

EFFECTS OF PARENT EXPECTATIONS AND INVOLVEMENT ON THE SCHOOL  
READINESS OF CHILDREN IN HEAD START

A Dissertation

by

KRYSTAL TISHA' COOK

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

Major Subject: School Psychology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Michael J. Ash
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## ABSTRACT

Effects of Parent Expectations and Involvement on the School

Readiness of Children in Head Start. (August 2009)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Michael J. Ash

There is an achievement gap occurring between ethnic minority children, mostly from low-income homes, and European American children in the United States. The gap between these children is present at school entry. Many children are not prepared for the minimal standards needed to succeed in school and, as a result, the gap widens throughout schooling. School readiness is an important attribute for future success among all children. There are many efforts to close this school readiness gap through early intervention. Head Start is an example of an early intervention program offering educational and social services to low-income families in an effort to promote school readiness among children at-risk for school failure. Early intervention programs, policy, and research acknowledge that advocating parent involvement and empowerment is the foundation for improving children's ability to be successful in school.

The purpose of this study was to examine the association between parent variables and school outcomes. Specifically, the focus was to study how parent expectations and parent involvement in home learning and enrichment activities affect the school readiness of children enrolled in Head Start. The study examined how these

parent variables were related to children's school readiness, and differences between ethnic groups, gender groups, and level of risk. The study tested a model whereby the effect of parent expectations on school readiness is mediated by parent involvement. The sample consisted of 77 caregivers, primarily mothers or mother figures, and their children who were enrolled in a Head Start preschool program. The caregivers were given experimental measures in addition to questionnaires adapted from standardized measures to assess parent behaviors. Standardized measures were administered to children to assess school readiness. Demographic information and level of risk were gathered using existing data collected during the enrollment process.

Results indicated that high parent expectations directly relate to increased school readiness scores. Parent expectations also had a positive direct relationship to parent involvement. However, results did not support that parent involvement in home learning activities served as a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness variables. In addition, the analysis of ethnicity, gender, and risk level suggested these variables had no moderation effects on the parent expectations and school readiness relationship or the comprehensive model. Study implications for parent behaviors and school readiness are discussed.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the children in Head Start who were bright and eager sponges to all of their experiences. Thank you for your innocence, honesty, and contagious laughter. You all are an inspiration to ensure we care for our youth today to create a better tomorrow.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would to thank my family and friends for their encouragement, unyielding love, and support. Thanks to my brother and sister for inspiring me to be a good role model as your big sis but still keeping me grounded. Most importantly, thank you mom and dad, Brenda and Russell Cook, for having such high expectations of me. There are no words to express my gratitude. You helped me to overcome the obstacles in life that only made me stronger and encouraged me to reach for the stars and turn my dreams into a reality.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

There is a consensus among professionals in the school psychology field that a child's home environment has an influence on academic performance. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2006) declared that families need positive support to promote effective parenting for their children. Parents and guardians are children's first teachers and the promotion of effective care helps to foster the development of basic skills, healthy behavior, and moral judgment (NASP, 2006). For that reason, it is important to understand how parent behaviors cultivate developmental skills leading to school success.

The phrase "parent involvement" captures an assortment of parental practices, such as parents' expectations of their children's academic success and the behaviors parents employ at home to increase their children's learning (Seginer, 2006). Parent involvement in academic activities is an asset for children through their school tenure. From early in a child's development, parenting variables such as teaching children basic literacy skills, promoting play, and holding high expectations for their children are linked to improving academic achievement (Alexander & Entwisle 1996; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; Gill 1997; Reese, & Cox, 1999; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Sheehan, Cryan, Wiechel, & Bandy, 1991; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1988; Vygotsky, 1962), improved mathematics readiness scores (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999),

---

This dissertation follows the style of *School Psychology Review*.

early literacy skills, increased vocabulary, and listening comprehension skills in later grades (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). These types of benefits predict higher verbal intelligence and non-intellective characteristics such as extroversion, creativity, and independence (Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay, 1999).

Parental involvement in shaping early developmental skills has lasting effects, including higher school achievement, low cumulative grade retention, and lower cumulative rates of special education placement (Reynolds & Temple, 1998). As stated above, parent expectations, as a form of involvement, influence student outcomes. The literature generally concludes that high academic achievement is consistently related to high parent expectations. However, the relationship between the two is complex and may involve many mediating variables (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992).

The purpose of this study was to explore parental involvement (e.g. establishing an interactive learning environment) as a possible mediating variable between parent expectations and the school readiness of preschool children. Parents with high expectations tend to involve their preschooler in activities such as academic games and visiting the library (Entwisle & Alexander, 1990). Thereby, parent interactions with their children prior to school enrollment promotes school readiness and aids in future academic success (Mehaffie & Fraser, 2007). The following study focused on a sample of preschool children enrolled in a Head Start Program and their caregivers. The aim was to assess the processes between parent behaviors and their child's level of school readiness. In addition to parent variables, the study addressed the academic dilemmas affecting low income and minority groups in the United States. In particular, research

among Hispanic, African American, and low-income groups are understudied in the area of parent expectations process variables. Implications concerning the importance of conducting research in the area of education among these groups will be discussed.

#### Statement of the Problem

Many children belonging to low-income, minority groups tend to be less successful in school compared to their European American peers from middle and high-income families. The difference in preparedness, known as the achievement gap, is present at school entry (Cybele-Raver, Gershoff, Lawrence Aber, 2007; Dickens, 2005; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). Because of low readiness skills, African American and Hispanic children tend to achieve less throughout their school careers. There is an increased interest in educational psychology research to understand the factors effecting minority and low-income students' school success. Children who begin school with a disadvantage have higher rates of school dropout, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). Early intervention is effective in quelling these outcomes among groups at-risk for poor outcomes (Janus & Duku, 2007). Hence, strategies to aid in improving school readiness during the preschool years are important factors in decreasing problems associated with poor future educational outcomes among at-risk groups.

#### Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to address the link between parent expectations and school readiness in an at-risk sample. The study analyzed the possible mediating role of parent involvement in the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. Figure

1.1 represents the conceptual model tested in this study. The study also explored differences in these relationships between a sample consisting of predominately African American and Hispanic participants. There is robust literature on the impact parent expectations have among European American children. However, there is a lack of understanding of how parent expectations work within ethnic minority groups and low-income groups. The current study attempts to fill in some of the gaps in the area of parent expectations among these groups.

Furthermore, the study assessed ethnicity, gender, and risk as possible moderating variables. Moderators are variables that have interaction effects among the hypothesized relationships of a set of variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). Research suggests the child's prior academic ability may or may not influence parents' expectations depending on ethnicity (Alexander et al., 1994,

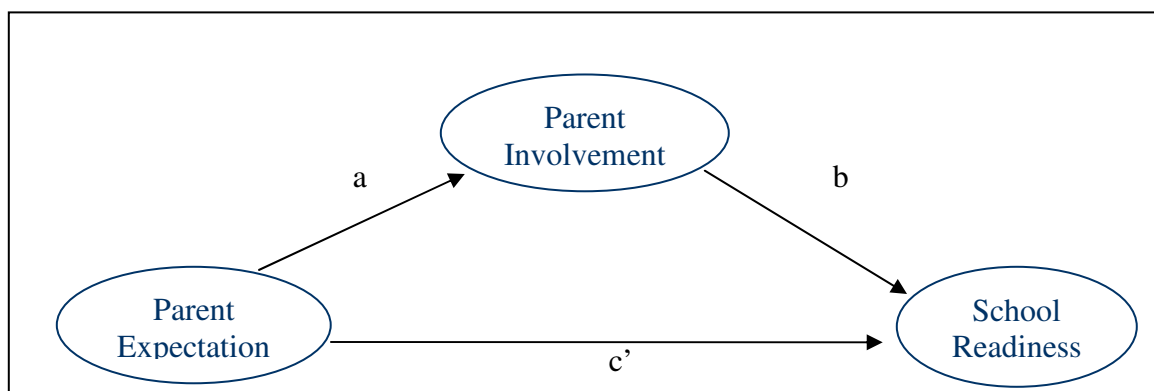


Figure 1.1 Conceptual model

*Note: a* represents the relationship between parent expectations and parent involvement, *b* represent the relationship between parent involvement and school readiness, and *c'* represents the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness adjusted for the mediating variable.

Gamble et al., 1997; Seginer, 1983; Stevenson et al., 1990). Additionally, parents of different ethnic backgrounds provide differing activities, which lead to varying academic outcomes for children (Farver et al., 2006). Therefore, analysis of ethnic groups' interaction to the comprehensive model was exploratory because the parent expectation reports were conducted at a time when parents had no prior ability information (e.g. report cards, class grades) for comparison.

Research supported that parents have differing expectations for their child depending on gender. Specifically, parents from low-income families tend to have lowered expectations for their male child's school success compared to girls (Gill, 1997) and paths among parent expectations and school achievement models tend to be stronger for females (Baker & Entwisle, 1987; Christenson et al., 1992; Gill, 1997). Males from low-income families tend to be more involved in at-risk activities as they become older, which may account for lowered parent expectations for academic outcomes (Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, 1991). The study assessed the moderating effects comparing the mediational model among male and female subgroups.

Selecting the components of risk was guided by the literature on family risk. The risk components selected included receipt of one or more public assistance programs, which is indicative of low-income families, poverty level, family size, family composition (i.e. two parents or female-headed household), exposure to crime, caregiver's education level, and employment status of the head of the household. These factors were found to be indicative of low-income families and studies showed they have an impact on children's cognitive functioning (Hubbs-Tait et al, 2006; Klebanov,



Brooks-Gunn, McCarton, & McCormick, 1998; Phillips, Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, & Crane, 1998; Sameroff, 2006).

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

*Research Question 1:* Do parent expectations of their child's school readiness ability and future school attainment have a positive relationship to school readiness? To what extent does parent involvement serve as a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness?

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between high expectations and increased school readiness. In addition, parent involvement will serve as a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness.

*Research Question 2:* Does the caregiver's ethnicity serve as a moderator for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness? Does the caregiver's ethnicity moderate the comprehensive model?

*Hypothesis 2: The analysis of ethnic groups' interaction with parent expectations' relationship to school readiness will be exploratory. The analysis of whether ethnicity moderates the mediational model will be exploratory.*

*Research Question 3:* Does the child's gender serve as a moderator for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness? Does the child's gender moderate the comprehensive model?

*Hypothesis 3: The relationship between parent expectations and school readiness will differ among the caregiver groups with female children in Head Start*

*compared to those with males. In addition, the mediational model for female students at Head Start will be stronger compared to male students.*

*Research Question 4: Do risk factors serve as a moderator for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness? Does risk moderate the comprehensive model?*

*Hypothesis 4: The relationship between parent expectations and school readiness will differ among participants with low levels of risk compared to those with higher levels of risk. In addition, the mediational model for participants with lower risk indicators will be stronger compared to those with higher levels of risk.*

#### Significance of the Study

Overall, there is a strong relationship between types of parenting behaviors and school success (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Foster, Lambert, Abbott-Shim, McCarty, & Franze, 2005; Hughes & Kwok, 2006). Particularly, children whose parents have high expectations for their academic success have more positive academic outcomes (Entwisle & Baker, 1983; Parsons, Adler, & Kazcala, 1982). The study builds on the literature by demonstrating a relationship between parents' expectations upon school entry and preschool children's school readiness skills. In addition, the study found this relationship among a low-income, minority sample.

#### Organization of the Study

This study contains five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, and definitions of terms. Chapter

II presents a review of the related literature including a historic overview of research on parent behaviors in education, related theories concerning parents' influences on learning and school readiness among differing socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Chapter III includes research methodology and design. Chapter IV presents the results and Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

#### Definition of Terms

*Achievement gap.* A statistically significant difference between groups and achievement outcomes throughout schooling.

*Caregiver.* Mothers or mother figures of children enrolled Head Start

*Children.* Students enrolled in the Head Start program and participant in the study.

*Ethnicity.* The caregiver or child's ethnicity as defined by the caregiver on enrollment forms and as reported in the data management system.

*FACES.* Family and Children Experiences Survey is a research effort through the office of Head Start to maintain longitudinal data on the experiences, characteristics, and outcomes of families and Head Start programs.

*Gender.* The participant child's sex reported by their caregiver as either male or female.

*Head Start.* Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families (ACF, 2009).

*Mediation.* Occurs when the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is transmitted through a third variable known as the mediator variable.

*Moderation.* Occurs when the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable varies depending on the level of the third variable (moderator variable), which interacts with the independent variable.

*Parent expectations.* Parent expectations are defined in three categories; parents' expectations of their child's overall ability compared to other children upon entering Head Start, expectations of ability while matriculating in the Head Start Program, and future ability in regards of high school completion.

*Parent involvement.* Parent behaviors are the home activities performed by parents as measured by the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) questionnaire. The behaviors of interest include frequency of reading to children, play indoor/outdoor games, recreation activities, and number of educational items in the home (e.g. books, magazines, dictionaries).

*Parent variables.* Parent variables include parent behaviors that affect the educational process among children's schooling based on an ecological framework. Parent expectations and parent involvement are the primary parent variables of interest.

*Poverty level.* Based on participants reported family income and the percentage above (or below) the U.S Federal Poverty Guidelines at the time of enrollment. Poverty guidelines are calculated by income and family size

*Risk.* The risk composite will be based on responses from the FACES Survey and demographic information. Risk questions will include responses concerning family size, maternal level of education, poverty level indicators, exposure to violence, and receipt of social assistance, employment status of the head of the household, and access to

transportation. A comprehensive risk index was measured by a tabulated score based on the presence or absence of these risk indicators.

*School readiness.* School Readiness is defined by the cumulated score obtained by Head Start students on the Speed DIAL assessment

*School readiness gap.* A statistically significant difference between groups and achievement outcomes present at school entry and school readiness indicators.

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## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The parents' role in their children's cognitive development has a great impact on academic achievement for children of all ages. Studies support that parent behaviors promoting a home environment inclusive of social, educational, and play interactions and holding high expectations throughout early childhood, aids in the development of successful learners. The role of parent interventions with children is vital, especially for those from low-income families, as evident in the development of early childhood intervention programs such as Head Start. For decades, children from low-income families (typically ethnic minorities) have been the focus of this research due to occurrence of what is known as an achievement gap between ethnic and income groups (Cyber-Raver, 2007). It can be argued that the gap among these groups is present at school entry with a 0.5 of a standard deviation or greater disparity in test results between African American and European American and Hispanic and European American groups (Janus & Duku, 2007).

Although approaches for how to reduce the gap vary widely, one fact remains: parents serve an instrumental role in promoting success for their children. The following chapter outlines the problems among minority and low-income groups in United States schools, a brief background of the parent's role in child development, and variables of interest including school readiness, parent expectations, and parent involvement. The study will assess independent and comprehensive paths among each of these variables.

The population of interest is children in Head Start. Children whose caregiver participated in this study were predominately from Hispanic and African American, low-income backgrounds. Assessing these groups is of interest if the proposed model for school readiness outcomes differs across ethnic groups.

### Achievement Gap

Ethnicity, poverty, and household composition are factors contributing to different approaches parents use to support their children (EdSource, 2003, US Department of Education, 2007). These same factors are associated with the achievement gap hindering the United States' education system. Overall, students in the United States perform comparably to other industrialized countries (US Department of Education, 2007). However, there is a disparity between groups in their academic performance in United States schools. A primary concern is, despite overall acceptable gains in educational outcomes for minority children in the United States education system; there is a gap in successful educational outcomes between distinct groups.

According to the National Assessment of Education Progress (US Department of Education, 2007), Asian and European American students were more likely to score at or above *Proficient* in reading compared to African American and Hispanic students. A larger number of minority students are enrolling in advanced placement (AP) classes. However, African American students attain the lowest mean scores on the AP exams. Not only is there a gap between achievements among children, but there is a gap in parents' educational attainment. Overall, among children between the ages of 6 to 18, Asian and European American children were more likely to have parents with higher

levels of education than African American and Hispanic children (US Department of Education, 2007).

Poverty is another factor related to the achievement gap (Cyber-Raver, Gershoff, Aber, & 2007). Children who come from impoverished homes enter school with a disadvantage. Many families may not have the resources to prepare their children for school. Poverty is one of the single best explanations for performance differences (EdSource, 2003). Although poverty does not cause low performance, factors such as physical, social, and emotional deprivations are possible correlates to both poverty and poor school outcomes (EdSource, 2003).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, African American households had the lowest median income among race groups, followed by Hispanics. Asian households had the highest median income, followed by European Americans (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Lee, 2006). African American and Hispanic families had overall higher percentages of children living in poverty than European American and Asian families. In 2005, these same high poverty groups were more qualified for free- and reduced-price lunch programs than were their European American and Asian peers.

Parent behaviors such as level of expectations, educational involvement, and their sense of academic effectiveness can influence achievement outcomes despite social disadvantages (Bandura et al., 1996). Inevitably, parents with high expectations for their children's academic success are more likely to have children with higher scholastic success. Therefore, it is essential that parents set certain goals to prepare their children for school. Although there is evidence that family factors influence children's



achievement above and beyond school effects (Brofenbrenner, 1986; Eccles & Harold, Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Stone, 2006) and parent expectations above socio-demographic factors (Gill, 1997; Reynolds & Gill, 1994), there is limited research on how these processes occur in underserved families.

### School Readiness Gap

There are interesting differences in ability outcomes between ethnic groups when children first enter school. Worrell (2005) noted there is no significant difference between African American children ages 3 to 4 and European American children of the same age in their disability status according to school disability standards. Furthermore, there is little variance between these students' ability to meet developmental indicators including counting to 50, attention span, motor development, and verbal memory scores. Yet, African American children were found to be weaker in major achievement areas of math, reading, and vocabulary compared to European American children in elementary school (Worrell, 2005).

Comparable measured differences on early academic indicators support the view that the achievement gap exists when children enter school, thereby creating the occurrence of a school readiness gap (Cybele-Raver, Gershoff, & Lawrence, 2007; Dickens, 2005; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). A school readiness gap is the measured difference in test results between groups of young children that are equal to or greater than half a standard deviation (Janus & Duku, 2007). To gain understanding of the impact a school readiness gap will have on America's future, it is important to understand how research defines and measures school readiness. A foundational

understanding of the factors associated with school readiness is the first step to identifying approaches on how to minimize problems relating to the gap.

### School Readiness

The opportunity to be well prepared upon entering a school setting is the foundation to how well a child will successfully perform in their future educational experiences. Just as being prepared for school upon entry increases future success in educational outcomes, a child who lacks the necessary skills to achieve entry-level academic expectations is at greater risk of remaining behind throughout schooling. There is support that underdeveloped skills in reading, language, and social-behavioral competence are indicators predicting poor future academic performance (Justice, Bowles, Pence Turnbull, & Skibbe, 2007). Therefore, early learning opportunities, proper brain development, and overall health are essential for one's lifespan development.

A general characterization of school readiness is a student's acquirement and application of skills before entry into an educational program (typically kindergarten). It is important to keep in mind the demands placed on children upon school entry. Children are expected to have self-regulation, sustained behavioral inhibition, comply with rules, positive interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers, successfully carry out goal-directed activities, have sufficient physical health, and possess basic cognitive skills in reading, math, and language (Bierman et al., 2008; Kagan, 1990).

Having school readiness skills is not an attribute that suddenly occurs but it is the outcome of a child's development at a certain point (Janus & Duku, 2007). The brains

ability to learn occurs *in utero*; thereafter, an adult has the ability to influence a child's capacity to learn new concepts building on previous knowledge (Vygotsky, 1962; Janus & Duku, 2007). Without appropriate exposure, a child will not have the necessary foundation to perform at the expected academic level upon entering school (Janus & Duku, 2007). School readiness "often marks the beginning of a developmental trajectory and sets the tone for later success in school" (Hill, 2001, p. 686). Children who do not perform proficiently, especially in reading, by the third grade are at greater risk for poor future outcomes, such as school dropout, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005).

An important aspect related to school readiness is the genetic-environmental etiology of school readiness. According to Lemelin et al. (2007), research underscores the importance of the environmental aspects of school readiness, yet overlooks the individual differences in school readiness factors that may be accounted for through genetic components. The environmental aspects important to school readiness include a nurturing environment consisting of care giving, adequate nutrition, health care, supervision of safety needs, and help in increasing physical growth, cognition, and socioemotional development (Mehaffie and Fraser, 2007). Yet, Lemelin et al. (2007) hypothesized that genetics is an important indicator of school readiness. Through twin studies, the authors found a substantial contribution of the shared environment to cognitive school readiness and genetic effects were more important for general abilities underlying school readiness. All of the genetic and environmental factors accounted for the predictive association between school readiness and early school achievement.

In summary, if caregivers do not provide basic needs, a child is at risk for poor health and decreased readiness for school. It is not solely the child at stake, but the future economic strength and vitality of the U.S. depends on these children having the skills necessary to be productive citizens (Mehaffie & Fraser, 2007). Overall, there is a multifactor approach to school readiness. Research in these areas is a step toward gaining a better understanding in defining and measuring school readiness. Hence, more researchers and other leaders are promoting the importance of addressing early childhood outcomes. For example, educational policy implemented by President George H. W. Bush stated, “By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn” (Kagan, 1990, p. 272). The statement was the first of many national goals for standards based on educational reform developed by Congress in the 1990s. Furthermore, Gallop Poll suggested the goals were their first priority and the most attainable goal to reach (Kagan, 1990). However, this raises the issue of how to define and identify “readiness.” Describing “readiness” is a challenge among researchers and the larger challenge is how America will meet the goal of getting all children ready for school.

#### *Definitions of School Readiness*

Kagan (1990) identified two historical constructs associated with readiness: readiness for learning and readiness for school. Readiness for learning is the developmental stage or age when a person acquires the skills to learn material and is fluid in nature. Robert Gagne (1968) discussed a model of development he called “the growth-readiness model.” The model extended from theory developed by G. Stanley

Hall and Arnold Gesell. Gagne stated that a child must have certain patterns of cognitive growth before learning can effect development. The rationale was supported by research indicating that training a child in a particular developmental area (e.g. gross motor skills) was best conducted when a child was maturationally ready to perform the desired task (Gagne, 1968). Overall, children's readiness for learning involves adequate attention span, motivation, and developmental status (Kagan, 1990). In addition, theories acknowledged the environmental forces attributed to school readiness. Theoretical extensions from Piagetian models of development defined readiness as the ability to integrate new stimuli from previous acquired skills (Kagan, 1990).

The second constructs identifies readiness for school as a finite concept where a person learns specific cognitive and linguistic skills (e.g. distinguishing colors by name or identifying shapes). Essentially, a formulation of school readiness was children's ability to perform cognitive, language, or motor tasks on demand (Janus & Offord, 2007). Janus and Offord noted the described formulation was from an empiricist/environmentalist perspective as classified by Meisels (1998). The perspective asserted environmental forces, such as parenting, had little effect on ability, but rather school readiness was an internal process. Unfortunately, developmental test designed on this premise under-identified children who were ready for school (Janus & Offord, 2007). Nonetheless, parent and teachers as instrumental forces of gauging school readiness tend to define the construct as children's abilities, skills, and dispositions in relation to academic skills or behavior (Kagan, 1990).

As demonstrated, there is no consensus for an operationally defined statement of school readiness. Historically, schools resorted to chronological age as a determinant of school entry (Lewit & Schuurmann-Baker, 1995). Yet, not all students achieve at the same level. Essentially, research findings have been essential in improving our understanding of school readiness. The current theoretical construct of school readiness is the minimum developmental level of a child to respond adequately to the demands of school through their cognitive, social, and emotional qualities (Lemelin et al., 2007). Based on constructs developed from empirically supported evidence, policy makers and researchers have identified several indicators observed to be important when identifying school readiness.

In response to President Bush's national education goals policies, the National Education Goals Panel (NAEP) (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995 as cited in Mehaffie & Fraser, 2007) defined readiness to encompass physical, social, and emotional well being. Overall, the NAEP claimed the following five domains of early development were critical for preparing a child to learn.

1. *Physical well-being and motor development.* This category includes physical health, growth, motor skills, and environmental conditions before and after birth.
2. *Social and emotional development.* The ability to interact with others, to understand the feelings of others, and how to express one's feelings.
3. *Approaches to learning.* Refers to use of skills and knowledge by way of their temperament, curiosity, enthusiasm, and cultural values.

4. *Language development.* Includes verbal skills (listening, speaking, and vocabulary) and early literacy skills such as the ability to understand a story structure.
5. *Cognition and general knowledge.* Ranges from knowing shapes, letters, and numbers to the ability to identify similarities and differences in objects, events, and people (p. 5).

As researchers increased their understanding of the factors related to poor school readiness, they have been the key contributors to identifying national guidelines for the school readiness skills necessary to achieve. Evidence demonstrates the strongest indicators of school readiness are academic skills in reading, math, language, and attention at school (Justice et al., 2007). Teacher reports indicate the predictors of behaviors that undermine a child's school readiness are difficulty following directions, lack of academic skills, problems working independently or in a group, problems with social skills, and language difficulties.

Through evolving research, there are national efforts to identify key indicators and measures for school readiness. Measures may evaluate a variety of cognitive, language, motor, socioemotional skills, and other components at the minimal standards needed to succeed in school (Lemelin et al., 2007). Identifying indicators and appropriate measures is essential to meet policy standards. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) implemented in 2001 could be viewed as a predecessor to the Annual Goals for 2000. The NCLB goals included increased expectations for children to be ready for

kindergarten and holding kindergarten programs more accountable for producing these expectations.

National databases on school readiness are a response from policy to gain information on child development. There are five major databases containing content specifically related to school readiness. These databases are the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten class of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K), the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), the Head Start Impact Study (HSIS), and the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSRE). These data sets have strengths in consisting of nationally representative samples, longitudinal data, and information about home, school, and community settings (Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997).

The National School Readiness Indicators Initiative (NSRII) 2005 is another example of a nationwide response for ensuring school readiness for all children. The purpose of NSRII is to develop indicators and track the progress of children from birth to 8 years of age (NSRII, 2005). The core indicators incorporates factors related to children, family, community, health services, early childhood programs, and schools that contribute overall strong development of a child. The NSRII also developed criteria guidelines for selecting measures based on school readiness indicators. The guidelines state that measures should be developmentally-appropriate, addresses special considerations by age group, disability, and are relevant across racial, cultural and language groups, which drives the question what are the current measures of school readiness?



### *Assessment of School Readiness*

Along with the varying definitions for school readiness, an underlying issue is how to measure school readiness. As noted earlier, a primary determinant for school readiness was based on chronological age. By comparing constructs such as the readiness to learn versus readiness for school, it is difficult to determine a set age to which all children should meet criteria for readiness. It is also difficult to establish if a child meets school readiness indicators. Therefore, researchers and educators use various assessment measures to establish a child's school readiness.

The types of assessments educators and researchers use for school readiness vary by theory, ease of assessment, and measurement domains. Examples of older forms of measurement include the emphasis on visual-motor and spatial abilities. Harriman and Harriman (1950) hypothesized the Bender Visual Motor Gestalt test was a good measure for readiness. Theoretically, the visual-motor construct was associated with language ability. Researchers wanted to observe the maturational changes that occurred during reading and writing lessons. According to gestalt theory, the most rapid developmental stage typically occurs around the same age children are taught to read or write. The variances between children and their Bender scores was associated with age differences and maturational levels, thus younger children had reduced autokinetic effects (a stationary, small point of light in an otherwise dark or featureless environment appears to move). However, Baldwin (1950) argued that the visual motor gestalt function was one aspect of readiness and one could not assume a causal relationship. In addition, case

studies suggested persons with low cognitive skills learned to read as well as another student with similar cognitive skills but had well above average Bender scores (Baldwin, 1950).

Another example of historic school readiness assessment is based on the “readiness to learn” construct. Kaufman and Kaufman (1972) used assessments based on Gesell’s School Readiness Tests and a battery developed from Piaget’s tasks for school readiness. These tests were found to correlate with the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests and were predictors of later achievement on math, spelling, reading, and vocabulary tasks. The researchers tested the children first around the age of three or kindergarten age and retested them in the first grade. The Gesell and Piaget tests were predominately perceptual-motor tasks, spatial tasks, and performance tests. The Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test assessed future achievement through identifying oral vocabulary, pictorial classification, pictorial pairing, and teething levels. Teething levels was an assessment of physiological maturity and identifying teething level assessed the degree to which a child lost his or her primary teeth and gained permanent teeth. However, a majority of the participants had missing teeth and there was no tendency for children with more permanent teeth to perform better.

Along with the visual-motor assessments, the Draw-A-Man test demonstrated to be a good predictor of school readiness but not intellectual ability among four-year-olds (Leviton & Kiraly, 1974). For example, the number of smiling faces on the assessment revealed the extent one’s environment had on their social or cultural values of smiling.

Nonetheless, the measures for school readiness evolved into using screeners not only assessing spatial relations and visual-motor coordination, but also counting/auditory comprehension, perceiving relationships, color recognition (Seitz, Willis, & Johnson, 1976), listening, and fine motor skills (Buttram, Covert, & Hayes, 1976). As measures advanced, there was formation of principal standards to guide policies and standards for assessing school readiness. Shepard, Kagan, and Wurtz (1998) suggested assessment for school readiness to include the following: 1) Assessment should be beneficial to children; 2) tailored to a specific purpose that is reliable, valid, and fair; 3) policies should be designed to recognize that reliability and validity of assessment increases with age; 4) the assessment content and methods of data collection should be age appropriate and linguistically appropriate since all assessment measures language to some extent; and 5) parents should play a primary role in the information gathering stages of assessment.

There have been advances in the measurement of school readiness. However, Rock and Stenner (2005) provide a good overview of the challenges remaining in assessment. Current tests provide better measures of readiness through the manner clinicians administer test and the type of indicators the assessment measures. Readiness tests may be administered in group or individual settings. The group tests are less expensive and time consuming; however, individual assessment is more valid for the child. At such a young age, children in preschool have shorter attention spans and demand more individual attention, especially from an administrator attempting to get a child to perform a task. Nonetheless, Rock and Stenner suggests the best measures for

readiness are adaptive (the tests' difficulty level increases as they perform well or the level decreases as they perform poorly). Other issues to take into account are the floor and ceiling problems that are more likely to occur among this population. About 10-20 percent of children will find assessments from a single test form to be too easy or too hard (p. 17).

Overall the more prominent tests used to measure school readiness include the following standardized measures as identified by Rock and Stenner (2005): 1) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—Fourth edition, assesses receptive vocabulary, though there are substantial African American-European American differences in vocabulary skills that are greater than national samples. 2) Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence—Third edition measures general intellectual functioning. 3) Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, fifth edition measures cognitive abilities and overall development; and 4) Woodcock–Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery—third edition, which assesses cognitive and academic achievement among visual processing, auditory processing, processing speed, long-term retrieval, and short-term memory.

In their assessment, Rock and Stenner claim many school readiness tests cannot predict more than 25-36 percent of the variance in performance, which is problematic in predicting academic performance. If the floor and ceiling problems occur, it will be difficult to measure performance over time. Other measurement problems involve testing among multicultural groups. It is important for assessment to account for differences among assessment outcomes as the diversity of children entering school increases.

Culture incorporates the values, behaviors, experiences, and attitudes of individuals. Ethnic background, differences in language socialization, limited English proficiency, and income level are all factors that can influence education and the rates of development among children in the United States (de Barona & Barona, 2007). Much of these factors created such a significant impact on educational outcomes that there is a gap in the performance level between groups, especially minority groups.

Cybele-Raver et al. (2007) argues that the school readiness gap among ethnic minorities and their European American counterparts are related to family environment and parenting behaviors. Namely, poverty or income inequality is the strongest predictor for differences in achievement outcomes and the processes related to achievement (e.g. parent behaviors). Hispanic and African American families are disproportionately more likely to live in poverty. Cybele-Raver et al. concluded that although children's reading, math, and general knowledge scores cohere in a similar fashion for African American, Hispanic, and European American students among a nationally representative sample; racial and ethnic group membership moderates the relationship between poverty and children's ability to meet expectations of cognitive readiness as they enter school. For example, income was a stronger predictor of child competence for African American children compared to Hispanic and European American children. In addition, lower levels of parent stress were more strongly related to lower levels of positive parenting behavior among African American and Hispanic families than for European Americans.

An environmental factor that is typically seen as a deficit shows contrasting conclusions. Families living in poverty tend to have single parent households headed by

women. Yet, there is evidence that neither African American nor European American children from single parent households enter school with lower cognitive ability, although their rate of progress is slower (Thompson et al., 1988). However, there is limited information regarding whether this finding holds true for Hispanic families.

Nonetheless, to further support the argument that the school readiness gap is related to environmental factors, Dickens (2005) reported that the ethnic school readiness gap is highly unlikely to have a genetic component. The variance in human ability and behavior can be traced to differences in genetic endowment, but these variances can be traced to the role of environment as well. Dickens recommends that short-term intervention cannot solely increase cognitive ability; however, interventions targeting very disadvantaged families and improving cognitive ability can have long-term effects on achievement even if there are significant long-term effects on cognitive ability.

Participation in high quality early childhood programs is a key intervention for students from disadvantaged families. Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005) determined that increasing the enrollment of African American and Hispanic children in high quality early childhood programs, such as Head Start, has the potential to decrease the school readiness gap. It is predicted the gap could narrow as much as 12 to 52 percent (0.06 to 0.26 of a standard deviation) for the Hispanic-European American school readiness gap and the African American-European American gap to about 4 to 20 percent (0.02 to 0.10 of a standard deviation) (p. 183). Nonetheless, these gaps can further narrow through

parent interventions of holding high expectations and involvement in home learning practices.

Reynolds, Temple, and Ou (2003) ascertain that through parent involvement in early childhood intervention, there are significantly higher levels of school readiness, achievement, and educational attainment among children from low-income families. The link decreases rates of child maltreatment, juvenile delinquency, special education placement, and grade retention. Furthermore, for every dollar invested in early childhood intervention returns \$7.14 to society at large (Reynolds et al, 2003).

#### Parent Variables

Developmental research on the context of how families can influence their child's academic success is a growing field of investigation. Historically, the study of the relationship between parents and student achievement stemmed from a concern about the low achievement rates among ethnic minority children and children from low-income families (Hess & Holloway, 1984, Seginer, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1986) identified that family processes were considerably more powerful in producing higher grades in school among children compared to classroom procedures, although school influences are effective. In addition, family and school influences are greater than those attributable to socioeconomic status or race.

Bandura et al. (1996) indicated that parent and child relationships affect children's internal processes. Parent with high efficacy beliefs and aspirations for their children was related to their child's increased academic achievement. Children with these good relationships with their parents show increased confidence in their academic

ability. Hughes and Kwok (2006) review of literature indicated that self-confidence leads to increased motivation to perform better in the classroom and elicits positive responses within their relationships in the school setting. The strong relationship contributes to increased skills. Through motivation, social relationships, and achievement, a bidirectional process occurs, that influences long-term academic adjustment (Hughes & Kwok, 2006).

Overall, there is strong evidence that one's immediate surroundings relates to school success. Specifically, parents socially, economically, and structurally have a strong influence on how well children achieve in school. Due to the vast amount of research on parent variables and education, the present study will focus on two critical aspects of parenting variables established to have a significant effect on children's school outcomes.

### *Parent Expectations*

Parents' academic expectations are one of the most influential factors on children's educational outcomes (Entwisle & Baker, 1983; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982). Parent expectations consist of the attitudes a parent has about their child's academic success and educational outcomes. This area of parenting is shown to be a very important precursor to school achievement at all age levels including pre-school age children attending Head Start (Gamble, Wigfield, & Seefeldt, 1997; Mantzicopoulos, 1997), elementary students (Baker & Entwisle, 1987; Christenson et al., 1992; Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1988; Seginer, Cohen, & Zukerman, 1987; Thompson et al., 1988), children in middle school (Davis-Kean, 2005; Kaplan,



Liu, & Kaplan, 2001), high school (Catsambis, 2001), and have long term effects on achievement and performance on cognitive tasks (Christenson et al., 1992).

A parent's expectation operates through conveying the importance of education and influences the impact of children's success in several ways. Some parents believe they can contribute to their child's intellectual development by emphasizing their child's academic efficacy. As expectations are communicated to children, they may interpret their parents' expectations as indicative of their ability in school. For example, if a parent has high expectations for their child, the child may assume they can be successful in school. Based on social cognitive theory, "personal agency operates within a broad network of socio-structural and psychosocial influences in which efficacy beliefs play an influential regulative function" (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 1207). Essentially, a child's self-efficacy beliefs regulate their cognitive development. Parent factors can act as agents for their child's self-efficacy beliefs. Overall, social factors and a child's intellectual development cannot be separated (Bandura, 1993; Vygotsky, 1962).

Bandura et al.(1996) found that parents with high self-efficacy are more likely to promote their children's educability by fostering academic activities, monitoring schoolwork and keeping them out of trouble, which was not confined to those with high socioeconomic status. Therefore, parents may not have material resources, but parental valuation of education plays a key role in setting the course for their children's educational development during the formative years

*Defining and Measuring Parent Expectations.* There are varying definitions for academic expectations. Parent expectations have been defined based on short-term

(Entwisle & Alexander, 1996; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978, 1988; Thompson et al, 1988) and long-term expectations (Clare, Garnier, & Gallimore, 1998; Gamble et al., 1997; Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Halle et al., 1997; Marjoribanks, 1987; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Short-term expectations are typically defined as the current level of academic performance. For example, a study measured short-term expectations by asking parents to report what they expect their child's general ability estimate is to do school work compared to their child's peers and their best guess for their child's marks in reading and math (Thompson et al, 1988). Alexander, Entwisle, and Bedinger (1994) conducted a study assessing current scores based on previous marks. The authors found that parents who have recall that is accurate to their child's previous grades were more accurate in their school expectation reports.

On the other hand, long term expectations accounts for the future or long-term expectations for educational attainment, such as total years in school or high school completion (e.g. Kurtz-Costes, Halle, Clarke, & Seidu, 1995). Studies using this measure typically ask a parent how far they expected their child to go in school, with options ranging from drop out at the first opportunity available to professional school. Many of the studies assessing long-term expectations include a sample of parents who have children in elementary school. However, Clare et al. (1998) found this kind of prediction to be difficult to presume for parents of three-year old children. Parents of preschool children expressed more ambiguity in reporting their expectations of children in adulthood.

Another variation among parent academic expectation definitions is realistic versus idealistic expectations. Realistic expectations predict the reported level of a child's academic performance, whereas idealistic expectations are the desires, dreams, wishes, and hopeful anticipation of a parent's belief for their child's academics (Seginer, 1983). Essentially, studies assessing realistic expectations ask questions referring to what a parent expects to happen in their child's academic performance and idealistic expectations are what parents want and hope to happen.

There are variations of the word expectations in the literature. Recent literature appears to have transitioned from using the term expectations to synonyms such as aspirations. These variables appear to assess the constructs similar to parent expectations. For example, Carpenter (2008) used the term parental aspirations in conjunction with parental expectations throughout the literature review and analysis. The author utilized a questionnaire measuring expectations by asking how far in school the parent expected their child to go and aspirations was measured using the same scale. Aspirations can be interpreted as idealistic expectations.

De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro, and Tremblay (2004) designated the term "aspirations" to assess the level of education parents wanted their child to complete. Maternal educational aspirations were measured as a mediator of family sociodemographic factors and academic failure based on grade retention and special education placement. The risk of academic failure among 12 year-olds was partially explained by lower educational aspirations among low-income mothers.

Hong and Ho (2005) reported that research from other investigators showed positive effects of parental education aspiration on students' academic achievement; the higher a parent's academic aspirations for their child, the higher the grades and test scores. These findings were consistent across ethnic groups (i.e., European American, Asian American, African American, and Hispanic).

Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, and Garnier, (2001) measured academic aspirations as "how far do you want your child to go in his/her formal schooling;" whereas, parental expectations was measured as "how far do you think your child will go in his/her formal schooling" (pp. 555-556). Aspirations were found to fluctuate throughout elementary school, yet their idealistic expectations remained high and consistent. Davis-Kean (2005) assessed the same aspect of expectations but used the term beliefs as the latent variable construct.

Overall, synonymous terms, such as aspiration, belief, or anticipate tend to measure expectations according to a certain timeline (immediate or future), realistic assessments of their child's academic ability, or the idealistic outcomes of their child's schooling. What one expects of their child's school outcomes are typically measured using one to three items. Although there are varying dimensions of parent expectations, according to Gill and Reynolds (1999), the research generally analyzes three areas among the topic: (1) expectations for ability, (2) short term expectations for grades, and (3) long term expectations for educational attainment.

### *Parent Involvement*

Parents, in effect, are a child's first teachers. The dynamics a parent has on nurturing their child's development has a valuable lasting impact. Parents who engage in reading aloud, providing books and print material, and participating in learning activities at home with their children set the stage for future school success (Foster et al., 2005). Specifically, home learning activities, especially in the areas of literacy, promote language acquisition (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), reading skills, competency, future school outcomes (Foster et al., 2005), and written language (Bus, van Ijzendoor, & Pallegriani, 1995). Research in the area of family involvement has made the most advancement compared to other social links to educational outcomes (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Parental influences on a child's competency extend beyond genetic factors. Petrill, Deater-Deckard, Schatschneider, and Davis' (2005) study found parent involvement influences, especially reading, is an environmental force that can strengthen one's competency. The study sampled parents where a majority adopted children born outside of the United States including Korea, China, Eastern Europe, South and Central America, and Africa. The parents completed a survey about their involvement in schoolwork and reading-related activities, which showed an association with their adopted children's competency outcomes. The findings in the study demonstrated that the parental involvement and the family environment have a significant effect on their children's abilities that could not be attributed to shared genes between parents and their children.

Parental involvement is essential for all children in the early years over and beyond race and income status. Foster et al., (2005) sampled African American and European American Head Start children and parents. The authors utilized responses endorsed on the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES): Parent Interview. The interview explored parent behaviors such as how often a primary caregiver read to their child during the prior week, enrichment activities (e.g. library visits, trip to the zoo, or sporting events), and home learning activities (e.g., teaching the child a song, playing games, and participating in arts and crafts). Results indicated that parent involvement mediated the association between socioeconomic status (measured by family income and highest level of education obtained by the caregiver) and Head Start children's school readiness. These findings show that the parent involvement components advocated by early intervention programs such as Head Start strongly influences school outcomes and substantiates the focus in this area of child development. Family environments among low-income Hispanic parents are also strongly associated with parenting behaviors promoting school readiness (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006). These parenting behaviors include modeling of literacy activities (e.g., how often do you read for fun and pleasure?), parents' involvement in literacy-related activities (e.g., how many times per week do you read to your child?) and children's interest in literacy (Farver et al., 2006). When parents are proactive in teaching children basic skills, children tend to be better prepared for school.

The vast evidence establishing the importance of quality interaction and learning experiences point's out barriers that exist preventing fruitful levels of parent-child

interaction. When examining determinants of parent involvement that accounted for multiple ecological systems influencing children, parent involvement was established to be at the most proximal level by parents' beliefs and values for influencing how a child succeeds in school (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007). Implications of parents who minimize the importance of educational success may lead to children's disengagement of attaining the minimal standards for school readiness and future achievement. Lack of involvement can have negative consequences for children's future educational attainment. Children whose parents are not involved in their education during kindergarten or third grade are more likely to be retained (Marcon, 1998).

Parents' minimal involvement in enrichment activities with their children might be due to several factors. One possibility is due to limited resources. The resources parents gain through their social networks contribute to their involvement in their children's education (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007). If parents have minimal social networks, they tend to be less involved. In addition, Sheldon (2002) noted that parents with access to more financial resources are more likely to be involved. He also reported that the more financially stable a family is, the more time parents have for their children and the more concern they have for their education.

Another barrier to school involvement is the education level of the parent. Among a sample consisting of 95% African American parent raters, 5% European American, and 1% Bi-racial, economic stress and neighborhood social disorder related negatively to parent involvement (Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007). Stevenson and Baker (1987) reported a positive correlation between the mother's education and the

degree of parent involvement in school activities, which signifies that parents with low educational attainment are less involved with their children. Furthermore, a mother's mental health status and stress levels affect the level of involvement and have negative consequences on children's school success (Oyserman, Bybee, Mowbray & MacFarlane, 2002).

Despite variability in the quality of home learning environments across and within all Socioeconomic Status (SES) levels, children from high-income homes are more likely to have positive learning environments compared to those from low-income homes. For examples, children from low-SES families engaged in less shared book reading (25 hours) than those from higher SES families (1,000 to 1,700 hours) by the beginning of first grade (as cited from Adams, 1990). Consequently, those children from low-income families who are more successful in reading have home-environments similar to high-income families. Parent involvement at home expands to home literacy activities that include reading to children and enrichment activities, which are indirect learning activities outside of the home, such as going to the museum (Foster et al., 2005).

Although the evidence supporting the importance of parental involvement has positive implications for developing social and research models of learning for children, it would be neglectful not to mention that parent involvement can have a negative association with student achievement. Parent reports of involvement through school communication (e.g. phone call home about child's negative behavior) was the only parent involvement activity to have a negative association with student achievement



compared to other parent involvement variables, including schools offering volunteer opportunities, decision making opportunities provided by the school, parental activity in volunteering, and home learning (PURE, 2006). This interesting result suggests a flaw in a parental involvement strategy by the schools. However, parents preferred and valued home learning and volunteer activities more as a means to involve them in their child's education (PURE, 2006). In addition, parents with authoritative parent involvement, where they have over-bearing or hostile involvement in their child's school matters has a negative affect on children's school outcomes (Hill, 2001; Oyserman et al., 2002). Parents, especially low-income, involved in the educational process can maximize children's opportunities for academic success by lessening the discontinuity between the home and school environment, reduce conduct problems, and protect against school failure (Waanders et al., 2007).

*Definitions of Parental Involvement.* There is no definitive operational definition for parent involvement. However, Epstein (1986) identified two opposing approaches to involvement in education. One approach deems school institutions and parents as responsible for their own level of involvement. The approach assumes that families and schools can best fulfill their child involvement duties separately. History shows that as the American economy became increasingly industrial, especially during colonial times, there was a shift in social institutions. Schools gradually replaced families as the primary source of knowledge. In particular, African Americans heavily relied on this shift through establishing schools with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau. Schools and universities contained a level of wisdom beyond the general knowledge of those in the

home. Therefore, African American families supported schools to empower their children to assure freedom and prosperity (Slaughter & Epps, 1987).

An opposing approach to parent involvement encourages cooperation and collaboration between the two institutions. Essentially, both institutions should share in the socialization and education of children as conjectured by ecological models (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The approach draws on the ecological framework highlighting the importance family involvement and home environment has on children. The alternate approach is the construct investigators' use most often in current research.

The term parent involvement is multifaceted, but typically includes school involvement through volunteer activities and conferencing with teachers or home involvement activities that include reading, play, and linguistic interactions. Parent involvement in school has its origins in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) a national organization promoting parent involvement in children's schooling. According to the PTA (2009), McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst founded the organization in 1897 on the premise that the strongest bond was between mother and child and this would reduce the dangers children faced. Mothers, fathers, teachers, laborers, and legislators responded to the call and support grew from the first meeting in Washington DC. Problems were identified and strategies devised, such as creating what is now known as the kindergarten class (PTA, 2009)

Involvement has different meanings across the literature and between respondents (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Parent definitions for school involvement derives from a community centered view where keeping their child safe and getting them

to school is defined as involvement. Teacher definitions include parent levels of involvement at the school including conferencing and volunteering (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Teachers also tend to define parent involvement as being supportive of children's educational efforts and school practices (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). Some teachers believe they could only be effective in teaching children when parents are involved with cognitive enrichment activities at home (Epstein, 1986). Differences in definitions can lead to a miscommunication where teachers blame parents for low involvement and parents feel unappreciated for their efforts (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Essentially, parents can convey the importance of education within the school system through involvement with the teacher and classroom activities, which in turn increases the teachers' educational commitment. These factors act as effective social agents for the successful academic achievement among children (Bandura et al., 1996).

Overall, parent involvement in the home typically consists of literacy activities, engaging in play activities, and enrichment activities in the home or in the community. Waanders et al. (2007) described parental involvement as a home and school connection where parents' participate in their children's education through behaviors consisting of ideological support of education and active communication with school personnel.

Epstein and Sanders (2006) proposed a theoretical model for involvement in children's learning. The theory of overlapping spheres declares that students have greater school success when home, school, and community systems work together to support children's learning and development. The model specifies an external structure depicting collaboration among home, school, and communities. The internal structure

includes interpersonal relationships and the exchange of information between the three systems. Through this model, Epstein conjectured six areas of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

*Measuring Parent Involvement.* Involvement at home has the strongest impact on academic achievement. However, it is important to underscore the types of involvement that account for school success. Measures of level of involvement frequently include questionnaires that assess type and frequency of parent child activities predicting cognitive development. Reading is an important component to parent involvement activities in the home. For example, the length of time parents spend reading to their children and the frequency parents read aloud to their children are important contributors to literacy development among preschool age children (Weigel, Martin, & Bennet, 2006a).

Waanders et al. (2007) measured parent involvement through self-reports and an objective count of parent attendance at Head Start center events and meetings. The Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) was a multidimensional measure of parent involvement in early childhood education that had three independent constructs of involvement as confirmed by factor analysis: Home-based, School-based, and Home-School Conferencing. The Home-based Involvement scale measured parent behaviors such as initiating learning activities with their children at home or in the community. The School-based subscale accounted for parents' participations with volunteering activities, and the Home-School Conferencing subscale measured parent and school

communication regarding children's progress in the classroom. Each dimension was loaded significantly on a single canonical variant indicating these differing dimensions are inter-related and are part of the same overall construct of parent involvement. It is interesting to note the authors found parent efficacy regarding education was the only significant predictor of parent involvement in home educational activities and not the other three dimension of involvement. This implies that parents who see themselves as effective social agents in educating their children were more likely to involve their children in home learning activities. Parents who reported relying on the school for the education of their child tended to be less involved, which is consistent with prior work examining minority families (Waanders et al., 2007).

Parent involvement not only is measured through parent reports, but also teacher reports (Epstein, 1986). Teachers most often expect parents to maintain active communication in the school and supplement school activities with home learning activities. Teacher reports of parent involvement are helpful because it can provide insight into how teachers involve parents in educational outcomes. Teachers would either make few attempts to involve parents in school matters or requesting parents to increase home learning activities. Nonetheless, parents tend to have an overall positive impression of their child's elementary schools, but they believe the school could do more to involve parents in helping their children at home (Epstein, 1986).

In summary, research shows there is a relationship between certain parent behaviors, such as school involvement, nurturance, discipline, and children's competency and academic achievement (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzo, 2002; Bandura,

1993; Bandura et al., 1996; Leggett et al., 1999; Merlo, Bowman, Barnett, 2007; Roberts et al., 2005; Weigel et al., 2006a; Weigel et al., 2006b). Constructive parenting behaviors can affect children's competency and development. Parent nurturance promotes children's self-concept (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzo, 2002; Bandura, 1993; Bandura et al., 1996; Merlo et al., 2007) and the home learning environment (i.e. number of books in the home). Furthermore, behaviors such as involvement in school, frequency of book reading, parent instruction including activities related to learning and play is highly correlated with cognitive and social development (Halle et al., 1997; Foster et al, 2005; Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000). Evidence of the impact parent involvement has on school outcomes in early childhood development indicates a variable that may mediate the processes associated with parent expectations and school readiness. With a supportive atmosphere promoting positive cognitive development, there can be positive influences on children's academic competency across ethnic groups, income levels, and other sociodemographic variables that typically hinder childhood developmental trajectories.

#### Links between Parent Variables and School Readiness

##### *Parent Expectations and School Readiness*

The powerful relationship between parent expectations and school outcomes is underscored by literature measuring the association among children in elementary to high school levels. There is a dearth of information pertaining to the relationship among children at the pre-school level. Through understanding the importance of positive parent behaviors on the formation of school readiness skills among younger children, it

is important to test if parent expectation findings have generalizability to children at the early stages of schooling.

Sonuga-Barke, Edmund, and Stevenson (1995) used a small sample of mothers (36) to assess their long-term educational expectations for their three-year old child. Fifteen of these parents expected their children to graduate from a university, while 19 mothers reportedly expected their child to leave school at the earliest opportunity. Expectations were compared to the intellectual ability of the children as measured by the McCarthy Scales of Children's abilities. The measure assessed verbal, quantitative, perceptual, memorial, and motor abilities. Results of the study show that there is a significant advantage for pre-schoolers whose parent had high expectations. The children with higher intelligence scores tended to have a mother with high educational expectations. The study went a step further and results signified that parent expectations might also be influenced by child characteristics. The study encouraged looking at models of the development of parent behaviors for school success. However, the study did not assess the school outcomes according to school readiness definitions and there were limited socio-demographic characteristics reported other than mean socio-economic status. Reports of ethnic group status were not reported among the British sample. The study also had a disproportionate number of girls in the sample and did not take into account the parental expectations differences of long-term goals based on their child's gender.

Mantzicopoulos (1997) focused on Head Start children to examine the factors promoting children's competency during these years. Most Head Start children come

from low-income families with the possibility of comprising greater risk factors. Therefore, the author analyzed the parent behaviors predicting preacademic competence controlling for child sex and IQ, maternal level of education, and risk due to daily stress. Seventy-two of the 95 children who participated in the study were European American, 16 were African American, and five were reported as Other. The three items measuring parent expectation asked about future school achievement (realistic expectations), ability level compared to their child's peers, and how well they expected their child to perform in elementary school. Correlational analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between parent expectations and their children's achievement scores as measured by the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children –Achievement Battery. Hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that parent expectations and other parenting behaviors were predictive of children's competence over and beyond maternal education, child IQ, and daily stress.

Gamble et al. (1997) assessed information from children previously in Head Start. The authors asked parents about their children's cognitive, social, and physical skills, as well as their expectations for their children's future achievements at the end of their child's kindergarten year. Measures included the Parent's Evaluations of Children's Interests, Abilities, and Effort (parent expectations) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (cognitive skills and language ability). Parents were found to be optimistic about their child's future and expected their children to complete college. The authors assessed ethnic differences among responses and found Hispanic parents were less confident in their children's future education and



job prospects compared to African American and European American parents. These findings highlight an important aspect of parent expectation literature; the moderating effects socio-demographic factors have on the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness (Gamble et al., 1997).

The social agents affecting parent expectations and school achievement vary. Parent expectations differ between ethnic groups, families of various incomes, and can be dependent on the child's gender. These social factors are important to consider when discussing parent expectations due to differences between these groups in academic success and the differences in the magnitude associated with socio-demographic factors and child outcomes.

According to Stevenson et al., (1990), European American families are better at interpreting goals and expectations in relation to their children's actual abilities. African American families were positive about their child's skills and abilities and reported high evaluations of their child's achievement. However, these evaluations were not congruent to actual achievement. African American parents may express high expectations and report high achievement regardless of how well their children actually perform.

Alexander et al. (1994) stated that African American parents are least likely to take into account prior academic performance when reporting academic expectations of their child. As a result, the "too high expectations" these parents have for their children widely occurs among this group in the early grades and may not be beneficial (p. 297).

Although, high expectations are related to high academic outcomes, having unrealistic expectations for children does not show benefits in performance outcomes (Alexander et

al., 1994). Among Hispanic families, Stevenson et al. (1990) note that some mothers' lack of familiarity with the American school system and the English language make it difficult for them to assess their children's level of performance. Overall, minority families have positive and strong interest in schooling, expectations, and future opportunities, but the youth are not as successful in interpreting these expectations commensurate to their academic outcomes.

Family beliefs can be seen as a relevant factor of higher school competency above and beyond socio-demographic variables among children living poverty (Castro, Lubker, Bryant, & Skinner, 2002). This exciting finding had important implications for variables fostering academic success among low-income children. Parent expectations are an effective precursor for school competency among low-income children; however, there are opposing conclusions on the level of expectations among families from various income statuses. Baker and Entwisle (1987) reported middle-income and low-income mothers have different expectations for their children. Middle class mothers viewed their children as considerably above average, while low-income mothers viewed their child as slightly above average compared to other children in the same school. The same discrepancy held true in terms of reading and math grades. Middle-income parents expected their children to receive an A or B, compared to a B or C as reported by low-income parents. Sonuga-Barke et al. (1995) notes children whose parents had lower expectations came from lower social classes (and tended to be boys). However, when controlling for income and gender, the higher expectations group had children who were more intelligent. Contrastingly, there are findings indicating that low-income and

middle-income parents' expectations are equally high but middle-income parents are more consistent with their expectations (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1988; Reynolds & Gill, 1994). Nonetheless, differences among these low-income families' expectations could represent a realistic assessment of limited resources, social capital (problems communicating with school officials due to social status and language barriers), and opportunities for their children.

Some findings concerning parent expectations for academic success based on gender differences are complicated by other contributing factors. Sonuga-Barke et al.(1995) found parents had lower expectations for boys compared to girls. However, more girls were also in the groups having higher intelligence scores and less active temperaments. Because boys were more active and have more behavioral and developmental problems, it seems parent expectations are part of a package of more general attitudes toward their children's adjustment and development.

The expectation differences related to gender may be due to environmental factors. For example, males in urban areas are at higher risk for street violence, drug, and gang activities (Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, 1991). With the ever-present negative influences that are mostly in low-income areas, parents may not have high expectations for males. On the other hand, girls are less likely to be involved with these at-risk activities. In addition, Thompson et al. (1988) noted that most impoverished families are headed by females. These adult females may serve as a role model and girls internalize these caregivers' attitudes and look up to them more as powerful figures compared to boys.

Although there is a positive relationship between parent expectations and children's school outcomes, the magnitude of this relationship is affected by the families' ethnicity, SES, and the gender of the child. Yet, these findings generalize to children who have been in school for some years. It may be impetuous to generalize these findings to pre-school age populations. Parents may not have a standard to compare their children's cognitive, behavioral, and developmental abilities to their same age peers prior to entering school. Mantzicopoulos (1997) discussed maternal educational expectations as being predictive of preacademic achievement among Head Start students controlling for child gender, child and maternal cognitive variables, and stress. However, there remains to be a limitation within the literature that not only discusses how parent expectations affect preschool achievement, but also the school readiness of children upon school entry.

#### *Parent Expectations and Parent Involvement*

Parents who hold high expectations and have a strong interest in academics are more likely to have behaviors promoting educational activities in addition to self-management skills conducive to learning (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992, Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; Marjoribanks, 1979). In addition, moderately high levels of parental involvement in early education have been shown to increase children's levels of academic competence and success, which, in turn, increase parental expectations for achievement (Mantzicopoulos, 1997). Therefore, parents with high expectations can greatly influence school personnel and their instructional activities. All

of these factors are effective social agents for the successful academic achievement among children.

A review of the literature assessing some link between expectations and behaviors is helpful in understanding if these behaviors mediate children's academic outcomes of Entwisle & Alexander (1990) found a link between high expectations and engagement in reading and library activities among African American families; however, not to a statistically significant degree. Among this sample of first grade children, their math ability responded differently depending on their parent expectations and engagement. Hess, Holloway, Dickson, & Price (1984) showed maternal behaviors such as developmental expectations and cognitive activities were strongly related to school readiness among European American families.

However, there are conflicting findings related to expectations, behaviors, and school outcomes among families with different incomes. Christenson's et al. (1992), goal was to identify family factors affecting children's school achievement. The authors found literature suggesting that income was correlated to the parents' expectations of their children's academic performance. These expectations were more likely to influence academic outcomes. In addition, parents of higher income were more influential to their children's achievement through expectations and modeling, compared to low-income. Yet, Reynolds and Gill (1994) stated that parent expectations might be mediated by parent behaviors with children. Therefore, the manner parents communicate expectations and the degree to which parents hold expectations can differ according to one's income.

Overall, the literature suggests a high importance for research assessing the strategies parents use to support their children's academic outcomes (Castro et al., 2002). A key to understanding academic achievement among disadvantaged families is to research the relationship between parent expectations and academic success along with the behaviors they conduct to promote academic success (Halle et al., 1997). Furthermore, it is important to understand how these parent behaviors are instilled at its earliest stages. The literature is limited on discussing the early occurrence of such behaviors, although early intervention is the best practice (NASP, 2006).

#### *Parent Involvement and School Readiness*

Although research suggest parent involvement are positively associated with school achievement and success, Reynolds and Gill (1997) argue these findings may be overestimated because they do not account for possible confounding factors that include family background characteristics. The authors further note many studies on parent involvements' influence on academic achievement employ research designs and rely on teacher or student reports rather than parent reports, which do not yield clear cut results.

Studies assessing for socio-demographic factors concludes there are differences between income and racial groups. Parent behaviors are greater in middle-income families compared to low-income families (Reynolds & Gill, 1999). There is evidence that African American parents are more likely to report teaching their children academic skills prior to entering school compared to European American parents, despite the academic performance differences which favor European Americans as children emerge through school (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Stevenson et al., 1990). African American

children from low-income homes perform better when their parents are involved with home literacy practices (Bus et al., 1995; Reese & Cox, 1999; Wu & Qi, 2006). Overall, the home environment among African Americans appear to be a better indicator of children's literacy and language development compared to parents' school involvement (Wu & Qi, 2006). However, due to inconsistencies about the relationship between parenting practices and literacy, it may be more important to assess the frequency of parent's educational practices, which has a stronger positive relationships between parent practice and academic and developmental outcomes (Reese & Cox, 1999; Roberts, Jurgens, Burchinal, 2005; Wu & Qi., 2006).

Family environments among low-income Hispanic parents are strongly associated with parenting behaviors promoting school readiness (Farver et al, 2006). When parents are proactive in teaching children basic skills, children tend to be prepared for school. Unfortunately, when there are environmental factors and high stress levels among parents, inhibiting the amount of time spent teaching their children, it affects the child's early skill development (Farver et al., 2006; Goldenberg et al., 2001).

There is further evidence that different components of parent behaviors and the home environment affect pre-school children's competencies (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005). Parent behavior influence's are greater early in school and becomes moderately effective over time by the sixth grade (Reynolds & Gill, 1999). Unfortunately, children qualified to attend Head Start enter a school setting at a disadvantage compared to other children their age (Zill & Resnick, 2006). Yet, the evidence shows parent behaviors enriching developmental and cognitive skills could

lead to positive academic outcomes among the Head Start population (Zill & Resnick, 2006). When a child is in an enriched home learning environment, it sets an important foundation for language and literacy. Therefore, a child's home learning environment can serve as a mediator between income and performance outcomes (Foster et al., 2005). However, there is concern about the opportunities to engage in these behaviors for families who lack the resources. Conditions in the home such as socio-economic status, low proficiency in English, and family size have an impact on how involved parents can be in promoting educational behaviors (Farver et al., 2006).

Overall, evidence shows that low-income families from ethnic minority populations are involved with children's early competency development. Unfortunately, the literature tends to show these families from a deficit perspective and the home environments of low-income and ethnic minorities are poorly understood (Farver et al., 2006).

#### *Parent Involvement as a Mediator of Parent Expectations and School Readiness*

An approach to research is to assess if previous empirically supported findings can be generalized to other populations. As established throughout the literature review, much of parent expectations literature explores findings among early adolescent populations. On the other hand, there is strong support that parent involvement has an impact on early childhood development and school readiness. The current study aims to explore the interrelationships of parent variables and school readiness.

There are limited studies examining models of the interrelationships between parent expectations, parent involvement, and school outcomes. Davis-Kean (2005)



examined a cross-sectional model of how parent education influences development among children ages 8-12 years of age. She proposed two hypotheses: 1) parent education and family income indirectly influenced children's achievement through their association with parent educational expectations and involvement related to emotional support, play, and reading to their children and 2) these predictive relationships will be similar across groups. The sample included European American and African American children from middle class families with parents having education beyond high school. Parents' educational expectations were measured using one item that asked about future realistic expectations. Three latent variables were created to represent parental involvement, reading, parent-child play behavior (e.g. arts and crafts), and parental warmth. Using structural equation modeling techniques, the author found support that parents' educational attainment influenced children's academic achievement, as obtained on the Woodcock –Johnson-Revised Tests of Achievement, indirectly through parents expectations and parental behaviors. Furthermore, the process appeared to work differently based on ethnic group, family SES, and small, but notable gender effects. Davis-Kean (2005) found that parent educational attainment and family income were indirectly related to children's achievement through parents' educational expectations. However, parents' education had direct and indirect relationships to children's academic expectations, which had a moderate direct relationship to children's achievement for the European American sample. The authors found small gender effects in the model, which showed that European American boys and African American girls were more likely to have higher achievement scores.

There remains further investigation if the findings are generalizable to younger children and Hispanic families. Furthermore, the study stated past research focused on parent income, hence the focus on parent education. However, due to research suggesting that parents with low educational attainment are less involved in children's learning, it would be expected that there are lower levels of parent behaviors and expectations among parents with less years of schooling. Although Davis-Kean (2005) found that educational expectations predicted the amount of parent-child involvement in play activities, these behaviors had no relation with achievement among adolescents. However, since play activities is an essential aspect of child development and school readiness in the preschool years, the current study conjectures if Davis-Kean's findings of no relationship between parent play activities and academic achievement have generalizability among younger children.

Hill's (2001) article was one of the few studies assessing parent expectations, behaviors, and school readiness. Hill formulized that parent behaviors, involvement, and expectations were related to school achievement but it was necessary to assess if these findings could be generalized to younger children. The African American and Euro-American sample consisted of children in kindergarten whose parents had median incomes of \$32,000 and their parents' education levels mostly ranged from some college to an Associate Degree. Parent expectations were measured using three questions developed for the study. The questions assessed realistic expectations through asking about immediate expected grades, future school attainment, and future expected occupations. Parent involvement included home and school activities, and school

readiness was assessed using the Metropolitan Readiness Test Level 2 to measure readiness at the end of kindergarten.

Hill found that parent effects on school achievement involved type of parenting, home environment, and expectations. Parental warmth was related to increased prereading and premath performance, whereas hostile interactions with their children lowered school readiness performance. There were similarities across ethnic groups in the relationships between parent expectations for grades and premath and prereading scores. Parents' expectations for future occupations were related to prereading performance only. African American parent involvement at school enhanced premath performance, but parent involvement with educational activities at home improved premath performance for European American children. Family income moderated the relationship between parenting behaviors and prereading score. Parenting behaviors of low-income mothers showed a much stronger relationship with prereading scores compared to those from higher income families, which demonstrates the importance of targeting low-income families with prevention and intervention strategies to emphasize the value of parental expectations and involvement.

The study had innovative features in its assessment of parent behaviors and school readiness among families from differing ethnic and income groups. However, there remains a gap in assessing variability within income and minority racial groups. There were no Hispanic parents or children included in the sample for Hill's (2005) study. In addition, previous research typically measured parent behaviors by comparing high and low income families. However, there is limited assessment of the level of

expectations among low-income families overall. It may also be important to assess how timing affects the level of parent expectations. The Hill study assessed readiness after one year of schooling. Research shows that parents are more accurate in their level of expectations predicting school achievement when they have previous records of their child's ability, such as report cards. In addition, the analysis of parenting variables was measured separately as they relate to school readiness. There may be important implications in identifying a model assessing an interrelationship among all of the variables.

Overall, the literature suggests a high importance for research assessing the strategies parents use to support their children's academic outcomes (Castro et al., 2002). A key to understanding academic achievement among disadvantaged families is to research the relationship between parent expectations and academic success along with the behaviors they engage in to promote academic success (Halle et al., 1997). Furthermore, it is important to understand how these parent behaviors are communicated in early childhood. The literature is limited on discussing the early occurrence of such behaviors, although early intervention is the best practice (NASP, 2006). Overall, there is limited research that comprehensively investigates the relationship between parent expectations, parent behaviors, and school readiness. Furthermore, there is a limited amount of research that focus on this model within a disadvantaged population.

#### Population of Interest: Head Start

Head Start is a pre-school program focusing on the healthy and positive development of pre-school age children through early intervention [Administration for

Children and Families (ACF, 2007a)]. In these settings, children are exposed to a learning environment encompassing social, motor, and cognitive development. Furthermore, Head Start is an early childhood program incorporating parental involvement because of research stemming from ecological models.

Effective parenting is a large part of the Head Start mission for promoting healthy early childhood development among children from low-income families (ACF, 2007a). Parenting variables such as teaching children basic literacy skills, promoting play, and holding high expectations for their children are linked to improving academic achievement (Alexander & Entwisle 1996; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Sheehan et al., 1991; Weigel et al., 2006a; Weigel et al., 2006b). Therefore, Head Start has components within its program to ensure parent involvement and empowerment. The long-term goal is to impact academic success throughout the children's duration in school. Evidence shows children who were in Head Start were comparable to national norms on measures of school readiness upon entering primary school and maintained this status throughout the first year of school (Cole & Washington, 1986). Additionally, there are long-term benefits in the areas of educational achievement, attainment, employment and social behavior for children who attend Head Start (Barnett & Hustedt, 2005).

Primarily, the population attending Head Start consists of minorities from low-income families (ACF, 2007c). Low-income status and minority group status (e.g. African American and Hispanic) are predictors of low achievement outcomes and cognitive scores (Anastasi, 1988; EdSource, 2003; Pennock-Roman, 1992; Shiraev &

Levy, 2007; Suzuki & Valencia, 1997). Although one's race or ethnicity and SES is not thought to directly cause low school outcomes, children from disadvantage homes may live in environments where fostering academically stimulating environments is difficult. Therefore, it is valuable to study the factors such as early intervention strategies that may serve as a buffer to poor school outcomes.

### Review of Literature Summary

Parents have an undeniable influence on how successful their children will become in school. There are successful students from all backgrounds despite income or ethnic characteristics. However, there is an achievement gap between ethnic groups and income groups. Evidence shows parent contributions and early intervention may help reduce these gaps.

High parent expectations results in greater academic achievement among children above and beyond school factors and socio-demographic effects. Furthermore, high expectations in addition to early intervention equal maximum benefits for successful school achievement (Gill & Reynolds, 1999). Therefore, the importance of exploring the effects of parent expectations relate to how high expectations can foster resilience in high risk, low-income children and may serve a role in being a modest buffer against social isolation (Reynolds & Gill, 1994). These implications are important for the interventions on the typical groups who are part of the Head Start Program.

There is a lack of research exploring parent expectations among minority and low-income groups and the processes involved in communicating these expectations. Although parents with high expectations tend to be more involved in home learning

activities, there is limited information on whether these behaviors has an indirect effect on the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness, especially among minority and low-income families. Additionally, there are differences in the magnitude of expectations parents' have for their children between ethnic and income groups. For example, communication between Hispanic and African American parents with their children is less clear compared to European Americans. This study assumes that parent behaviors may mediate the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. Furthermore, researchers have noted for decades the limitations in parent expectations' literature are due to the lack of investigating the factors transmitting parent expectations to children's school success (Reynolds & Gill, 1994, 1999; Seginer 1983, 2006). Data on these factors would advance understanding the dynamics of parent behaviors' relationship that influence school adjustment. In Seginer's (2006) review of parent educational involvement research, which focused on parent expectations and parent behavior results, she concluded the following:

Future research should go beyond testing direct links [of parent involvement and educational outcomes] and focus on the antecedents of parental involvement practices and the mediators and moderators of parental involvement – educational outcomes links. It should also focus on environmental specificity and, rather than controlling for ethnicity, compare between different ethnic and immigrant groups as well as groups undergoing social change. The strength of this analysis rests in using multivariate methods such as structural equation models, hierarchical linear models, and latent growth curve analysis (p.38).

Overall, assessing the parent expectations-parent behaviors-academic achievement model is understudied in the pre-school population. Due to an achievement gap present at school entry, it is important to assess the factors that may reduce the gap, increase school readiness, and prevent a problem before it begins. The current study

aims to assess the relationships between parent expectations, parent behaviors, and school readiness among a Head Start population. The research study is unique in assessing a preschool population and the expectations of parents without prior documentation to student achievement level (e.g. report cards, progress reports). Furthermore, the study's unique sample included low-income, minority caregivers and children who are understudied groups in this area.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

*Research Question 1:* Do parent expectations of their child's school readiness ability and future school attainment have a positive relationship to school readiness? To what extent do parent involvement serve as a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness?

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between high expectations and increased school readiness. In addition, parent involvement will serve as a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness.

*Research Question 2:* Does the caregiver's ethnicity serve as a moderator for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness? Does the caregiver's ethnicity moderate the comprehensive model?

*Hypothesis 2: The analysis of ethnic groups' interaction with parent expectations' relationship to school readiness will be exploratory. The analysis of whether ethnicity moderates the mediational model will be exploratory.*



*Research Question 3:* Does the child's gender serve as a moderator for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness? Does the child's gender moderate the comprehensive model?

*Hypothesis 3: The relationship between parent expectations and school readiness will differ among the caregiver groups with female children in Head Start compared to those with males. In addition, the mediational model for female students at Head Start will be stronger compared to male students.*

*Research Question 4:* Do risk factors serve as a moderator for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness? Does risk moderate the comprehensive model?

*Hypothesis 4: The relationship between parent expectations and school readiness will differ among participants with low levels of risk compared to those with higher levels of risk. In addition, the mediational model for participants with lower risk indicators will be stronger compared to those with higher levels of risk.*

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The following chapter describes the method and procedures used in the research study to determine the predictive validity of parent expectations and parent behaviors on scores obtained by the Speed DIAL screening instrument. This chapter is organized into the following sections: research design, participants and data collection, instrumentation, data analysis, research questions, and a summary.

#### Research Design

The following quantitative study is a descriptive correlational study modeling the effect of parent involvement on the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. The purpose of this study was to explore the strength of associations between variables (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The study had a non-experimental design because random assignment was not used to draw a sample and the variables were not directly manipulated.

#### *Participants*

*Description of Sample.* Participants were 77 mothers or mother figures whose children were enrolled in the Head Start program in the 2008-2009 school year. For simplicity, mother or mother figures will be referred to as caregivers throughout the study reports. Responses from caregivers were used due to the high-incidence of father absent homes as identified by the Head Start program enrollment data. Furthermore, caregivers are principal informants due their availability, opportunities to observe their

Table 3.1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Caregiver and Children*

	Caregiver % (n)	Children % (n)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male		51.9 (40)
Female	100 (77)	48.1 (37)
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American	37.7 (29)	42.9 (33)
Hispanic	50.6 (39)	49.4 (39)
European American	11.7 (9)	7.7 (6)
<b>Primary language</b>		
English	76.6 (59)	80.5 (62)
Spanish	23.4 (18)	19.5 (15)
<b>Family Structure</b>		
Father absent	76.6 (59)	
Father present	23.4 (18)	
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
No high school	10.4 (8)	
Some high school	26.0 (20)	
High school diploma	53.2 (41)	
Associate degree	5.2 (4)	
Bachelor degree	1.3 (1)	

Table 3.1 Continued

	Caregiver % (n)	Children % (n)
Head of Household Employment		
Employed	85.7 (66)	
Unemployed	35.1 (27)	
Poverty level		
Above	13.0 (10)	
Below	87.0 (67)	

children in various settings, and they are the most reliable informants of children's well-being (De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2005; Kentgen, Klein, Mannuzza, & Davies, 1997). The participants were drawn from a population of about 500 students enrolled in Head Start. Of the populations of students enrolled during the data collection period, 43% were Hispanic, 49% were African American, and 8 % were European American. Other family characteristics such as income and age had similar characteristics as those used in the study. The sample was drawn from students attending one of six Head Start Centers or home-based services in a rural area of central Texas. Participants were recruited throughout the fall term (August to October) of 2008 as detailed below. Table 3.1 shows the social demographic compositions of the 77 caregivers and their children.

Overall, the sample population consisted of caregivers who were 50.6% Hispanic, 37.7% Black, and 11.7% White. The mean age of the caregivers was 29.62 years of age ( $SD=7.22$ , minimum age of 20 and maximum age of 66). The children

consisted of three (67.5%) and four year-olds (32.5%), 52% male and were 50.1% Hispanic, 42.9% Black, and 7.0% White. Demographic information was gathered using application information and reported in a data management system. The application is designed to obtain eligibility and background information about the child, parent(s), and family. Obtaining the demographic information was a standard procedure for the Head Start program. Ethnicity, gender, age, and family characteristics were provided from the demographic information for the study. Table 3.2 displays further family demographic information.

#### *Data Collection, Procedures, and the Protection of Human Rights*

The Head Start program directors and operations manager were initially contacted for the feasibility of having directors, teachers, students, and parents to participate in the study. For approval to conduct a study with Head Start students and families, the proposed study had to be approved by a policy council. The policy council consisted of a board of Head Start parents and community members who review the policy goals and daily operations of Head Start. The study was presented to and approved by the policy council. Additional approval to conduct the study was obtained from the university Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Table 3.2  
*Family Demographic Characteristics*

	<i>M (SD)</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Family size	3.92 (1.5)	2	10
Family income	\$13,680.04 (8716.84)	\$1,860.00	\$41,600.00
Poverty level	-38.60 (35.91)	-94.11	71.91

Prior to study implementation, the instruments were given to women with children to complete as a trial assessment of the length of time to complete the assessment and to identify unclear items, and other concerns related to accurately completing the questionnaires. Additionally, changes were made to shorten instruments and clarify questions according to trial responses. The revised questionnaires with consent forms were re-approved by the IRB.

The Head Start directors served as data collectors. They received a training session by the principal investigator discussing the guidelines of how to obtain informed consent. Each Head Start Director was also instructed in issues of coercion or undue influence during the training session. Following director training and IRB approval, the questionnaires were distributed to the Head Start centers with a letter explaining the distribution process, how to encourage parents to participate, and to ensure that all participation was voluntary. If caregivers volunteered to complete the questionnaires, the caregiver and the person administering the questionnaire were to sign the consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, option to discontinue

participation, and the investigator's contact information. All consents were provided the same day parents completed questionnaires. As an incentive for participating, one randomly chosen respondent from each center received a \$15 gift card to their local grocery store. The survey took 5-10 minutes to complete depending on reading efficiency level. The data collection period occurred from September 2008 to October 2008. Attempts to gather a larger sample size by extending the data collection timelines were unsuccessful.

The investigator entered the data into an electronic database upon receiving the returned questionnaires from the participants. The caregiver and child were assigned a unique identifier for confidentiality purposes. The questionnaire data from parents were merged with an existing data set of their child's information and family demographic information. The child data was provided by the Head Start personnel responsible for maintaining the assessment data files. Furthermore, demographic information was added to the database by researching family information from a data management system used by the Head Start program. The choice electronic management system was the Program Resources and Outcomes Management Information System (PROMIS). The PROMIS system was accessible online and the investigator had read only access to family information. All completed questionnaires and consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet accessible only by the investigator. All electronic data information was password protected and accessible only by the investigator.

## Instrumentation

### *Parent Expectations*

Although there are differing approaches to how researchers measure parent expectations, there is evidence that parent expectations are generally analyzed by assessing expectations for ability, short-term expectations for grades, and long-term expectations for educational attainment (Gill & Reynolds, 1999). Typically, the parent expectations variable is measured by one question; however, the questionnaire developed for this study used a combination of three items to assess for parent expectations. This study assessed parent expectations by deriving questions from prominent parent expectation question sets (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1978; Wigfield, Eccles, Harold, & Aberbach, 1991). The first item: *How ready do you think your child is to attend Head Start compared to other children in the program?* was a five point Likert scale with 1=One of the least prepared, 2=Not as prepared as some children, 3=As prepared as other children, 4=More prepared than some children, 5=One of the best prepared. The second item asked the question: *How well do you expect your child to do (perform) in class compared to other children during the Head Start program?* The five point Likert scale was 1=Very poor, 2=Poor, 3=Average, 4=Good, 5=Excellent. The third question asked: *How far in school do you expect your child to get?* Based on a five point Likert scale, the response set was 1=Less than high school diploma, 2=Complete high school, 3=Complete 2- year college degree or technical school, 4=Complete 4-year college degree, 5=Attend graduate school. The parent expectation questionnaire was available in English and Spanish. To ensure the semantic equivalence of the instructions



and items in the two different languages, the investigator translated the questionnaires into Spanish with help from a committee member and Head Start employees, and then back translated into English by Head Start parents and employees fluent in both Spanish and English.

The homogeneity of the participants, quality of test items, questionnaire length, and time to administer the questionnaire could affect the internal consistency reliability (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Researchers indicate that an alpha value of .70 is the minimum criteria to determine acceptable reliability in a measure (Nunnally, 1978). In the current study, the alpha coefficient for the parent expectations questionnaire was .65. However, results suggested that an alpha of .95 could be obtained with the deletion of the second item, which asked how well do you expect your child to do (perform) in class compared to other children during the Head Start program? Therefore, the parent expectations variable was measured using two items asking questions about caregivers' realistic, short-term expectations and their realistic, long-term expectations.

### *Parent Involvement*

The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) is a tool designed to obtain information about the following:

“Demographic characteristics of children and families enrolled in Head Start; self-reported goals, strengths, needs, and attitudes of participant families, and their expectations for participation in the Head Start program; Head Start parents' perceptions of the strengths and problems of their larger communities; and

activities, [involvement] and experiences of families while their child is enrolled in Head Start” (ACF, 2007b).

The conceptual framework of the FACES model is the interrelationships of factors that help shape the developmental paths of children. The child is the central or core place of these relationships, which depicts Head Start’s ultimate goal of fostering children’s progress toward school readiness. The next level influencing a child’s outcome is the family context, which includes cultural, economic, and educational resources. The interrelationships within the model include the Head Start classroom, the Head Start program, community, and national factors. The conceptual framework illustrates the complex interrelationships shaping children’s growth and development. The relationships include cognitive development and approaches to learning, which quantifies as a child’s school readiness.

In accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-62) and the 1994 reauthorization of Head Start [Head Start Act, as amended, May 18, 1994, Section 649 (d)], the FACES study collects data on successive nationally representative samples of Head Start programs, classrooms and the children and families served by Head Start. The other purpose of FACES is to examine the developmental progress of Head Start children and families. An advantage of the FACES questionnaire is that it consists of 78 pages of items that give a comprehensive measure of community, program, classroom, family, and child characteristics. Other reasons for selecting FACES were (a) that it was developed for and previously used in research with Head Start populations; and (b) it was available in Spanish and English.

Permission to use the survey was given by the Administration for Children and Families' project manager and FACES point of contact.

To assess parent involvement the investigator used the 19 indicators from the FACES questionnaire that measured the extent to which parents engaged their children in learning activities in the home context. The questionnaire was provided in the parent's dominant language. The questionnaire first asked how many times their child was read to in the past week (0=not at all, 1= once or twice, 2= three or more times), then for how long did the child enjoy being read to at a sitting. Next, nine of the items assessed home learning activities (e.g., how often do you and your child participate in reading activities, playing games, arts and crafts, indoor and outdoor play, household duties, and talked about television or video programming in the past week). The last ten items assessed the caregiver's enrichment activities such as their involvement in community, recreational, cultural, religious, and sporting activities within the past month.

In the Foster et al. (2005) study, the internal consistency of the home learning activities and enrichment activities scales from the FACES questionnaire had undesirable Cronbach alpha coefficients (.66 and .68, respectively). In the current study, the reliability for the home learning activities items had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .81, a coefficient of .73 for enrichment activity items, and the overall questionnaire's Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.83. Reliability coefficients suggest these items worked well as one overall scale; therefore, the study utilized reports of overall involvement by developing a composite score.

Previous research suggested that economically disadvantaged parents were either less likely to perform activities to promote literacy development with their children or were inconsistent with the time they spent on activities (Foster et al., 2005; Weigel et al., 2006a). Therefore, little was known about whether the amount of time spent on learning activities among low-income parents makes a difference in school readiness outcomes. Therefore, the present study will contribute more information about parent-involvement in the home-setting by assessing how the amount of time involved in home learning activities effect the school readiness of children from predominately low income families.

#### *School Readiness*

The dependent variable was the Speed Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (Speed DIAL; Mardell-Czudnowski & Goldberg, 1998). Speed DIAL developmental screening test was used to measure the children's school readiness. The Speed DIAL was a shortened version the DIAL-3 assessment. The Speed DIAL was a norm-referenced developmental indicators screener that can be assessed in 15 to 20 minutes. The Speed DIAL was designed for pre-school age children and standardized for children ages 3.0 to 6-11 and can be individually administered. The measure was available in English and Spanish to serve a linguistically diverse population.

The Speed DIAL incorporates ten of the DIAL-3 items, screening for early-childhood areas of motor, concepts, and language. The motor area measured the child's gross and fine motor skills through assessing jumping, hopping, skipping, writing, and block building abilities. The concept area measured a child's ability to identify colors,

body parts, and concepts such as biggest, smallest, most, and least. Within the language area, the children were asked to recite the alphabet, identify pictorial concepts, and solve coping problems. The Speed DIAL only provides a total score because of the brevity of the assessment.

The DIAL-3 was standardized on a national sample of 1,125 children from varying racial, geographical, community, gender, and age groups between 1995 and 1997. Reliability coefficients for the Speed DIAL vary from 0.76 for ages 4-6 to 3-11 to 0.85 for ages 3-0 to 3-5. The correlation coefficient between the DIAL-3 and Speed DIAL is reported as .94 (Mardell-Czudnowski & Goldenberg, 1998). Furthermore, Gonzales, Pizzitola, Team, and Ash (2002) found reliability coefficients yielding a value of 0.82,  $p < .01$  for test-retest reliability among the Head Start population.

All children in the Head Start program were given the Speed DIAL within the first 45 days of their enrollment as mandated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107-110, 2001). Before administering the Speed DIAL, designated screeners were given yearly refresher trainings. There was systematic planning on the coordination of assessing all of the students in the program within the 45 days. There were guidelines in place for students who partially refused to complete a test or refuse assessment entirely. Furthermore, the Speed DIAL goal is to identify students who may need further evaluation of potential developmental delay. Screening coordinators decide upon a cut-off score based on what was appropriate for that community. The total scaled scores a child can obtain on the Speed DIAL range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 39.

Table 3.3 shows results by gender from the Speed DIAL screenings among the sample represented in the study by gender.

*Summary of the Instruments Used.* The instruments used for this study included:

1. “*Parent Expectations Scale*” was completed by the caregiver of a child enrolled in the Head Start Program. The two items asked about parent’s current and future realistic expectations. A composite score, ( $\alpha = .95$ ) was used to measure total levels of expectations.

2. “*Parent Involvement*” (FACES, ACYF, 2007b) questionnaire was completed by the caregiver for the self-ratings of their participation in home learning and enrichment activities with their child. A composite of the 19 items from the questionnaire were used in the model testing ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

3. “*Speed DIAL*” (Mardell-Czudnowski & Goldberg, 1998) was a developmental indicators screener given to children within the first 45 days of their enrollment in Head Start. A total score was utilized to assess school readiness.

## Data Analysis

### *Statistical Methods*

Descriptive statistics, tests of normality, and multiple regression analyses were examined using the SPSS package 12.0. The main study analysis proceeded in three stages. In the first stage, multiple regression was used to determine the combined effects of the independent variables (parent expectations and parent involvement) on the school readiness scores. In the second stage, results of the multiple regression analysis were

Table 3.3

*Speed DIAL Scores*

	<i>M(SD)</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Male	9.07(5.56)	0	26
Female	12.47(7.37)	3	34

used to assess if the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness is mediated by parent involvement.

PRODCLIN (distribution of the PRODUct Confidence Limits for INdirect effects) test of mediated effects was employed to assess mediation. Fritz and MacKinnon (2007) reported the use of common product-of-coefficients tests, such as the Sobel (1982) first-order test rely on multivariate normality assumptions. However, normally distributed values from random variables that can be compared to a normal distribution do not usually occur. Therefore, PRODCLIN uses tables of critical values to create asymmetric confidence intervals. These values capture the non-normal shape of the mediating effects' distribution, which improves power. Confidence intervals including a zero indicate that there is no significant mediational effect (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007).

The third stage assessed the moderation effects of three variables: race, gender, and risk level. The moderator effect of each variable on the relationship between parental expectations and school readiness was tested by creating an interaction term between the moderator and parental expectations, after centering both variables. The

interaction was tested in multiple regression and any significant interaction terms were probed using Aiken and West's (1991) simple slopes equation. Then, the mediator analyses described above were re-analyzed within different moderator groups (e.g., separately for boys and girls) to examine whether the mediation model differed across different levels of the moderators.

*Missing Data.* Efforts were made to minimize missing information; however, with conducting research using questionnaires there was a high possibility of receiving incomplete items and is often beyond the researchers control (Kline, 2005). The study had 99.13 % of the data complete, which is well within the generally accepted bounds for obtaining accurate estimates in multivariate statistics (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Pairwise deletions were used to handle missing data because only cases having missing values on variables tagged for a particular computation were excluded from the analysis. Other methods for handling missing data, such as listwise deletions could significantly limit the sample size.

*Assumptions.* There are several assumptions of multiple regression analysis including adequate sample size, multicollinearity, singularity, outliers, and normality (Pallant, 2005). There are various guidelines concerning the number of cases required to conduct multiple regression. Stevens (1996, p. 72 as cited in Pallant, 2005) suggested 15 subjects per predictor variable. Tabachnik and Fidell (2001, p. 117 as cited in Pallant, 2005) developed the formula,  $N > 50 = 8m$  ( $m$ = number of independent variables) to calculate sample size. The sample size of 77 for this study meets these guidelines to assess the cross-sectional model.



Multicollinearity exists when the correlations of the independent variables are high and singularity occurs when subscales are included along with the total score of an independent variable. The total scores for the parent expectations and parent involvement variables showed a relationship of .24,  $p < .05$ , indicating no issues with multicollinearity and singularity. The residuals were assessed and the standardized values showed no indication of non-normality (between 3.0 and -3.0). Skewness values were less than 3 and kurtosis values for the model were less than 8; values greater than these can be problematic (Kline, 2005). Table A.1 displays the skewness and kurtosis values for the instrument items and table A.2 shows skewness and kurtosis values for risk variables. Furthermore, the independent variables showed a linear relationship with the dependent variable, with minimal variance among the residuals.

#### *Returnee Effects*

It was noted during data entry that some of the students participated in Head Start prior to the 2008-2009 school year of this study. In an effort to assess parent expectations with a limited assessment of children's prior abilities, re-enrollment status may possibly affect those outcomes. However, 10 of the 77 students were classified as being re-enrolled into Head Start. Assessment of scatter plots and two-way Analysis of Variance tests indicated no significant interaction effects with parent expectations, parent involvement, and school readiness variables.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Hypothesis 1

*It is hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between high expectations and high school readiness. In addition, parent involvement will serve as a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness.*

Prior to regression analysis, correlations among the independent, dependent, and moderator variables were calculated and are presented in Table 4.1. Correlations between study variables were low to moderate but parent expectations and school readiness had the highest correlations ( $r = .31$ ) followed by parent expectations and parent involvement ( $r = .24$ ). School readiness was positively associated to parent involvement ( $r = .22$ ). There was a positive relationship between gender and risk ( $r = .23$ ) and gender and school readiness ( $r = .24$ ) indicating that female students were more likely to be in families with greater risk, but have higher school readiness scores.

Next, school readiness was predicted from parental expectations. The model explained 11.4 % of the variance in school readiness, which is statistically significant,  $p = .01$ . The coefficient for parent expectations was significant,  $p < .05$ , such that higher expectations for readiness to attend Head Start and future school attainment were associated with higher school readiness scores. For every one standard deviation unit of increase in parent expectations, school readiness scores would likely increase by 1.80 points. The results of this regression analysis are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1  
*Intercorrelations between Independent, Dependent, and Moderator Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Parent expectations	1.00					
2. Parent involvement	0.24	1.00				
3. School readiness	0.31	0.22	1.00			
4. Caregiver ethnicity	0.08	0.06	-0.09	1.00		
5. Child gender	0.09	-0.04	0.24	-0.26	1.00	
6. Risk level	-0.05	0.10	0.04	-0.11	0.23	1.00
Mean	7.20	16.92	10.68	1.74	1.47	2.81
SD	1.44	6.18	6.66	0.66	0.50	1.03

*Note.* Correlations greater than the absolute value of .30 are statistically significant at the  $p < .01$ . Correlations between .20 and .30 are statistically significant at the  $p < .01$ .

Lastly, regressions of parent expectations on parent involvement, and parent involvement on school readiness were assessed to test for mediation (see table 4.2). Results indicated that parent expectations were a significant predictor of parent involvement. The unstandardized coefficient for parent involvement was .24,  $p < .05$ . However, parent involvement was not a significant predictor of school readiness. To test for mediation effects of parental involvement, PRODCLIN's test for mediation effects was employed. The PRODCLIN analyses did not support mediation (lower limit value = -.04 and upper limit value = 0.79, with a confidence interval of 98%).

Table 4.2  
*Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analysis for Parent Expectations and School Readiness Model*

Variables	School Readiness				Parent Involvement			
	B	S.E. B	t	R <sup>2</sup>	B	S.E. B	t	R <sup>2</sup>
Parent Expectations	.39**	.51	2.79	.10				
Parent Expectations					1.02*	.49	2.05	.06
Parent Involvement	.22	.13	1.76	.04				

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

## Hypothesis 2

*The analysis of ethnic groups' interaction with parent expectations' relationship to school readiness will be exploratory. The analysis of whether ethnicity moderates the mediational model will be exploratory*

The European American ethnic group was not used in the moderation analysis due to its low sample,  $n = 9$ . Therefore, only the African American ( $n = 28$ ) and Hispanic ( $n = 39$ ) groups were used to compare moderation effects. The regression analyses testing whether ethnicity moderated the relationship between expectations and school readiness are presented in Table 4.3. The interaction term was not significant, suggesting that ethnicity did not moderate the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. Next, the mediation model was tested separately based on ethnicity using the PRODCLIN program to assess if the mediation effects differed across groups. Results indicated there was no mediational effect in either group.

### Hypothesis 3

*The relationship between parent expectations and school readiness will differ among caregiver groups with female children in Head Start compared to those with males. In addition, the mediational model for female students at Head Start will be stronger compared to male students.*

The regression analyses testing whether gender moderated the relationship between expectations and school readiness are presented in Table 4.3. The interaction term was not significant, suggesting that gender did not moderate the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. Next, the mediation model was tested separately based on gender using the PRODCLIN program to assess if the mediation effects differed across groups. Results indicated there was no mediational effect in either group.

### Hypothesis 4

*The relationship between parent expectations and school readiness will differ among participants with low levels of risk compared to those with higher levels of risk. In addition, the mediational model for participants with lower risk indicators will be stronger compared to those with higher levels of risk.*

Risk factor information was gathered using demographic information provided by PROMIS and the FACES survey to assess crime exposure. All of the risk items were calculated based on the presence (coded as 1) or absence (coded as 0) of that risk factor. The scores were summed to obtain a cumulative risk index. The cumulative risk index

Table 4.3  
*Ethnicity, Gender, and Risk Level Moderating the Parent Expectations and School Readiness Model*

Variables	School Readiness			
	B	S.E. B	t	adj R <sup>2</sup> Δ
Ethnicity x PE	-.28	.46	-.62	.02
Gender x PE	.85	.75	1.14	.07
Risk Level x PE	-.10	.22	-.44	.01

ranged from a minimum score of 0 and maximum score of 7. The risk score was then divided into subgroups, low (0-2 risk factors), medium (3 risk factors), and high (>4 risk factors). Research indicated the number of risk factors, especially an index of four or more risk factors, increases the likelihood of negative child outcomes (ACYF, 2002).

The regression analyses testing whether risk level moderated the relationship between expectations and school readiness are presented in Table 4.3. The interaction term was not significant, suggesting that risk level did not moderate the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. Next, the mediation model was tested separately based on risk level using the PRODCLIN program to assess if the mediation effects differed across groups. Results indicated there was no mediational effect in any of the groups.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to fill some gaps in the literature concerning the impact parent expectations has on school readiness outcomes among low-income, minority preschoolers. This study further examined if parent involvement, a variable widely researched, was a mediator of the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness. The pre-school years are a crucial time in child-development and parents are their child's primary teachers during this developmental stage. Previous research typically assessed the impact of parental expectations on academic achievement among early adolescents. Furthermore, parent expectations were typically assessed as a mediator of the impact socio-demographic factors have on educational achievement. Not only is there limited research on the variables that transmit the effects of expectations on school outcomes, but overall, there were gaps in the area of parent expectations among preschoolers. This study is unique in assessing these parent variables not only among a preschool population, but also among a population that is largely from low-income minority families. There has been a great push to promote more research to understand minority and low-income families and process variable impacting educational success.

Specifically, this study investigated the effect of parent expectations on school readiness among children attending Head Start. Differences between caregiver ethnic groups, gender of the child, and risk level were assessed in congruence with the literature indicating parent variables are associated with these factors. The measurement

model was designed to address limitations and fill gaps in the literature in the area of parent behaviors, development, and schooling.

*Do parent expectations have a positive relationship to school readiness?* The investigator assessed parents' expectations of their child's academic ability and their child's school readiness scores as measured by the Speed DIAL. Results indicated that parent expectations had a statistically significant positive relationship to school readiness. The results showed that high parent expectations directly predicted increased levels of school readiness among this preschool sample. This finding was consistent with previous results indicating that parent expectations relates to school outcomes among preschool-age children (Hill, 2001; Mantzicopoulos, 1997; Sonuga-Barke et al., 1995).

*To what extent does parent involvement serve as a mediator between parent expectations and school readiness?* Separate analyses of the relationship between parent expectations and parent involvement revealed a significant direct relationship. It appears as though the level of expectations a parent has for their child is associated with parent's involvement in home learning and enrichment activities. However, parent involvement had no statistically significant relationship with the child's school readiness scores. It appears as though parent involvement did not directly affect the school readiness among this sample of children. Reynolds and Gill (1994) had similar findings and conjectured that there was no association in their sixth grade sample because parent involvement may be more important in early childhood. The results in this study suggest that parent involvement had marginal significance with school readiness, and parent involvement



could possibly be more important in early childhood as Reynolds and Gill suggest; however, the small sample size is a factor in interpreting these results with caution.

Davis-Kean (2005) found that parent involvement did not have a statistically significant relationship with academic achievement among middle school children. The author concluded it may be due to age and that parent-child play is more closely related to parent-child relationships than achievement. The same justification may relate to this sample of preschool-age children. Future research could assess if parent-child relationships rather than the learning activities are the socialization processes that effect school readiness. Additionally, it is possible that parents who do not have the material resources to provide home learning and enrichment activities to their children will not hinder their child's school readiness skills (Davis-Kean, 2005). Low-income parents may overcome their child's risk for lower school readiness skills through maintaining high academic expectations.

After assessing the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness, a mediational analysis was assessed to determine if parental involvement in home learning and enrichment activities transmitted the effects of parent expectations to school readiness. The findings did not support the hypothesis that parent involvement mediates parent expectations and school readiness. However, there is evidence that other parent behaviors such as maternal warmth and reading activities mediates the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness (Davis-Kean, 2005). Therefore, assessing types of parent involvement that focuses on reading activities and maternal parenting styles may provide more information about mediating effects on the

relationship between expectations and school readiness. Overall, literature and the current study indicate that supportive parenting (especially high expectations) may serve as a buffer to the environmental stressors usually associated with low-income, minority families that effect early school performance (Davis-Kean, 2005; Hill, 2001; Reynolds & Gill, 1994).

*Do ethnicity, gender, and risk level serve as moderators for the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness and the comprehensive model?*

Findings did not support the hypotheses that ethnicity, gender, and risk levels moderated the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness or the comprehensive model. Analysis for moderators was exploratory due to the decrease in sample size as they were split into groups. Research indicates that parent expectations account for school outcomes over and beyond socio-demographic factors (Castro et al., 2002; Gill, 1997). However, it remains important to assess how parent expectations and involvement differ among minority families, especially Hispanic families, to gain a better understanding of these understudied groups (Farver et al.2006).

Additionally, due to the nature of at-risk behaviors most low-income minority males engage in, further studies on parents expectations based on gender is important. Studies show parents tend to have higher expectations for their female children compared to males (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Sonuga-Barke et al, 1995; Thompson et al., 1988). Through a focus on preschool children, there could be potential for early interventions and preventions of low academic outcomes among male children from disadvantaged backgrounds. As parent expectations appeared to be an overall stronger

predictor of achievement, parent's level of expectations could also buffer poor school outcomes among male students.

The same implications can be true for families with high-risk levels. Previous findings showed that socio-demographic factors such as income, parental education, family size, and poverty level indirectly effected achievement (Davis-Kean, 2005; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1988; Gamble et al., 1997; Reynolds & Gill, 1994). In addition, when there are negative environmental factors and high stress levels among parents, parent involvement in the amount of time spent teaching their children reduces and affects the child's early skill development, whereas the opposite is true for those with minimal stressors (Farver et al., 2006; Goldenberg et al., 2001). The study assessed all these factors and based on categorical levels of risk there was no impact on the relationship between parent expectations and school readiness.

#### Limitations

Results from the study supported and rejected hypotheses concerning parent behaviors and school readiness. Much of the mixed findings could be accounted for the probability of a large Type II error due to small sample sizes. Larger sample size to increase power and effect size would have yielded more interpretable results (Cohen, 1988) and decreasing the probability of rejecting a model that has statistically significant differences. Splitting the groups to assess model functionality across groups further compounded the problem. Plausible issues relating to sample size occurred during the recruitment process. The number of caregiver respondents was significantly higher in some Head Start centers compared to others. Parents were often reticent to complete the

questionnaires due to time constraints. Utilizing only the parents of first time enrollees would have been ideal. Although years in Head Start did not have a statistically significant effect on the data analysis, there are theoretical implications that previous knowledge of a child's adjustment in school can account for better predictions of school outcomes. Additionally, the study used cross-sectional data to test process models, thus, it was not possible to assess the effects longitudinally to better assess causal hypotheses.

There were some measurement limitations in the study. Although parent expectations are typically measured in less than three items, the items developed for the study did not have adequate internal consistency with the sample. Pre-testing results for developing the survey indicated a Cronbach alpha coefficient greater than .70; yet, this differed with the population of interest. The differences in the pre-test sample and the study's sample (moderate reliability versus a less than adequate reliability) could indicate variations in parent behaviors based on sociodemographic factors but that assumption was not tested and is an anecdotal assessment of the parent expectations measure. Nonetheless, reducing the parent expectation factor to two items on this construct accounted for better reliability. As with most social science research, there were missing data. Having perfectly completed items for each participant could also provide conclusions that are more reliable. Furthermore, using questionnaires poses the possibility of bias in through leniency effects, halo effect, and central tendency (Denham et al., 2001).

Although the parent involvement survey was adapted from a questionnaire used among nationally representative samples, the study focused on parental involvement at

home. There is vast support that parent involvement in the schools has a positive effect on children's educational outcome. In addition, teacher perceptions of parental involvement were not assessed to provide comparable estimates of involvement. Comparing teacher and parent responses could provide a more global aspect of involvement and increase the external validity of the study (Waanders, Mendel, & Downer, 2007).

There are limitations due to demographic information that was not accounted for in the analyses. This study did not account for mental health status of the mother. Research demonstrates that stress levels indicate the probability of parent involvement across ethnic groups (Oyserman et al., 2002). As reported above, the number of years a child was enrolled in Head Start could account for variation in the responses. In addition, due to the high Hispanic population in the sample, further assessment on language proficiency and immigrant status could have an effect on the outcomes of parent variables and school readiness.

### Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to try to understand the mechanisms through which parent expectations effect school outcomes. The study was an innovative approach to assessing parent expectations and parent involve as a mediator of school readiness upon entry. Furthermore, the study was the first to test the structural model among a majority low-income and a majority minority population. Research in the area of minority and low-income school outcomes is mostly assessed from a deficit model. This study aimed to highlight the successes that occur among this population.

*Implications for Research and Practice*

The study provided information about parent expectations impact on school readiness among a preschool population. Future studies should add school readiness outcomes to the parent expectations literature. In addition, further studies assessing the differences among ethnic and low-income groups can help in better understanding the process involved in positive parent practices and school readiness. The interactions between these variables are poorly understood among these groups in the literature, especially for Hispanic families. Researchers should be responsible in not assuming that all preschoolers need the same level of intervention, as this negates the different skills and experiences they have already required.

Although parent expectations had a marginal impact on school readiness, future research may assess the direct effects of expectations on schooling but also other possible variables that may mediate the relationship. Communicating the importance of education to a pre-school age student may be more difficult. The communication process would be especially difficult for parents with lower educational levels and SES status. Notably, levels of expectations were assessed at the very start of school. As children matriculate in Head Start, parents are expected to participate at the school and home level. This aspect of Head Start is encouraging for those children whose parents exhibited little parent involvement prior to enrollment.

Study results in general can attribute to policy and programming standards. Research identifying models can help to facilitate intervention models for at-risk youth. Due to the strong relationship of parent variables and school outcomes, early

intervention should develop paradigms that include parents. An example would include Head Starts model that include the involvement and empowerment of parents. The parent child relationship in terms of increasing play and ability to facilitate learning has an impact on improving school readiness and predicts positive behavioral outcomes in the classroom of Head Start children (Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay, 1999). Parents with low involvement will be encouraged through Head Start, which is an intervention that could have the most impact in a child's life.

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## APPENDIX A

## TABLES

Table A.1

*Skewness and Kurtosis of Instrument Items and Composites*

Variables	Mean(SD)	Median	Skewness	(SE)	Kurtosis	(SE)	p	N	% missing
How ready do you think your child is to attend Head Start compared to other children in the program?	3.27(.905)	3	0.67	0.28	-0.22	0.55	0.00	75	2.60
How well do you expect your child to do (perform) in class compared to other children during the Head Start program?	4.09(.751)	4	-0.35	0.28	-0.55	0.55	0.00	76	1.30
How far in school, do you expect your child to get?	4.03(.84)	4	-0.48	0.28	-0.45	0.55	0.00	75	2.60
Told (him/her) a story?	1.22(.60)	1	-0.12	0.27	-0.41	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Taught (him/her) letters, words, or numbers?	1.45(.53)	1	-0.19	0.27	-0.41	0.54	0.00	76	1.30
Taught (him/her) songs or music?	1.34(.60)	1	-0.31	0.28	-0.63	0.55	0.00	76	1.30
Worked on arts and crafts with (him/her)?	.67(.74)	1	0.63	0.28	-0.92	0.55	0.00	75	2.60
Played with toys or games indoors?	1.53(.55)	2	-0.61	0.27	-0.72	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Played a game, sport, or exercised together?	1.26(.72)	1	-0.43	0.27	-0.94	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Involved (him/her) in household like cooking, cleaning, setting the table or caring for pets?	1.44(.62)	2	-0.63	0.27	-0.52	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Talked about TV programs or videos?	1.13(.77)	1	-0.23	0.27	-1.25	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Played counting games like singing songs with numbers or reading w/ numbers?	1.30(.65)	1	-0.39	0.27	-0.69	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00

Table A.1 continued

<i>Skewness and Kurtosis of Instruments</i>									
Variables	Mean(SD)	Median	Skewness	(SE)	Kurtosis	(SE)	p	N	% missing
Visited a library?	.34(.58)	0	1.52	0.27	1.37	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Gone to a movie?	.40(.61)	0	1.27	0.27	0.58	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Gone to a play, concert, or other live show?	.21(.50)	0	2.38	0.28	5.01	0.55	0.00	76.00	1.30
Gone to a mall	.92(.72)	1	0.12	0.27	-1.04	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Visited an art gallery, museum, or historical site?	.17(.47)	0	2.87	0.27	7.69	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Talked with CHILD about (his/her) family history or ethnic heritage?	.56(.72)	0	0.89	0.27	-0.51	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Attended an event sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group?	0.55(.72)	0	0.93	0.27	-0.45	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Attended an athletic or sporting event where CHILD was not a player?	.57(.73)	0	0.88	0.27	-0.60	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00
Parent involvement total score	16.92(6.18)	16	.69	.28	.35	.55	.051	74	3.90
Speed Dial score	10.68(6.66)	2	0.41	0.27	-0.63	0.54	0.00	76.00	1.30

Table A.2  
*Skewness and Kurtosis of Risk Variables*

Variables	Mean(SD)	Median	Skewness	(SE)	Kurtosis	(SE)	<i>p</i>	N	% missing
Caregiver Education	2.59(0.81)	3	-0.24	0.28	0.49	0.55	0.00	74	3.90
Exposure to Crime	.36(.482)	0	-1.80	0.27	1.29	0.55	0.00	76	1.30
Family Composition	.77(.43)	.80	-1.28	0.27	-0.36	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Family Percent Poverty level	-38.61(35.91)	-46	1.08	0.28	1.00	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Family Size	3.92(1.49)	4	1.13	0.27	2.37	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Head of Household Employment	0.11(.31)	0	2.58	0.28	4.77	0.55	0.00	74	3.90
Household Income	13680.04(8716.84)	11,700	1.23	0.27	1.57	0.54	0.00	77	0.00
Total Risk	2.81(1.03)	3	-0.27	0.27	-0.20	0.54	0.00	77.00	0.00

APPENDIX B  
STUDY MATERIALS

## **CONSENT FORM**

### **Effect of Parent Expectations and Behaviors on Head Start Children's School Readiness**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying Head Start children and their parents. The purpose of this study is to look at the link between parent's expectations and their behaviors and how this affects their children's school readiness. You were selected to be a possible participant because you decided to enroll your child into the Head Start Program and are making steps to be involved in the education of your child.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that will take about 20 minutes to complete.

#### **What are the risks involved in this study?**

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

#### **What are the possible benefits of this study?**

The possible benefits of participation are to provide information that may help parents, teachers, and other educators better understand how parents involvement in education helps children to become prepared to enter and succeed in school. By exploring these factors, children can benefit by having an easier transition into school because their parents received the tools to help them be prepared. Although, there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, it is possible that this study may benefit society by providing information on how children can be successful in school through parents participating in educating their children at home.

#### **Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University or Head Start being affected.

#### **Who will know about my participation in this research study?**

This study is confidential and your confidentiality will be maintained in the following ways: The records of this study will be kept private, no identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published, and research records



will be stored securely and only Krystal Cook, the primary investigator, and Kari Smith, the data enterer, will have access to the records.

**Whom do I contact with questions about the research?**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Krystal Cook at (202)-277-5238 or at [ktcook@tamu.edu](mailto:ktcook@tamu.edu)

**Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

**Signature**

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO**

### **El Efecto de las Expectativas y los Comportamientos de los Padres en la Preparación Escolar de los Niños de Head Start**

#### **Introducción**

El propósito de este formulario es ofrecerle información que puede afectar su decisión en cuanto a querer participar en este estudio de investigación. Si usted decide participar en este estudio, este formulario será usado como registro de su consentimiento.

A usted se le ha pedido participar en un proyecto de investigación que estudia a niños de Head Start y sus padres. El propósito de este estudio es de examinar la relación entre las expectativas y los comportamientos de los padres y como éstos afectan la preparación escolar de los niños. Usted fue seleccionado como un posible participante porque usted decidió inscribir a su niño en el programa de Head Start y está tomando pasos para estar involucrado en la educación de su niño.

#### **¿Qué me pedirá hacer?**

Si usted decide participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que llene un cuestionario que tomará cerca de 20 minutos para completar.

#### **¿Qué son los riesgos involucrados en este estudio?**

Los riesgos asociados con este estudio son mínimos y no son mayores que los riesgos encontrados usualmente en la vida diaria.

#### **¿Qué son los posibles beneficios de este estudio?**

Aunque no hayan beneficios directos a usted por participar en este estudio, es posible que este estudio beneficiará a la sociedad porque nos daría información que pudiera ayudar a que padres, profesores, y otros educadores mejor entiendan como el ser involucrado en la educación ayuda a que los niños estén mejor preparados para entrar y ser exitosos en la escuela. Al explorar estos factores, los niños pueden salir beneficiados al tener una transición más fácil a la escuela porque sus padres recibieron las herramientas para ayudarles a que los niños estén mejor preparados. Es posible que este estudio beneficiara a la sociedad porque proporcionaría información de cómo los niños pueden exitosos en la escuela al tener padres que participan en la educación de los niños en el hogar.

#### **¿Tengo que participar?**

No, su participación es voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no participar o de retirarse en cualquier momento sin afectar a su relación presente o futura con la Universidad de Texas A & M y Head Start.

#### **¿Quién sabrá de mi participación en este estudio de investigación?**

Este estudio es confidencial y su confidencialidad será mantenida de las maneras siguientes: Los archivos de este estudio serán mantenidos privados y ninguna información que podrá relacionarlo con este estudio será incluida en cualquier tipo de reporte que podrá ser publicado. Los archivos de investigación serán guardados bajo seguridad y solo Krystal Cook, la investigadora principal, y Kari Smith, la persona encargada de registrar los datos, podrán tener acceso a los archivos.

#### **¿A quién contacto si tengo preguntas acerca de la investigación?**

Si tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio, puede contactar a Krystal Cook al (202) - 277-5238 o a [ktcook@tamu.edu](mailto:ktcook@tamu.edu)

**¿A quién contacto acerca de mis derechos como un participante en una investigación?**

Este estudio de investigación ha sido revisado por el Human Subjects' Protection Program y/o el Institutional Review Board de Texas A&M University. Si tiene problemas que tienen que ver con la investigación o tiene preguntas relacionadas con sus derechos como un participante en un estudio, usted puede contactar a estas oficinas al (979)458-4067 o [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

**Firma**

Por favor asegúrese que ha leído la información anterior y que ha hecho preguntas y recibido respuestas a su satisfacción. Se le dará una copia del formulario de consentimiento para sus archivos. Al firmar este documento usted dice que esta de acuerdo en participar.

**Firma del Participante:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fecha:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nombre**

**escrito:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Firma de la Persona que Obtiene el consentimiento:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Fecha:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nombre**

**escrito:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent Expectations Questionnaire

*How ready do you think your child is to attend Head Start compared to other children in the program?*

1 One of the least prepared	2 Not as prepared as some children	3 As prepared as other children	4 More prepared than some children	5 One of the best prepared
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*How well do you expect your child to do (perform) in class compared to other children during the Head Start program?*

1 Very poor	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
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*How far in school do you expect your child to get?*

1 Less than high school diploma	2 Complete high school	3 Complete 2- year college degree or technical school	4 Complete 4-year college degree	5 Attend graduate school
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**A. ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CHILD**

Please answer the following questions about you and your CHILD at home.

1. How many times have you or someone in your family read to CHILD in the past week?

Not at all	01
Once or twice	02
Three or more times	03
Everyday	04

2. For about how long does CHILD enjoy being read to at a sitting?  
(Write 000 if child does not like to be read to at all)

\_\_ \_\_ \_\_ minutes

3. In the past week, have you or someone in your family done the following things with your CHILD? (READ LIST BELOW)

<b>In the past week, have you or someone in your family...</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>How Many Times</b>	
a. Told (him/her) a story?	01	02	1-2	3 +
b. Taught (him/her) letters, words, or numbers?	01	02	1-2	3 +
c. Taught (him/her) songs or music?	01	02	1-2	3 +
d. Worked on arts and crafts with (him/her)?	01	02	1-2	3 +
e. Played with toys or games indoors?	01	02	1-2	3 +
f. Played a game, sport, or exercised together?	01	02	1-2	3 +

<b>In the past week, have you or someone in your family...</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>How Many Times</b>	
g. Involved (him/her) in household like cooking, cleaning, setting the table or caring for pets?	01	02	1-2	3 +
h. Talked about TV programs or videos?	01	02	1-2	3 +
i. Played counting games like singing songs with numbers or reading with numbers?	01	02	1-2	3 +

4. In the past MONTH, have you or someone in your family done the following things with your CHILD? (READ LIST BELOW)

<b>In the past month, have you or someone in your family...</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>How Many Times</b>	
a. Visited a library?	01	02	1-2	3 +
b. Gone to a movie?	01	02	1-2	3 +
c. Gone to a play, concert, or other live show?	01	02	1-2	3 +
d. Gone to a mall	01	02	1-2	3 +

e. Visited an art gallery, museum, or historical site?	01	02	1-2	3 +
<b>In the past month, have you or someone in your family...</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>How Many Times</b>	
f. Visited a playground, park, or gone on picnic?	01	02	1-2	3 +
g. Visited a zoo or aquarium?	01	02	1-2	3 +
h. Talked with CHILD about (his/her) family history or ethnic heritage?	01	02	1-2	3 +
i. Attended an event sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group?	01	02	1-2	3 +
j. Attended an athletic or sporting event where CHILD was not a player?	01	02	1-2	3 +

**B. Which of the following do you have in your home?**

	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
1. Children's books	01	02
2. Comic books	01	02
3. Magazines for children	01	02
4. Magazines for adults like People or Sports Illustrated	01	02
5. Newspapers	01	02

6. Catalogs	01	02
7. Religious books like a bible or prayer book	01	02
8. Dictionaries or encyclopedias	01	02
9. Other books like novels or biographies or nonfiction	01	02



### C. HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

The next questions are about situations that can be difficult for families. The following questions are about things that may have happened to you or others in your household within the past YEAR. Please remember, all of your answers are held in the strictest confidence. The researcher will not tell anyone what you say, including Head Start.

For each of the following items, please circle how often each one happened to you since last spring? **READ LIST. CIRCLE ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.**

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I saw non-violent crimes take place in my neighborhood (for example, selling drugs or stealing.)	01	02	03	04
2. I heard or saw violent crime take place in my neighborhood.	01	02	03	04
3. I know someone who was victim of a violent crime in my neighborhood.	01	02	03	04
4. I was a victim of violent crime in my neighborhood.	01	02	03	04
5. I was a victim of violent crime in my home.				
6. Has CHILD been a witness to a violent crime since last spring?	01	02	03	04
7. Has CHILD been a witness to domestic violence since last spring?	01	02	03	04
8. Has CHILD been the victim of a violent crime since last spring?	01	02	03	04
9. Has CHILD been the victim of domestic violence since last spring?	01	02	03	04
10. Since last summer, have you, another household member ( <i>or a non-household biological parent</i> ) been arrested or charged with any crime by the police?	01	02	03	04
11. Since last summer, has CHILD lived apart from you not including vacations or shared custody arrangements?	01	02	03	04

## Cuestionario de las Expectativas de los Padres

*¿Qué tan listo piensa usted que esta su niño para atender Head Start comparado a otros niños en el programa?*

1	2	3	4	5
Uno de los menos preparados	No tan preparado como algunos niños	Preparado como otros niños	Más preparado que algunos niños	Uno de los más preparados

*¿Qué tan bien espera usted que su niño haga en la clase comparado con otros niños durante el programa de Head Start?*

1	2	3	4	5
Muy mal	Mal	Promedio	Bien	Excelente

*¿Hasta adónde espera usted que su niño vaya a la escuela?*

1	2	3	4	5
Menos que un diploma de la Escuela Secundaria (High School)	Termine la Escuela Secundaria (High School)	Termine un grado universitario de 2 años o escuela técnica	Termine un grado universitario de 4 años	Atienda una escuela para un posgrado

### A. ACTIVIDADES CON SU NIÑO

Conteste por favor a las preguntas siguientes acerca de usted y su NIÑO en la casa.

1. ¿Cuántas veces usted o alguien en su familia le ha leído al NIÑO en la última semana?

Nunca	01
Una vez o dos veces	02
Tres o más veces	03
Diariamente	04

2. ¿Alrededor de cuanto tiempo le gusta al NIÑO ser leído en una sentada?

(Escriba 000 si no le gusta para nada al niño que le lean)

\_\_\_\_\_ minutos

3. ¿En la última semana, usted o alguien en su familia ha hecho las cosas siguientes con su NIÑO? (LEA LISTA ABAJO)

En la última semana, usted o alguien en su familia...	No	Sí	Cuántas Veces	
			1-2	3 +
a. ¿Le contó una historia?	01	02	1-2	3 +
b. ¿Le enseñó letras, palabras, o números?	01	02	1-2	3 +
c. ¿Le enseñó canciones o música?	01	02	1-2	3 +
d. ¿Trabajó en obras de arte manuales con (él/ella)?	01	02	1-2	3 +
e. ¿Jugado con juguetes o juegos dentro de la casa?	01	02	1-2	3 +
f. ¿Jugó un juego, deporte, o ejercitó junto con el/ella?	01	02	1-2	3 +
g. ¿Se involucro con (él/ella) en obras de la casa como cocinar, de limpiar, poner la mesa, o cuidar de los animales domésticos?	01	02	1-2	3 +
h. ¿Hablo de programas de la televisión o de videos?	01	02	1-2	3 +
i. ¿Jugado juegos de contar como cantando	01	02	1-2	3 +

canciones con números o leyendo con números?				
--	--	--	--	--

4. ¿En el último MES, usted o alguien en su familia ha hecho las cosas siguientes con su NIÑO? (LEA LISTA ABAJO)

En el último mes, usted o alguien en su familia...	No	Sí	Cuántas Veces	
			1-2	3 +
a. ¿Visitó una biblioteca?	01	02	1-2	3 +
b. ¿Fue a una película?	01	02	1-2	3 +
c. ¿Fue a una obra de teatro, concierto, o a otra demostración en vivo?	01	02	1-2	3 +
d. Fue a un centro comercial?	01	02	1-2	3 +
e. ¿Visitó una galería de arte, un museo, o un sitio histórico?	01	02	1-2	3 +
f. Visitó un patio de recreo, un parque, o fue a una comida al aire libre?	01	02	1-2	3 +
g. ¿Visitó un zoológico o el acuario?	01	02	1-2	3 +
h. ¿Hablo con el NIÑO sobre (su) antecedentes familiares o herencia étnica?	01	02	1-2	3 +
i. ¿Atendió un evento patrocinado por un grupo de la comunidad, un grupo étnico, o religioso?	01	02	1-2	3 +

<b>En el última mes, usted o alguien en su familia...</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Sí</b>	<b>Cuántas Veces</b>	
j. ¿Atendió un acontecimiento atlético o deportivo adonde el NIÑO no era jugador?	01	02	1-2	3 +

**B. ¿Qué de lo siguiente tiene usted en su hogar?**

	<b>No</b>	<b>Sí</b>
10. Libros de los niños	01	02
11. Libros cómicos	01	02
12. Revistas para niños	01	02
13. Revistas para los adultos como “People en Español” o revistas de deportes	01	02
14. Periódicos	01	02
15. Catálogos	01	02
16. Los libros religiosos como la biblia o libros de rezo	01	02
17. Diccionarios o enciclopedias	01	02
18. Otros libros como novelas, biografías o libros de no-ficción	01	02

### C. CARACTERÍSTICAS DEL HOGAR Y DEL VECINDARIO

Las preguntas siguientes son sobre situaciones que pueden ser difíciles para las familias. Las preguntas siguientes son sobre cosas que le pudieron haber sucedido a usted u otros en su casa dentro del último AÑO. Por favor recuerde que todas sus respuestas son estrictamente confidenciales. El investigador no le dirá a ninguna persona que dice usted, incluyendo a Head Start.

¿Para cada uno de los puntos siguientes, por favor circule cuantas veces cada uno le sucedió desde la primavera pasada? **LEA LA LISTA. CIRCULE UNA RESPUESTA PARA CADA UNO.**

	Nunca	Algunas veces	Frecuentemente	Siempre
1. Yo vi crímenes no-violentos que ocurrieron en mi vecindario (por ejemplo, vendiendo drogas o robando.)	01	02	03	04
2. Yo oí o vi un crimen violento que ocurrió en mi vecindario.	01	02	03	04
3. Sé de alguien que fue víctima de un crimen violento en mi vecindario.	01	02	03	04
4. Yo fui víctima del crimen violento en mi vecindario.	01	02	03	04
5. Yo fui víctima del crimen violento en mi hogar.	01	02	03	04
6. ¿El NIÑO ha sido un testigo a un crimen violento desde la primavera pasada?	01	02	03	04
7. ¿El NIÑO ha sido un testigo a la violencia doméstica desde la primavera pasada?	01	02	03	04
8. ¿El NIÑO ha sido la víctima de un crimen violento desde la primavera pasada?	01	02	03	04
9. ¿El NIÑO ha sido la víctima de la violencia doméstica desde la primavera pasada?	01	02	03	04
10. ¿Desde el verano pasado, usted u otro miembro del hogar ( <i>o un padre biológico no parte del hogar</i> ) ha sido arrestado o acusado de un crimen por la policía?	01	02	03	04
11. ¿Desde el verano pasado, ha vivido el NIÑO separado de usted, sin incluir las vacaciones o acuerdos de la custodia compartida?	01	02	03	04

Texas A&M University Email Collaboration Suite

ktcook@neo.tamu.edu

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RE: FACES Permission Request

Friday, May 16, 2008 11:37:03 AM

From: maria.woolverton@acf.hhs.gov

To: ktcook@neo.tamu.edu

Dear Ms. Cook,

You have permission to utilize the FACES instruments in your research.

Please provide appropriate citation of the source where applicable.

Thank you,

Maria Woolverton

ACF

-----Original Message-----

From: Krystal T. Cook [mailto:ktcook@neo.tamu.edu]

Sent: Thursday, May 08, 2008 2:06 AM

To: Woolverton, Maria (ACF)

Subject: FACES Permission Request

Hi Ms. Woolverton,

My name is Krystal Cook and I would like to request permission to use the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey, Parent and Staff Instruments available in English and Spanish. I would like to use portions of the Parent and Staff Interview for my dissertation research I am conducting with the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency Head Start Program. If you need any further information please contact me at 202-277-5238 or ktcook@tam.u.edu

~ Thank you,

Krystal T. Cook  
School Psychology Ph.D. Candidate  
Texas A&M University  
ktcook@tam.u.edu

Mental Health Intern  
BVCAA Head Start Program  
mhinterns@bvcaa.org  
979-774-3496

## VITA

Name: Krystal Tisha' Cook

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