $p<.004$ and the 2004 GPA All Courses, $R^2 = .109$, $F(2,69) = 4.207$, $p< .02$. The Father-Undifferentiated Rejection subscale was related to the 2004 Content Area Grade Point Average (GPA) (the Grade Point Average including only Reading, Language Arts and Mathematics), $R^2 = .082$, $F(2,76) = 3.390$, $p<.05$, and the Mother-Warmth and Affection subscale was related to the 2003 Content Area GPA, $R^2 = .051$, $F(1,81) = 4.318$, $p<.05$.

Table 4.

Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Math and Reading Test Scores and GPA

Variables	Predictors	SE B	β	t	F	R^2
Math						
NRT, 2004					3.665	.085
	PARQ - Mother	.050	-.185	-1.250		
	PARQ - Father	.047	-.131	- .884		
Reading						
NRT, 2004					5.574	.124
	PARQ - Mother	.045	-.018	- .124		
	PARQ - Father	.042	-.339	-2.338		
NRT, 2005						
	PARQ - Mother	.028	-.235	-2.212	4.891	.055
	Host/Agg - Mother	.079	-.270	-2.573	6.621	.073
	Undif.Rej. - Mother	.114	-.311	-2.997	8.980	.097
GPA						
Content, 2004						
	Undif.Rej. - Father	.026	.-493	-2.582	3.390	.082

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked if students with learning disabilities who report greater psychological adjustment report greater academic success as expressed by higher grades and test scores. To address this question, regression analyses were computed to determine the impact of psychological adjustment as expressed by the Child-PAQ score on the expressions of academic success, using annual GPA and NRT math and reading scores as dependent variables. Although analysis of the Total Child PAQ and tests and GPA did not demonstrate significance, when the variable of socioeconomic status as expressed by School Rank was added to this equation, significant relationships were found between the Total Child-PAQ and 2003 NRT Math scores, $R^2 = .090$, $F(2,69) = 3.420$, $p < .05$, the Total Child – PAQ and 2003 NRT Reading scores, $R^2 = .085$, $F(2,69) = 3.224$, $p < .05$, 2004 NRT Reading scores, $R^2 = .083$, $F(2,87) = 3.942$, $p < .05$, and 2005 NRT Reading scores, $R^2 = .067$, $F(2,93) = 3.351$, $p < .05$. As shown in Table 5, it is important to note that in each of these relationships, the SES variable, School Rank was a greater contributor to the association than the PAQ variable.

Table 5.

Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Math and Reading Test Scores

Variables	Predictors	SE B	β	*t*	F	R^2
Math						
NRT , 2003					3.420	.090
	PAQ - Child	.060	-.201	-1.725		
	School Rank	.738	.192	1.652		
Reading						
NRT, 2003					3.224	.085
	PAQ - Child	.062	-.113	- .967		
	School Rank	.761	.252	2.155		
NRT, 2004					3.942	.083
	PAQ - Child	.058	-.120	-1.137		
	School Rank	.651	.235	2.223		
NRT, 2005					3.351	.067
	PAQ - Child	.047	-.129	-1.272		
	School Rank	.539	.203	1.998		

Research Question 3 asked whether students with learning disabilities who report greater psychological adjustment reported higher parental warmth. Since overall parental warmth did not significantly affect overall child's psychological adjustment, further analyses were conducted focusing on one of the subscales of the PAQ, child's worldview, as the dependent variable. A regression analysis of the Parent PARQ subscales indicated that both Father and Mother Warmth and Affection Scales demonstrated a significant relationship to Child's Negative World View, $R^2 = .110$, $F(2,88) = 5.444$, $p < .01$. The three independent variables accounted for 11 % of the variance in the child's negative worldview. As shown in Table 6, a significant relationship between the Total Indifference/Neglect Scale – Father, and –Mother and the Child's Negative World View,

R^2 = .075, $F(2,88)$ = 3.555, p<.05, suggested that indifferent/neglectful parental involvement impacted the child's negative worldview as well.

Table 6.

Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables of Child's Psychological Adjustment

Variables	Predictors	SE B	β	t	F	R^2
Neg. Worldview - Child					5.444	.110
	Warmth/Affec. -Mother	.050	.140	1.057		
	Warmth/Affec. - Father	.043	.224	1.695		
					3.555	.075
	Indiff./Neglect- Mother	.066	.163	1.346		
	Indiff./Neglect- Father	.062	.149	1.226		

Research Question 4, a dynamic version of Research Question 1 which looked at static scores, asked if students with learning disabilities who report higher psychological adjustment exhibit greater *changes* in test scores and grades over time. Whereas Research Question 1 took a "snapshot" of overall scores in relation to reports of parental warmth. This hypothesis was not supported for reading NRT achievement, though approached significance in relationship to the NRT Math Change score from 2003-2005, R^2 = .063, $F(1,70)$ = 3.838, p = .054. However, the Negative Self-Esteem Subscale was significantly associated with NRT Math Change Score from 2004-2005, R^2 = .063, $F(1,88)$ = 5.936, p< .05, and with the NRT Math Change Score from 2003-2005, R^2 = .081, $F(1,70)$ = 6.180, p< .05. Thus, as illustrated in Table 7, negative self-esteem

explained six percent of the variance in the 2004-2005 NRT Math Change Scores and eight percent of the variance in the 2003-2005 Math Change Scores.

Table 7.

Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Change in Math Test Scores Over Time

Variables		Predictors	SE B	β	*t*	F	R^2
Math							
	NRT Scores, 2003-05						
		Neg. Self Est.- Child	.243	.251	2.436	5.936	.063
	NRT Scores, 2004-05						
		Total-PAQ	5.668	.023	1.959	3.838	.052
		Neg. Self Esteem - Child	.302	.285	2.486	6.180	.081

Research Question 5 asked if students with learning disabilities who report higher parental warmth exhibit greater changes in test scores and grades over time. This hypothesis was supported as evident by the significant relationship found between The Total PARQ Scores for Mother and Father and the NRT Reading Change Score from 2003-2004, $R^2 = .103$, $F(2, 65) = 3.746$, $p < .05$. Results showed that the PARQ scores for mothers and fathers accounted for about 10 % of the variance in changes in test scores. Upon further analysis, as shown in Table 8, three subscales of the PARQ Mother and Father were found to be significantly associated with GPA Content Change Scores; The Warmth and Affection Scale for Mother and Father and GPA Content Change Score from 2003-2005, $R^2 = .092$, $F(2,75) = 3.791$, $p < .05$, and with GPA Content Change Score 2004-2005, the Undifferentiated Rejection Scale, $R^2 = .083$, $F(2,77) = 3.486$, $p < .05$, and the Hostility and Aggression Scale, $R^2 = .082$, $F(2,77) = 3.441$, $p < .05$. The results of a stepwise regression using Total PARQ- Mother and Father and Child PAQ,

indicated that maternal warmth had the strongest influence on a change in reading test performance between 2003 and 2005, $R^2 = .079$, $F(1,66) = 5.688$, $p<.05$, accounting by itself for seven percent of the variance on changes in reading scores over time. Demographic variables, i.e. ethnicity and socioeconomic status, in isolation were not significantly associated with changes in reading scores or GPA.

Table 8.

Summary of Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Change in Reading Test Scores and GPA Over Time

Variables	Predictors	SE B	β	t	F	R^2
Reading						
NRT Scores 2003-04					3.746	.103
	Total PARQ-Mother	.057	-.004	- .025		
	Total PARQ-Father	.054	-.318	-1.832		
GPA						
Content, 2003-05					3.791	.092
	Warmth/Affec.- Mother	.014	-.382	-2.687		
	Warmth/Affec.- Father	.012	.176	1.237		
					3.441	.082
	Hos./Agg. - Mother	.012	.162	1.104		
	Host./Agg. - Father	.013	.152	1.036		
Content, 2004-05					3.486	.083
	Undif.Rej.- Mother	.019	.059	.368		
	Undif.Rej.- Father	.021	.242	1.508		

As discussed previously, a clinical split was computed for the Mother and Father Total PARQ Scores to distinguish higher and lower parental warmth. Clinical splits were also computed for several subscales to further investigate the relationships between the variables of parental warmth, child's psychological adjustment, and academic success.

Based on the dichotomization of the PARQ subscales for mothers and fathers respectively, expressing higher versus lower warmth, and the PAQ subscales, for the child's higher or lower psychological adjustment, a number of Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted. One analysis was conducted to investigate whether there were differences between the groups of children who reported mothers and fathers with high warmth versus children who reported their mothers and fathers to be less warm on the overall psychological adjustment of the child. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 9. Results show that the two groups were significantly different and that high warmth was related to the child's psychological adjustment, $F(1,96) = 3.832$, $p < .05$. However, with respect to the fathers, no significance was found.

Table 9.

Means and Standard Deviations for Child's Psychological Adjustment by Parental Warmth and Affection.

		Mean	SD
Warmth/Affec.- Mother			
	High	1.01	.114
	Low	1.10	.301
Warmth/Affec. - Father			
	High	1.08	.280
	Low	1.15	.366

Additional analyses were conducted to investigate more thoroughly the relationship between a child's negative worldview and the child's academic success. The variable Negative Worldview was dichotomized using Rohner's established midpoints

from his samples in the United States to distinguish between children's more positive or more negative worldviews. The results of several ANOVAs confirmed that the degree of negativity of a child's worldview had a differential effect on the child's academic success as expressed by both annual test scores and by change scores in tests and GPA over time. With academic success measured annually the results were as follows, as illustrated in Table 10. Children with more positive worldviews received significantly higher test scores in math in 2003 and 2004, and in reading in 2004, $F(1,70) = 4.406$, $p < .05$, $F(1,88) = 7.786$, $p < .01$, and $F(1,88) = 5.814$, $p < .05$, respectively. With academic success measured over time, the results were as follows, as shown in Table 11. Children with more positive worldviews improved more on the reading test between 2003-2004, improved their content area GPA more between 2003 and 2004, and made greater progress in the GPA for all courses between 2003 and 2005, $F(1,70) = 4.465$, $p < .05$, $F(1,83) = 7.810$, $p < .01$, and $F(1,82) = 4.181$, $p < .05$, respectively.

Table 10.

Means and Standard Deviations for Child's Worldview By Math and Reading Scores and Annual GPA

		Mean	SD
2003 NRT Math			
	High	40.17	7.47
	Low	35.71	5.40
2004 NRT Math			
	High	43.89	8.56
	Low	38.58	6.05
2004 NRT Reading Scores			
	High	42.47	7.48
	Low	43.89	8.56

Table 11.

Means and Standard Deviations for Child's Worldview By The Change in Reading Test Scores and GPA Over Time

		Mean	SD
NRT Reading 2003 - 04			
	High	3.29	9.41
	Low	-2.57	8.89
GPA Change 2003 - 04			
	High	.37	.84
	Low	-.25	.80
GPA All Courses Change 2003 -2005			
	High	.25	.60
	Low	-.02	.76

Chapter Five

Discussion

Discussion of Findings

The present study looked at the relationship among three constructs: parental warmth, children's personality dispositions, and academic success. Overall, the findings suggest that there are factors external to children that can be influenced by environmental sources to affect their academic success in school and most likely, their success in adulthood. There is evidence in this study that the way children feel they are treated by their parents affects his or her overall psychological adjustment as well as their academic success both yearly and over time. Also, there is evidence in this study that suggests that the way children feel about themselves affects their academic success both yearly and over time. This is important because parental warmth and psychological adjustment are

factors that can both be modified to help children, unrelated to a child's genetics or past history.

While some parental traits are immutable and relatively static, such as elements of parental philosophy based on culture, religion and ethnic background (Harry, 1992), behaviors can be changed as other factors and changing contexts mitigate poor parenting. These include changes in attainment of education (McLoyd & Wilson, 1990), socioeconomic status, and health status (Forrest et al., 1997). Parents can change their motivations and priorities as they have varied experiences in educational settings, SES-predictive environments (Felner et al., 1995; Garrett et al.,1994) and healthcare establishments that create new like-minded groups and perspectives for families. These changes have occurred more frequently in the last fifty years as industry has become more technology-based (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997), families become more dependent on two family incomes, and, in turn, the dynamic of families is very different in many homes than was experienced by parents when they were children.

The findings in this study are consistent with findings by several authors including Becker and Luthar (2002), Petrill and Deater-Deckard (2004), and Stoiber and Good (1998). They have all found that the influences of variables within the family, society and the school setting are primary contributors to the psychological adjustment of a student with learning disabilities, whether they are positive influences, or negative ones.

An investigation of the Research Question 1 analyzed whether parental warmth is significantly related to the academic success of students with learning disabilities, as expressed by three years of data on student scores on norm-referenced tests and final yearly grade point averages. Several results of this study support this hypothesis. Results

indicated that both maternal and paternal warmth were associated with academic success, although none of the multiple regressions accounted for more than 12 % of the variance in the academic success variables. The results of this study support, in part, the findings of Lamborn et al.(1991), and Moss et al. (2004) who found that a strong relationship exists between a child's quality of parental attachment and his overall emotional security, and, subsequently, his social and academic success (Granot & Mayseless, 2001).

In fact, other research has shown that parental encouragement is the primary mediator in the connection between the social class of the family and student academic performance (Steinberg et al., 1992) and is a protective influence against a student's engagement in problem behaviors such as early substance abuse, gang involvement and early sexual experimentation (Black et al., 1997; Melby & Conger, 1996; Smith & Krohn, 1995 and is pervasive throughout a growing young person's life. Cutrona et al. (1994) found that parental support was a significant predictor of college grade point average for LD students. It was also a significant factor in how well students with LD transitioned from high school to college (Smith et al., 2002).

The findings of this study, derived from a sample of children who live in an ethnically diverse community based on values from all over the world, are consistent with findings by many authors studying cultures both outside of the United States and Europe and inside the United States but outside the majority culture. Though studies in different countries and of racial minorities report that children perceive parental warmth differently, it is the influence of parents and primary caregivers that is most likely to be associated with children's academic success, their psychological adjustment, and their chances of success in life (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Gonzalez et al., 1996; Heaven &

Newbury; 2004; Kim & Chung, 2003; Luster & McAdoo, 1996; Maton, Hrabowski, & Greif, 1998; Smetana, 2000; Steinberg, Lamborn et al., 1992;).

An analysis of Research Question 2 considered whether students with greater reported psychological adjustment reported greater academic success as expressed by higher grades and test scores. The results of this study demonstrate a relationship between a student's psychological adjustment and his or her academic success, however, school rank or SES showed a greater contribution to GPA than psychological adjustment. The results suggest the importance of self-esteem and a child's world view as key contributors to his or her ability to focus at school. Several authors report studies that are consistent with these results and support the strength of these two variables. Valas (2001) found that low achieving students and students with LD both had more depressive tendencies and reported lower expectations due to lower academic expectations. However, Goldberg, and colleagues (2003), in their 20–year follow up of students with LD in Pasadena, California, found that those students who became successful adults cited elements of psychological management, such as self-awareness , management of personal challenges, and a positive world view as reasons they were able to persevere with daily tasks and succeed in life. Martinez and others (2004) report that lack of academic success, and resultant lowered self-esteem is highly associated with negative outcomes in young adulthood, such as school delinquency, which in turn predisposes a person to experience a higher rate of unemployment, lower incomes when employed, and a greater chance of becoming a member of the adult corrections system.

The finding that self-esteem is a construct related to school performance may further bolster the research of Assor and colleagues (2004) who were interested in the child's resentment and lowered self esteem that resulted when their mothers or fathers conditionally accepted their children based on their level of academic success. The findings of this study also corroborated in part the results of Baldwin and Sinclair's (1996) research that a child's perception of acceptance based on interpersonal relationships as conditional was associated with vulnerable self-esteem.

An interesting component of this set of findings was the role that socioeconomic status (SES) is purported to play as a mediating effect between psychological adjustment and academic success. These findings are consistent with the research of Felner et al. (1995) and Garrett et al. (1994) who documented the plight of children from poor families and the problems they encountered as they tried to succeed in school. Many children from poor families suffered from stress that kept them from concentrating in school, and from environmental factors such as parental unemployment, family substance abuse, poor nutrition, and health problems coupled with inadequate medical and psychological health services.

In this study, socioeconomic status was expressed by the rank of the school as judged by the No Child Left Behind Act which categorizes schools based on test scores of the school, attendance records, and adequate yearly progress. Higher performing schools tend to be in more affluent neighborhoods or are more heavily supported by parents and organizations that have more resources to motivate and support the school's students and teachers. The schools are in high SES communities and the school's ranking is based on test scores so it is reasonable to assume that those schools would have

students who do better on the tests. Also, from these findings it is evident that the higher the grade of the school, i.e. the better the quality programs offered and higher the morale of the students who perform better, the less negative will be the world view of the child. It is evident that the school environment plays a role in the way children feel about themselves and their family situation. It is noteworthy that socioeconomic status was found to be not only a contributing factor but the major contributor in the significance between the child's personality dispositions and school performance.

The examination of Research Question 3 considered if students who report greater psychological adjustment report higher parental warmth. The findings suggest that whether a parent expresses warmth and affection or indifference and neglect is related to a child's world view. They did not, however, reflect the anticipated relationship between overall parental warmth and a child's psychological adjustment. The clinical split coding used to compute the total scores for these two variables was based on the average midpoint of respondents to the PARQ and PAQ instruments (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005) in the United States. In the sample population for this study, the coding was not salient as it has a different make-up than Rohner and Khaleque's populations. In fact the differing midpoints demonstrated that this study's sample population had less psychopathology and the parents were reported as having more warmth than the average parent in Rohner and Khaleque's total population; this might be explained by the demographic distribution of participants of the present study. As noted previously, the current sample was predominantly Hispanic and for the most part came from high poverty neighborhoods. Several authors such as Middlemiss (2003), and Kenny and colleagues (2002), note that one protective factor that keeps students who live in poverty from academic failure is a

“kin” or relative support system that is always available to the child’s family. This support system has been documented in Hispanic families by Harry (1992).

A subtheory of Rohner’s PARTheory, the Sociocultural Systems Model, is supported however, by this variance and for the “societal and intrasocietal variations” in parental rejection (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). He notes that from a world perspective, poverty is not necessarily associated with increased rejection but that it is poverty coupled with other social and emotional dynamics that put children at greatest risk for rejection. Despite the presence of severe parental rejection in many cultures though, Rohner (1975) states that in general parents around the world tend to raise their children with care, love, and affection.

The finding of significant relationships between the subscales of Warmth and Affection and Indifference and Neglect are consistent with Cooley’s Symbolic Interaction Theory (1902) and were anticipated. The interactions between warm and affectionate parents with their child support the child’s belief *based on their parent’s behavior* that they are important and worth loving. These feelings are manifest in a child’s positive self-esteem and naturally create a positive world view for the child. Conversely, when indifference and neglect are characteristics of a parent-child relationship, symbolic interaction theory predicts that children will view themselves *based on their parent’s behavior* as unworthy of attention or even basic care. These perceptions will likely damage the child’s self esteem and negatively tint their world view to be dark and lacking promise.

The pairs of warmth and affection and of indifference and neglect are parental behaviors that predict a child’s locus of control. An association has been demonstrated

by researchers between the level of parental and psychological and behavioral control and whether a child has an internal or external locus of control (Eisenberg et al., 2001; Kochanska et al., 1996). When relationships are strained at home, the working models that Bowlby (1978) details, based on parents, are not positive ones and leave the children without an understanding of how to seek positive relationships with people outside of the home (Paley et al. 2005). These children often feel isolated as a result, and feel that they are unable to effect change, or trust others enough to ask for help. They consequently believe that the world is overwhelming and that hard work and motivation would not be enough to create a positive outcome (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

The analysis of Research Question 4 focused on whether students who report greater psychological adjustment exhibit greater changes in test scores and grades over time. Two personality dispositions of the child, self-esteem and emotional stability, were significantly related to NRT Math Change scores over three years time. These results are consistent with Lancaster, Mellard and Hoffman's (2001) research on test anxiety in which students with learning disabilities showed that the inability to recall information, often due to distraction, exacerbated a student with LD's constant frustrations in school, which in turn, caused them to hold negative views of their abilities and of the world in which they were trying to learn (Lufi, Okasha, & Cohen, 2004). These findings support findings of Light and DeFries (1995) who reported that more than 60 % of students with learning disabilities have significant problems in mathematics and that a particular set of problems of students with learning disabilities is their inabilities to recall facts, their lack of automaticity, and their poor calculation strategies (Bender, 2001). The reciprocal relationship between academic success and sense of self, although not statistically

significant in both directions in this study, seems intuitive and merits further formal research in future studies with larger populations.

The findings of Research Question 4 concerning change scores over a period of three years are consistent with Grotevant's (1978) research on the pervasiveness of the effect of parental behavior on children. He noted that differences in children's personalities are based on what they learn in their varied family experiences and how they learn about social comparisons in their family. When looking at test scores, grades or even behaviors over periods of time, Humber and Moss's (2005) discussion of Attachment Theory is relevant. They note that attachment relationships serve a broad-based adaptive function over a life-span rather than in one specific period of development and so, as posited by Bowlby (1978), the quality of attachment relationships such as those with parents pervasively affects and follows the child throughout every environment, every classroom, every year of school, and every emotionally – charged situation. The results are also consistent with Bowlby's concept of working models of attachment relationships; a student's beliefs about how others will respond to his or her needs is related to one aspect of their experience in school - their relationship with their teacher. The warmth of this relationship is anticipated by the student based on their understandings of relationships as modeled by their parents, and is affected by the child's personality regardless of his or her IQ or school performance. Studies by Meltzer and colleagues (2001) , Miller and others (2001), and Bandura (1977) in his research on self-efficacy, demonstrate that students who are psychologically adjusted well enough to be motivated, to do their best, and to stay motivated are treated by their teachers as though

they are more competent than those students with learning disabilities who display defeatist attitudes and low academic expectations.

Both these findings and the results obtained from Research Question 2 demonstrate significant relationships between personality traits and academic performance, particularly in testing situations. In both sets of findings, the Negative Self Esteem subscale and the Emotional Instability subscale demonstrate significance, revealing the salience of these components particularly when tackling challenging tasks. This finding is consistent with the belief that for students with learning disabilities, the prospect of taking a risk and failing is daunting. These results demonstrate that it is the level of stability at which one handles the disappointment of failure and the resultant feelings from failure that predict how a student will fare as they navigate through the school system. Hart and colleagues (1997) reported similar findings in their research that found children who were resilient and able to maintain emotional stability had higher levels of academic achievement and lower levels of concentration problems.

King and Daniel (1996) noted that low self esteem resulting from failure scenarios are potentially damaging to emotional health and behavior monitoring. In contrast, these findings do not reflect the population of students with LD researched by Stone (1997) and Stone and May (2002) who seem to have such high academic self-concepts that they overrate their academic performance as related to their teachers' ratings. The findings of the present study may, however, shed more light on the research by Marsh (1989), who found that there are age-related differences in overall competence and resulting self-concept, which is an important issue to consider as social promotion has fallen out of favor and more students retained for academic difficulties are older than other students in

the classroom (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2001). The argument for retention, however, is bolstered by research by Liddell and Davidson (2004) who found that students, who believed they could accomplish a task because they had worked on it before, were more likely to perform better on that task than on others that were from new material. Chang, and others (2003) found that students in China who felt prepared for the demands in school experienced greater life satisfaction over time beyond their performance in school.

The investigation of Research Question 5 considered whether students who reported higher parental warmth exhibited greater changes in test scores and grades over time. The parental factors were significantly related to the change score for the NRT reading test and to the change in content area grade point averages. These results are not surprising in light of Hall and Moat's (1999) report that 75-80 % of students classified as learning disabled have their basic deficits in oral and written language.

As in Research Question 2, the PARQ subscales that were significantly related to academic success either in one year or over time were Warmth and Affection, Hostility and Aggression, and Undifferentiated Rejection. In light of the fact that these subscales seemed so tied to academic success in this study, it is important to understand the possible reciprocal nature of these behaviors between children and parents. Although the discussion has centered on the effect that parents have on their children, several authors have also looked at the directionality of influence within the family. Research by Bell (1968), Harris (1995), and Kerr, and colleagues (2003) detail the dynamics between children and their parents to understand this phenomenon more clearly. They posited that the success of a child in school may prompt a parent to be more trusting and relaxed with the child, more warm, affectionate and permissive. It is also possible that when a child is

failing at their academic tasks, the parents' anxiety heightens their own emotionality, and potentially, their feelings of helplessness in assisting their child. These parental feelings tend to lead to neglect as a result of the parent not wanting to be reminded of what they perceive to be their possible failures as a parent or as an ineffective teacher or role model (Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001).

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be considered before attempting to generalize the findings of this study. First, the method of sampling is a limitation. Due to the large size of the school district sampled, it was necessary to use a convenience sample of schools in the district rather than a random sample in order to facilitate timely data collection. Additionally, the sample size of 98 students is relatively small and primarily Hispanic. Thus, these findings may not extend to the general population of the United States which is only 14 percent Hispanic. The sample population, though, does in some ways represent a classic group of students with LD. Due to the overidentification of minorities and boys for exceptional student education (Shaywitz et al.1990), it is common to find an uneven number of boys and girls (in this sample there were 59 % boys to 41 % girls) and an uneven number of minority students and White students (in this sample 91 % of the students were members of a minority population). Another characteristic of the population that can be viewed as a limitation is that the greater number of these students (at least 63 %) were from a minority population in economically depressed neighborhoods and as a result, the group is skewed towards students with the range of issues that accompanies poverty unrelated to learning. One of these issues, single-family households, affected the data in this study. As several participants reported

that they did not have a father figure in their life, they did not answer the survey regarding a father figure. Also, many children had moved between schools so often that they did not have recorded test scores for one or two of the years that were analyzed. Therefore, comparisons between variables are compromised as numbers of responders varied between pairings such that there were no pairwise findings in several cases, and participants could not be matched consistently across analyses.

An additional issue that accompanies poverty unrelated to learning is family instability (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003), which has a strong effect on a student's ability to focus on academic tasks. In an effort to provide a non-invasive, non-judgmental environment in which the students could feel comfortable enough to answer the questions honestly, they were not asked personal questions about the make-up of the family unit at the time of the survey. Therefore, there are not concrete data on whether there had been recent disputes in the home between parents and/or siblings, if the children were in the middle of custody battles, if patterns of abuse were present in the family, etc. These are events that would clearly color the perceptions of the child taking the survey and affect his or her responses about one parent or the other. Also, further data collection should include questions about birth order and number and gender of siblings. Extensive research on these family elements support that these factors could be significant in a child's perceptions of their parents. Future research might include a qualitative component to include observations of the student's home life or survey questions addressing more personal family issues to have a larger, more holistic picture of the context from which the child answers the survey questions.

Another limitation regarding the population is a consequence of the numbers of children who had been retained at some point during their elementary school experience. Seventy-five percent of the survey population had repeated 2nd or 3rd grade in past years in elementary school. Therefore, they had an extra year at some point to learn material that was assessed in the NRT Mathematics and Reading tests. They also had at least one year of repeating course work and assessments as reflected in the grade point averages for each child over three years. As a result it is difficult to confidently compare the NRT Math and Reading change test scores between students who were retained and those who had not been retained, as extra instruction had been provided to most of the children in the sample. Further research might look at the effects of retention on test scores, personality dispositions, and parental warmth by using a more balanced comparison sample of students who had been retained and those who were not.

A population of students with learning disabilities, although they all share the same label, are extremely varied and typically demonstrate a wide range of intellectual ability and academic difficulties. The group then, is not necessarily homogeneous and therefore, some of the findings of this study may apply more to some students than to others, depending on their processing abilities, their home life, and their experiences at school and with their peers as someone with LD. Because of the varied abilities found in members of this group, some children had difficulty in answering some of the questions presented in the study, particularly since many of them, for the purpose of reverse scoring, are worded counter intuitively. Although survey administrators were available to address the students' questions about the negatively phrased questions, nonetheless, concerns remain about the voracity of some responses

The results based on the method of measuring change over time in academic success should be interpreted with caution because the change scores range from negative to positive values and so signify some improvement and also some decline over different years. The magnitude of the change overall is known; however, due to the type of data accessed and its availability, the GPA and NRT Test change scores do not indicate which direction they changed within the span of more than one year. It is unclear with the small sample in this study and with the regressions employed, which piece of the change drives the significance, i.e. there may be one large negative change or many positive changes. For example, a student may have improved their NRT Math score from 2003 to 2004, and then dropped severely from 2004 to 2005 due to unknown circumstances. The overall score would then be negative but would not reflect the student's improvement in the first year. Future research might be conducted to analyze this issue, with additional data collected on the scores from year to year.

Finally, it should be noted that although significant associations were found between the independent variables and dependent variables in the regressions analyses conducted in this study, the percentage of variance accounted for by the independent variables did not exceed more than 12 % in most of the findings. Other variables not included in this study may have affected academic success, accounting for the rest of the variance (89 %) in academic success. Other variables to be taken into consideration are IQ, teacher preparedness and personality, school organization, provision of necessary supplies and resources, physical health, and family-related crisis or change events, such as separations, divorce, birth of new family members, sudden financial hardship, deaths, loss of unemployment, and incarcerations.

Future Research and Implications

These findings have potentially important implications for conclusions teachers and administrators may draw about students with learning disabilities and what their families, school administration, teachers and community members can do to help them meet formidable academic and life challenges. Cappella and Weinstein (2001) noted that some children who started school with below-level achievement, as do most students with learning disabilities, can steadily improve based on environmental factors that can be changed. This study analyzed the interaction between parental warmth, a child's personality dispositions, and academic success. The findings indicate that factors that can be influenced, unlike personal history, IQ, or other genetic factors, are extremely potent predictors for a child's success. How parents relate to their children affects their children's self esteem, their belief in their own competence, their independence, their emotional stability and responsiveness, and their view of the world and what it holds for them. These personality dispositions are significantly related to a child's academic outcomes both in this study and in myriad other studies that investigate varied cultural contexts throughout the world. Also, several analyses showed significant relationships between parental acceptance and rejection and a child's world view, and, in turn, the potentially debilitating effects that a student's negative world view can have on their academic success.

Future research should examine more carefully the powerful effects of a child's negative world view. Not only does generational transmission of this trait appear likely, but further research into this phenomenon might help to inform parents that their children are not just reacting to acceptance or rejection at a given moment but are, in fact,

applying their family experiences to how they perceive their environment in the present and the future and within, that view, their prospects to succeed.

Further research should also delve farther into the histories of the sampled population by looking at IQ as a controlled variable and understanding the current family, home and school contexts of children who are participating in the studies.

Further, it is hoped that this research will inspire future studies on students with learning disabilities and their families. One way to facilitate this research would be to supplement the PARQ and PAQ instruments with wording and instructions that are designed for children with cognitive challenges. The exploration of ways to inform parents and primary caregivers, such as foster parents, grandparents and extended family, of the importance of their role in raising their children must be pursued. More information on ways in which they can capitalize on the powerful role they have to positively support and guide their children to success in school and in life should be supplied and disseminated. The findings of this study can contribute to other research that reinforces the need for effective parenting programs in the schools and the community. It is evident that federal, state, and local administrators must find new ways to effect change in communities around the country. They must find ways to support, reach out to, and honor the parents of each community's children as partners in fulfilling the responsibility to protect, serve, nourish and encourage all children, despite their challenges, to grow and succeed.

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Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D

Appendix E

Appendix G

Appendix G