ADOLESCENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS:
AN EXPLORATION OF ACHIEVEMENT PRESSURES

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Laura M. Burke

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by

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Department of Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract
of
ADOLESCENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS:
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Recent studies indicate that high SES adolescents—a population not traditionally considered “at-risk”—may be susceptible to maladaptive behaviors and anxious-depressive symptoms linked to adolescent reports of achievement pressure. Parental performance expectations could be a significant source of achievement pressure experienced by high SES adolescents. Data about parental performance expectations and personal values were collected by surveying parents and their ninth-grade children in a high SES community. Using Likert Scale surveys, parents self-rated their expectations and values, and students rated their perceptions of parents’ expectations and values. Parent and student surveys also included open-ended questions for qualitative analyses. Significant differences were found between parents’ and students’ reports of parental academic and extracurricular expectations, with students rating parental expectations higher than their parents self-reported expectations. Parents rated their support of intrinsic values/character goals for their adolescent children higher than children rated their parents’ support of intrinsic values/character goals for them. Conversely, parents
rated their support of extrinsic values/character goals for their adolescent children lower than children rated their parents’ support of extrinsic values/character goals for them. The current study’s general findings support the relatively new academic proposition that adolescents living in materially and educationally advantaged environments may be at-risk for maladaptive issues more commonly associated with adolescents at the opposite end of the SES spectrum. Future investigation of the effects of both deliberate and inadvertent messages conveyed by parents, and through other bioecological processes, could help alleviate performance pressure in high SES communities, and promote sensible, individualized achievement goals for adolescent children that support healthy growth and development.

_________________________, Committee Chair
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_________________________
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Reports of teen achievement pressures in middle and upper-middle class, educated communities, and the potential links to teen depression, anxiety, and substance abuse have been widely reported in the media over the last two decades (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Ternus-Bellamy, 2010). The academic community, however, has only recently begun to explore the relationships between achievement pressures and adolescents’ psychological well-being and maladaptive behaviors. Children of educated, relatively affluent parents have not been traditionally considered an “at-risk” group. Many of these children live in married two-parent households and enjoy material privileges and opportunities not available to other American children. Material advantages, however, may not protect middle and upper-middle class adolescents from mental and physical health risks faced by other adolescent populations, including those at the opposite end of the socio-economic status (SES) spectrum (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Mukhopadhyay & Kumar, 1999). The current study is an exploration of the achievement-related beliefs of these families.

Research and media reports indicate that teenage children of affluent, educated parents often feel intense pressure to succeed, and that their parents are increasingly concerned about the negative effects of academic stress and competition (Abeles, 2010;
Levine, 2006; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Ternus-Bellamy, 2010a; Ternus-Bellamy, 2010b, Ternus-Bellamy, 2011). For example, in an ongoing longitudinal study of achievement pressures experienced by affluent teens, researchers at Columbia University’s Teachers College have received much community support in their efforts to collect data through district-wide adolescent surveys, interviews of students, parents, and school officials, and official student records. Remarkably, potentially risky research access has been granted—students have been surveyed about family relationships, drug and alcohol use, maladaptive behaviors, and symptoms of anxiety and clinical depression—because adults in the community recognize that despite the many privileges and opportunities afforded to their adolescent children, the teens appear to be experiencing stress and adjustment difficulties (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005).

Understanding achievement pressure is important because recent research suggests that such pressures may lead to a host of psychological, physical, and social problems for adolescents (Abeles, 2010; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Levine, 2006; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). In one of the first studies to draw attention to this issue, Luthar and Becker (2002) found that adolescents who perceived their parents as overly focused on academic achievement exhibited higher levels of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. In this study, the junior high school students’ self-reported levels of distress and maladaptive perfectionism—measured by statements associated with physiological and social anxiety, clinical depression, and delinquent behavior—were significantly related to the students’ perceptions of their parents’ high performance expectations (Luthar & Becker, 2002). Luthar and Sexton’s
A follow-up study about adolescent achievement pressure identified differences related to SES. The researchers found that when compared to tenth-graders of low SES, suburban tenth-graders of high SES reported higher levels of substance use/abuse, higher levels of depression, and significantly higher levels of anxiety. Self-reported maladaptive beliefs and behaviors reported by affluent adolescents were attributed to “…excessive pressures to achieve across multiple domains” (Luthar & Sexton, 2004, p. 126).

While middle and upper-middle class parents are becoming more concerned about the achievement pressures experienced by their adolescent children (Abeles, 2010; End the Race to Nowhere, 2011; Ternus-Bellamy, 2011), this issue cannot be adequately addressed without a more concrete understanding of the perceived sources of these achievement pressures. Rather than investigating achievement pressures from a broad, multidimensional perspective (Luthar & Sexton, 2004), the current study focused specifically on parents’ potential, and, possibly, inadvertent role in perpetuating pressure associated with adolescent achievement. Information gleaned from this empirical exploration could improve awareness of ecological roots of adolescent achievement pressures, thereby assisting parents and educators in their efforts to alleviate excessive performance stress experienced by their adolescent children.

The current study was an empirical exploration of adolescent achievement culture—combined with analyses of parents’ self-reported personal values and performance expectations in relation to adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ personal values and performance expectations—and the role that well-intentioned parents play in perpetuating adolescent achievement pressures (Ablard & Parker, 1997; Bronfenbrenner,
Investigation of the potential disparities in perceptions and self-reports of achievement-related beliefs and intentions could pinpoint a significant source of adolescents’ perceptions of achievement pressure. Such findings could indicate whether parents’ reported personal values and performance expectations are conveyed to their adolescent children, and may help explain how adolescents internalize their perceptions of their parents’ values and expectations. Results of this study could provide critical information for understanding and addressing the problems associated with adolescent achievement pressures in a local high SES population (DeCarlo & Luthar, 2000; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of the current study was to explore adolescent achievement pressure in a local community by studying the potential relationships between reports of parents’ performance expectations and personal values, and their adolescent children’s perceptions of their parents’ performance expectations and personal values. The study also investigated the potential association between participation in selective educational programs and reports of adolescent achievement pressure. To this end, the following research questions were addressed:
(a) Do relationships exist between adolescents’ ratings of their parents’ performance expectations, and the parents’ self-reported performance expectations for their adolescent children?

(b) Do relationships exist between adolescents’ ratings of their parents’ personal values, and the parents’ self-reported personal values?

(c) Does a relationship exist between adolescents’ participation in selective educational programs and/or tutoring services, and adolescents’ reports of achievement pressure?

**Definitions of Relevant Terms**

*Socioeconomic Status (SES)* is a sociological term used to refer to an individual’s or a group’s capacity to access and utilize valuable resources to sustain and enhance day-to-day living (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Participants in the current study live in a relatively high SES community.

In the current study, adolescents’ perceptions of—and parents’ self-reports of—parents’ personal values, were investigated using participants’ ratings of personal value statements classified by the researcher as either *intrinsic-altruistic* or *external-competitive* in orientation. *Intrinsic-altruistic* personal value statements measured adolescent perceptions and self-reports of parents’ aspirations for their adolescents’ character development as those aspirations related to happiness, personal integrity, and concern for others. *External-competitive* personal value statements measured adolescent
perceptions and self-reports of parents’ aspirations for their adolescents’ character development as those aspirations related to academic achievement, recognition and status, and material success (DeCarlo & Luthar, 2000).

Adolescent perceptions and self-reports of parents’ performance expectations for their adolescent children were also investigated in the current study. Performance expectations were defined as statements of achievement aspirations in academic, athletic, and social arenas (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

Achievement pressure was operationally defined as a significant discrepancy between adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ personal values and/or performance expectations, and parents’ self-reports of personal values and performance expectations. Understandings of achievement pressure were further informed by qualitative analyses of open-ended questions on parent and adolescent surveys.

Theoretical Basis for the Study

The current study explores adolescent achievement pressures from an ecological systems perspective and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner proposed that a child’s development is shaped by his/her interactions within—and across—the different environments in which he/she lives. A child grows and adapts in response to the influential environmental contexts of the varied and concurrent ecosystems in which he/she exists: home, neighborhood, extended family and friends, school, religious
community, city, region, nation, and generational era, for example. Socialization occurs across these overlapping and intersecting ecosystems first defined by Bronfenbrenner (in ascending order) as microsystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. The contexts in which different ecosystems overlap, such as the microsystems of family and school, are defined as mesosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model expanded the initial ecological systems model by emphasizing the critical role that proximal processes—regular, reciprocal, and increasingly complex interactions in which a growing person engages with influential individuals in his/her life, within different environmental contexts, and across time—play in shaping human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner and Morris considered proximal processes so important that they defined proximal processes as “the engines of development” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 801). The bioecological model of human development posits that an individual’s unique development is the outcome of the dynamic, bidirectional interactions with people, symbols, and objects within and across various intersecting environments. These may range, for example, from influential interactions within the nuclear family to personal experiences shaped by one’s identity as an American citizen in the world community, and may stretch from daily routines over a period of several years to the broader experience of growing up in an upper-middle class Californian household in a high-tech world at the start of the 21st Century.
The environmental interactions that shape the individual are reciprocal in nature, affecting the persons and objects with whom the individual interacts, in addition to the individual herself/himself. The individual’s disposition, skills, interests, and needs necessarily affect these environmental responses, and, thus, individual development. The many environments in which individuals live and interact are dynamic and increasingly complex, and are experienced differently by different individuals. Both objective and subjective forces can affect proximal processes, and, thus, human development. The objective reality of a household environment that includes two children and highly educated dual income married parents is tempered by an individual’s subjective experience within the environment. For example, an introverted child living in the aforementioned hypothetical household may experience loneliness and disconnect from her parents; her feelings might then affect her parents’ feelings, and influence other family members’ perceptions and future family interactions. Through proximal processes, individuals are agents of their own development, both directly and indirectly (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The home/family microsystem has long been recognized as the most influential niche in a child’s development. Investigation of parents’ and adolescents’ perceptions of, and reciprocal communication about, personal and academic achievement could improve our understanding of student achievement motivations, beliefs, and pressures within the mesosystem connections between home and school, and within the macrosystem of the larger community. The culture of adolescent achievement pressure can best be understood when parental expectations and values are explored within the broader
context of the intersecting microsystems through which students must daily navigate, and as proximal processes that are affected by the subjective experiences and beliefs of both parents and adolescent children.

**Method**

This descriptive, mixed-method study included survey data collected from adolescent students and their parents. Likert Scale surveys were used to collect data about *parental values* and *parental expectations* from ninth-grade adolescents and their parents in a highly educated, middle and upper-middle class Northern California college town community. Participants also completed demographic surveys. Most of the data collected for the current study were quantitative, but several open-ended questions were added to the measures to allow for explanatory qualitative analyses.

**Participants and Setting**

The researcher recruited 42 adolescent-parent dyads from a college town community to participate in the study. The student participants had either just completed ninth-grade (and would begin tenth-grade at a public 10th-12th grade high school campus in fall), or were soon to enter ninth-grade at one of the three public junior high school campuses in fall. Demographically, parents and students in the current study were very similar to parent and student samples in recent research studies about adolescent
achievement pressure (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

**Organization of the Study**

The relevance and necessity of the current study about adolescent achievement pressure is supported by a thorough examination and review of pertinent research literature in Chapter 2. Next, the study’s methodology is systematically described in Chapter 3, including detailed information about participant recruitment and demographics, measure structures and administration, and data analyses. Chapter 4 presents results, describing analytical approaches and noting significant findings about similarities and differences between parents’ and students’ ratings of parental performance expectations, and between parents’ and students’ ratings of parental personal values. In addition, Chapter 4 presents results related to links between adolescents’ participation in selective educational programs and adolescent reports of achievement pressure. Chapter 5 explains the current study’s findings in the context of existing research about adolescent achievement pressure, notes possible limitations to the current study, and proposes future research questions to be explored concerning adolescent achievement pressure in high SES communities. References and appendices with copies of study measures are also included.
A substantial body of research indicates that children of highly educated, financially secure parents benefit from many material and environmental advantages that are not available to their peers of lower-SES (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Luther & Latendresse, 2005a). Teens of high SES typically have access to private schooling and/or quality public school programs in safe, affluent communities, and often live in stable two-parent households (Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012; Luther & Sexton, 2004). Given the many material and social advantages afforded children of high SES, and the many economic, educational, and environmental disadvantages experienced by children of low SES (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Koplewicz, Gurian, & Williams, 2009), children of high SES have rarely been considered “at-risk.” Consequently, children of high SES have not historically been the focus of research studies about at-risk youth (Luther & Becker, 2002; Luther & Latendresse, 2005a; Luther & Sexton, 2004).
Recently, researchers have begun to explore the relationship between high SES maladaptive behaviors and psychological distress in adolescence (Koplewicz, et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz, McMahon, & Luthar, 2011). Achievement pressure has been investigated as a possible risk to healthy adolescent development in communities rich with environmental assets (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). Although adolescent perceptions of parental values and expectations have been explored as potential sources of achievement pressure, studies about the relationship between adolescent perceptions of parents’ values and expectations, and parents’ self-reported personal values and expectations, are limited (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b). The following review begins with a theoretical framework for the current study, and is followed by analyses of pertinent literature linking SES to children’s health and adjustment, and affluence to risks to health and happiness. The review also explores literature as it relates to potential sources of stress in the lives of adolescents of high SES.

**Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Bioecological systems theory was the theoretical foundation for this study. Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of child development is a very useful model for investigating parental influences—arguably the most important influences in children’s lives—on adolescent achievement pressure. The ecological paradigm depicts the intersecting and overlapping spheres in which a child lives, grows, and interacts, placing
the family microsystem at the center. Families, and, in particular, parents, are the primary socializers of children, articulating and modeling values, beliefs, practices, and acceptable behaviors beginning in infancy and continuing throughout childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development extends the ecological systems theory to include the important roles the person, the context, and time play in individual growth and development, and, most importantly, describes the central role of proximal processes. Development is bidirectional and dynamic. The complex interplay between an individual’s temperament, skills, interests, and beliefs and the varying characteristics, attributes, and messages conveyed in different environmental contexts is the foundation of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Studies indicate that even as children enter their teen years, and become more independent and peer-influenced, parental expectations and beliefs continue to affect adolescent attitudes and decisions (Mowder, 2005; Steinberg et al., 1992). For this reason, several recent studies about adolescent achievement pressure, and correlated maladaptive behavior and psychological distress, have focused on teen perceptions of parents’ achievement expectations (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b).

Although bioecological systems theory recognizes the primacy of certain developmental niches like family and school, it also emphasizes the multiple influences and developmental effects within and across the different spheres in which children live. Most importantly, this theory emphasizes the central role of proximal processes—the
reciprocal and ever-changing interactions between an individual’s unique and intrinsic developmental assets, and the individual’s subjective experiences, across different environmental contexts and times (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). To further explore the role of proximal processes with regard to adolescent achievement pressure, open-ended questions about individual perceptions of, and experiences with, achievement pressure were included in the surveys used in this study. The open-ended questions provided participants the opportunity to share opinions about potential sources of achievement pressure within the larger community and prevailing culture.

A thorough review of pertinent empirical findings about the relationships between SES and healthy child development, affluence and potential maladaptive outcomes, and achievement pressure and high SES adolescent distress supports the direction of the current study’s theoretical model, and, consequently, the relevance of the study. The current study seeks to understand adolescent achievement pressure through the context of the relationship between adolescents’ perceptions of—and parents’ self-reports of—parental values and performance expectations. The study also explores the possible link between adolescents’ participation in selective educational programs—participation in which is often encouraged by parents—and adolescents’ perception of achievement pressure. Because the influence of parents on children’s development in family microsystems is unparalleled, the current study examined the issue of adolescent achievement pressure through the lens of parental values and expectations.

**SES and Children’s Health and Adjustment**
Socioeconomic Status (SES) is a sociological term used to refer to an individual’s or a group’s capacity to access and utilize valuable resources to sustain and enhance day-to-day living (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). SES can be conceptualized as representing varying degrees of access to three types of capital: financial (material wealth), human (i.e., education, language development, travel, and other enrichment activities), and social (advantageous connections to individuals of high SES; Luthar & Becker, 2002). Numerous studies have indicated that children born to low SES parents tend to experience greater disadvantages and hardships than children born to parents of high SES (Berns, 2007; Evans & Kim, 2013; Luthar & Becker, 2002). Although SES can profoundly affect child development (Berns, 2007; Evans & Kim, 2013), many factors, including individual temperament and resilience, family beliefs and dynamics, and environmental influences can moderate the effects of SES during an individual’s childhood (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

**SES and Financial Capital**

A family’s capacity to access financial resources can greatly affect the quality of housing, schooling, and health care for its members (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Childhood poverty has been correlated with greater exposure to environmental hazards like lead-based paint, tobacco smoke, drug use, family instability, and violence (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Evans & Kim, 2012; Evans & Kim, 2013). In addition, children growing up in families of low SES typically have limited access to enriching...
language development and educational opportunities (Hart & Risley, 2003; Risley & Hart, 2006; Weigel, Lowman, & Martin, 2007), preventative medical and dental care, and adequate nutrition (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). From the start, children at the lowest end of the SES spectrum appear disadvantaged when compared to peers of high SES (Berns, 2007). Children of low SES are more likely to be born prematurely and with birth defects, more likely to experience developmental delays and suffer physical injuries, and more likely to develop respiratory illnesses, sensory impairment, cognitive delays, and long-term neurological problems due to lead exposure (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Evans & Kim, 2012; Evans & Kim, 2013). In contrast, children of high SES are more likely to benefit from “environmental safety nets” (Racz et al., 2011), living in stable households in safe neighborhoods near high-performing public schools (Berns, 2007; Levine, 2006; Luther & Sexton, 2004). Children of high SES have greater access to affordable, quality healthcare, and are more likely to visit doctors and dentists for regular check-ups, and to receive recommended vaccines (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

**SES and Human Capital**

An early childhood spent in a high SES household provides distinct advantages not available to peers of low SES (Evans & Kim, 2012; Evans & Kim, 2013; Weigel et al., 2006). Highly educated parents speak to their babies and toddlers with more regularity and complexity, exposing their young children to a significantly greater and more varied vocabulary by the preschool years (Hart & Risley, 2003; Risley & Hart, 2006; Weigel et al., 2006). These increased levels of conversational, expressive language
shared between parents and young children have been associated not only with a larger vocabulary, but also with increased intellectual accomplishments by children during the preschool and elementary years (Risley & Hart, 2006).

In a longitudinal study of 42 socio-economically diverse families, Hart and Risley observed and recorded interactions between parents and babies on a monthly basis beginning when children were seven to nine months old. By the time the children were three years old, those with parents of high SES were speaking with significantly greater regularity, and significantly larger vocabularies, than their peers of lower-SES (average vocabulary size of preschoolers of high SES was 1,116 words, versus 704 words for preschoolers of lower-SES). The SES differences among children were associated with SES differences between parents’ vocabulary and speech patterns. Most significantly, researchers found that parents of high SES engaged in more frequent and varied verbal interactions with their children. The difference in children’s verbal activity at age three grew exponentially by the age of nine to ten years. This SES-related difference was reflected not only by the children’s disparate vocabulary sizes seven years later, but also by significant differences in a wide range of language and cognitive skills as measured by standardized tests (Hart & Risley, 2003; Risley & Hart, 2006). The children of high SES parents benefitted intellectually from an environmental asset associated with human capital.

Headstart Preschool programs were created in the 1960s to address and remedy the early achievement gap between children at opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. Decades later, however, parental influence and interaction remains the most
significant determinant with regard to children’s later academic success (Hart & Risley, 2003; Risley & Hart, 2006). Beginning at infancy, parental practices and expectations affect a child’s developmental trajectory (Hart & Risley, 2003; Risley & Hart, 2006; Weigel et al., 2006; Weisner, 2002). In the current study, the researcher explored one element of social capital, parental values and expectations, to understand adolescent achievement pressure in a high SES sample.

**SES and Social Capital**

Children who grow up in a high SES environment have access to other individuals of high SES in their families, neighborhoods, schools, and communities that children growing up in low SES environments do not (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Weisner, 2002). Regular interaction with successful, educated professionals in their everyday lives exposes children of high SES to the attitudes, practices, values, and language of a highly educated, economically advantaged microculture (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This social capital can provide children of high SES with access to the highest-quality educational opportunities and enrichment activities, building a framework for later success. In contrast, children growing up in low SES environments have far fewer opportunities to interact with individuals of high SES in their families, neighborhoods, and communities. Connections to teachers, coaches, and mentors can provide educational and enrichment opportunities, but children of low SES have far less social capital than do children of high SES (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).
Given the distinct and substantial economic and educational advantages afforded children of high SES during their early years, it may be difficult to imagine that this population of privileged youth could be at risk for mental illness or dangerous maladaptive behaviors during their adolescent years. Recent academic studies indicate, however, that this is, in fact, the case. It now seems apparent that parents’ prosperity and education do not inoculate their adolescent children from stress-induced mental illnesses and dangerous maladaptive behaviors traditionally associated with adolescents’ growing up in low SES environments (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012; Luther & Becker, 2002; Luther & Latendresse, 2005a; Luther & Sexton, 2004).

**Affluent and At-Risk**

Popular media has publicized much anecdotal evidence suggesting that adolescents of high SES may be at-risk for maladaptive behaviors and mental illnesses typically associated with adolescents experiencing the day-to-day privations and dangers of low SES environments (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012). Recent empirical evidence also suggests that many adolescents of high SES may be experiencing higher-than-average levels of stress, manifesting in anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and behavioral issues (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; ; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al., 2011). In a 2009 editorial, Koplewicz et al. classified adolescents of high SES as a “newly identified at-risk group” (p. 1053), and defined the onset of
maladaptive responses to environmental stresses associated with a high SES lifestyle, “affluenza” (p. 1053). Given the limited research about environmental stressors negatively affecting adolescents of high SES, research documenting maladaptive outcomes in affluent adults is reviewed.

**Affluent Adults**

Although the study of affluent teens at risk is a relatively new academic focus, substantial research has been conducted about the relationships between adults’ affluence, achievement, and well-being (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Luther & Latendresse, 2005b; Myers, 2000; Parker, 2011). The findings from these studies indicate that material accumulation and high status do not necessarily confer contentment, health, and satisfaction with life (Brown, et al., 2009; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Myers, 2000; Parker, 2011; Sheldon, et al., 2004). For example, adults who favor extrinsic rewards, like financial gain and public accolades, over intrinsic rewards, such as fostering relationships and helping others, experience higher rates of depression (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Luther & Latendresse, 2005b).

In Kasser and Ryan’s 1993 study, college students completed Likert Scale surveys that measured self-actualization (or general well-being) and vitality. The participants also rank-ordered personal values that ranged from extrinsic/competitive in orientation to intrinsic/altruistic in orientation. Findings indicated that intrinsic/altruistic personal value
orientations were positively associated with higher levels of self-actualization and vitality, and that an emphasis on the extrinsic goal of financial success was positively correlated with lower levels of self-actualization and vitality. Financial success as a priority was also associated with higher reported levels of anxious-depressive symptoms. A second study with nearly 200 participants (almost twice the sample size of the first study) confirmed the initial findings (Kasser & Ryan, 1993), as did successive survey-based studies conducted with college student samples. Subsequent research findings indicated that participants who ranked intrinsic/altruistic goals associated with family, friendship, and community over extrinsic/competitive goals associated with wealth, prestige, and fame reported greater levels of happiness and general well-being (Brown et al., 2009; Sheldon et al., 2004).

Pursuing endeavors primarily for external pay-offs can decrease enjoyment and engagement, and increase dissatisfaction and distress (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Brown et al., 2009; Luther & Latendresse, 2005b; Sheldon, et al., 2004). It has been postulated that due to their financial security, adults of high SES have less need to rely on others, and that this lack of mutually beneficial social interconnectedness can result in depressive symptoms and superficial relationships (Brown, 2012; Kasser & Ryan, 1993, Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b).

Limited social connections and greater self-interest of adults of high SES have also been linked to a greater propensity to act unethically (Brown, 2012, Kasser & Ryan, 1993). In one study, researchers found that drivers of the most expensive, luxurious vehicles were four times more likely than drivers of average vehicles to illegally insist on
right-of-way at busy intersections. The same UC Berkeley researchers found that college students identified as of high SES were significantly more likely than their peers of lower-SES to report a willingness to engage in unethical behaviors when presented with eight hypothetical dilemmas (Brown, 2012). Wealth and high social status appear to be linked to a tendency to behave less altruistically. Further, studies indicate that financial acquisition and professional prestige are not correlated with higher levels of happiness or general well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Myers, 2000).

Despite achieving greater prosperity than the two previous generations of Americans, today’s adults report lower levels of happiness, and higher levels of depressive symptoms (Myers, 2000). Recent studies indicate that the happiest, most well-adjusted adults are those who value social connections over materialistic ambitions (Parker, 2011). Findings of increased rates of discontent among adults of high SES support an examination of the health and well-being of affluent adolescents, who are sandwiched between success-oriented—but potentially conflicted—adults, and a seemingly insulated, protected population of children of high SES.

The current study’s exploration of parental values and expectations in affluent adolescents is supported by a body of research linking adults’ personal value orientations to anxious/depressive symptoms. Parents’ personal values and achievement expectations could potentially be correlated with their children’s psychological well-being and reports of achievement pressure.

**Affluent Adolescents**
Although academic study about the potential risks and negative outcomes faced by affluent teens is limited, there are compelling findings from a growing body of research that indicate that further study is warranted. Living within home, school, and neighborhood microsystems and mesosystems that are largely defined by ready access to high levels of economic, educational, and social capital does not appear to protect adolescents of high SES from problems that affect American youth across the SES spectrum (Koplewicz et al, 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Rac et al., 2011).

One extensive survey of nearly 1000 teens identified a significant negative correlation between parents’ SES level and teenage children’s overall well-being. This finding was the result of a longitudinal study of adolescents across the SES spectrum enrolled in grades six through twelve. Student participants self-reported personal levels of happiness at specified intervals on a daily basis over the course of the four-year study (Moneta, Schneider, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). Adolescents of high SES consistently reported lower levels of happiness than their adolescent peers of low SES, who, despite having limited access to economic, educational, and social capital, reported the highest levels of happiness across the SES spectrum (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Moneta et al., 2001). In some cases, it appears that adolescents of high SES are even more susceptible to maladaptive behaviors and psychiatric disorders than their counterparts of low SES (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Rac et al., 2011).
**Affluent adolescents and maladaptive behaviors.** Recent studies have explored rates of external maladaptive behavior among samples of affluent adolescents, beginning in the middle school years and continuing through twelfth-grade (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al, 2011). This body of research, supported by analyses of data collected through one-time and longitudinal voluntary student self-reports conducted at participating middle schools and high schools, indicates that affluent children’s engagement in high-risk behaviors, like drug and alcohol use, increases dramatically beginning in seventh grade (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

For example, Luthar and Becker (2002) studied young adolescents in an affluent, suburban community and found a marked difference in substance use—operationally defined as use of nicotine, alcohol and/or marijuana—among both boys and girls between their sixth- and seventh-grade school years. Seventh-graders of high SES were three times more likely to report substance use than their sixth-grade peers of high SES (Luthar & Becker, 2002). Similarly, increased rates of substance use among seventh-grade children of high SES parents were also documented in a second study focused on the well-being of sixth- and seventh-grade students in an affluent suburb (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a). Both studies also found that substance use among affluent seventh-graders was positively associated with symptoms of clinical depression and anxiety (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a). Regular use of alcohol and other drugs appeared to increase in this high SES population throughout the high school years.
Findings of increased rates of substance use and other self-reported maladaptive behaviors among older adolescents in affluent, educated communities have been noted in additional studies (Luther, 2003; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al., 2011). In one study, Luthar and Barkin (2012) surveyed three large samples of eleventh- and twelfth-grade students from three high SES, geographically diverse communities about frequency of substance use and engagement in other rule-breaking and rebellious behaviors. When compared to national normative data, all groups—regardless of gender (with the exception of girls in one sample group)—used alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco at rates that exceeded national norms. Especially notable was the teens’ reported high level of alcohol use, including significant numbers of students who reported using alcohol on a regular basis with the intention of getting drunk. In one sample, rule-breaking behaviors were also positively correlated with high levels of reported substance use (Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

In another study of affluent teens, Luthar and Sexton (2004) found that use of both marijuana and alcohol greatly increased between tenth- and twelfth-grades among both boys and girls (31% increase in marijuana use, 50% increase in alcohol use; 50% increase in marijuana use, 56% use in alcohol use, respectively). Additional studies have found that rates of substance use among affluent teens exceed that of the average American teen (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al., 2011).

Such research indicates that not only are affluent teens potentially more at-risk for substance abuse problems than average American teens, but that they may also be more
at-risk than youth of low SES, those without the economic, educational, and social advantages afforded to the children of affluent, well-connected parents (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al., 2011). When the substance use of tenth-grade students from an affluent suburb of New York City was compared to that of their tenth-grade counterparts in an urban high school located in a low-income, high-crime neighborhood, researchers found that the suburban teens used tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit drugs more frequently and in greater excess (Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). One study reported that 59% of high school boys of high SES surveyed regularly used substances, compared with only 39% of their counterparts of low SES (Luther, 2003).

A national study that prompted subsequent research into substance use problems among affluent American teens found that high school students of high SES reported the highest levels of use of marijuana, tranquilizers, and inhalants across the SES spectrum (Johnston, O’Malley, & Bachman, 1998). As with their younger counterparts, substance use by older affluent teens has been associated with clinical symptoms of anxiety and depression (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). Notably, this substance use/psychological distress relationship was not found in similar low SES samples of teens (Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

More recently, Racz, McMahon, & Luthar (2011) studied maladaptive behaviors among youth of high SES using a model called Problem Behavior Theory (PBT), a paradigm first developed in 1977 to study problem behaviors associated with teens of low SES. The PBT model proposes that particular maladaptive behaviors engaged in by
teens, such as early sexual activity, alcohol and drug use, oppositional conduct, low academic achievement, and juvenile delinquency, are positively associated with each other, and with low socioeconomic status (Racz et al., 2011; Jessor & Jessor, 1977, as cited in Racz et al., 2011). The researchers analyzed data collected from ninth- through twelfth-grade students of high SES. Examination of students’ self-reports of engagement in risky behaviors identified a significant number of affluent teens whose maladaptive behaviors fit the PBT model. This finding supported their hypothesis that adolescents of high SES can potentially be considered an at-risk population (Racz et al., 2011). Thus, material and educational advantages do not appear to protect affluent youth from many of the same negative outcomes experienced by their counterparts of low SES. Some studies indicate that adolescents of high SES may be even more distressed and troubled than adolescents of low SES (Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). These findings support the researcher’s focus on adolescent achievement pressure in the highly educated, middle and upper-middle class college town community that is the setting of the current study.

**Affluent adolescents and psychological distress.** Behavioral problems and substance use among affluent suburban adolescents may well be linked to psychological distress. Luthar and Becker (2002) documented increased substance use by children of high SES between sixth-grade and seventh-grade, in addition to significantly elevated clinical levels of anxious-depressive symptoms for seventh-grade girls. Although symptoms of psychological distress for three of the sample groups (sixth-grade boys, sixth-grade girls, and seventh-grade boys) were similar to national norms, the seventh-
grade girls reported symptoms of depression at twice the rate of the national norm. In addition, 20% of the seventh-grade girls reported symptoms of clinical anxiety (Luthar & Becker, 2002). Studies of older samples of affluent, suburban teens suggest that psychological distress increases during the high school years (Luther, 2003; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luther & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

Findings from one comparative study of high school students indicated that clinical rates of anxiety for boys and girls of high SES were both significantly higher than national norms for tenth-graders, and significantly higher than rates reported by boys and girls in the low SES sample. Once again, girls of high SES appeared to be most affected by depression, reporting clinical symptoms at three times the rate of the normative sample (Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999). In a similar study, affluent, suburban high school girls experienced clinically depressive symptoms at three times the rate of economically disadvantaged, inner-city high school girls (22% and 7%, respectively; Luthar, 2003). Strong correlations between increased levels of psychological distress and increased levels of substance use among affluent teens—associations not supported by data collected from the poorer, inner-city sample of students—led researchers to speculate that substance use by students of high SES may be a form of self-medication (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999).

Similar correlations were found in another comparative study focused on high school students of high SES. For example, Luthar and Barkin (2012) investigated the link between psychological distress and substance use among eleventh- and twelfth-grade
students at three geographically diverse high schools. The researchers found significant relationships between anxious-depressive symptoms and substance use for boys and girls, and between anxious-depressive symptoms and somatic symptoms and substance use for girls. A significant positive association was also found in one sample that reported high levels of the externalizing behavior of rule-breaking and elevated levels of anxious-depressive symptoms (Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

In summary, academic studies indicate that adolescent children of educated, affluent, well-connected parents may be as developmentally at-risk as adolescents at the opposite end of the SES spectrum; this despite the many advantages afforded to this small, privileged population: expensive homes in safe neighborhoods, luxury items, travel opportunities, varied educational and recreational activities, access to highly ranked school and colleges, and lives without material privations. The curious reality that adolescents of high SES are experiencing significant adjustment difficulty and psychological distress has been supported by a small but growing body of empirical research. What contributes to these problems, however, remains less clear. The current study’s exploration of parental expectations and adolescent achievement pressure in a local high SES community could facilitate greater understanding of this newly identified concern.

Potential Sources of Distress for Affluent Adolescents
Studies that have explored maladaptive issues experienced by adolescents of high SES such as student stress, depression, substance use, and suicide have been prompted in part by concerned parents and community leaders seeking support and assistance from educational academia, mental health professionals, and other experts (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar, Shoum, & Brown, 2006; Racz et al., 2011). Researchers have explored many potential causes for affluent teens’ maladaptive behaviors and distress, but one variable, in particular, has been a focus of several studies: achievement pressure (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar et al., 2006). This factor was explored in the current study.

**Achievement Pressure**

Adolescent children of wealthy, educated, success-oriented parents may be especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of achievement pressure. Research indicates that adolescents who feel excessive pressure to excel, whether academically, athletically, and/or socially, experience depression and anxiety, and engage in substance use, at significantly higher rates than normative groups (Ablard & Parker, 1997; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Mukhopadhyay & Kumar, 1999). Many environmental stressors that have been found to be associated with maladaptive behaviors and distress in low SES adolescent populations, such as low-performing schools, dangerous neighborhoods, poverty, and limited access to health
services, for example, are not present in high SES populations (Berns, 2007; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Koplewicz et al., 2009, Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b). A different variable, one that may be unique to high SES adolescent populations (student perceptions of achievement pressure) has been studied as a potential contributing factor to elevated rates of affluent teens’ maladaptive behaviors and distress (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

Academically, pressure to outperform peers on standardized tests and pad high school transcripts with a wide range of Advanced Placement (AP) courses and extracurricular activities in competition for coveted acceptance to elite colleges is often the norm (Abeles, 2010; Bronson & Merryman, 2013; Carter, 2010; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Barkin, 2012). It is not uncommon for these academic achievement pressures to be experienced as early as the middle school years (Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

Even in athletics, the pressure to perform can be overwhelming (Abeles, 2010; Hellstedt, 1990; Keown, 2011; Levine, 2006). Participating on selective, year-round traveling sports teams during the elementary and middle school years is not unusual for children of the affluent. Participation on these teams is not only expensive and time-consuming, but also exposes adolescent children to repetitive stress injuries, and may limit opportunities to structure their limited free time around personal interests and hobbies (Carter, 2010; Maiman, 2012; Keown, 2011; Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012).
Researchers have operationally defined and analyzed adolescent achievement pressures in several studies using variations of three highly reliable measures (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar, et al., 2012). Two measures derived from the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) (Frost et al., 1990) have been used to assess students’ maladaptive perfectionist tendencies and parental achievement expectations (DeCarlo & Luthar, 2000). A third measure developed by researchers at Columbia University’s Teachers College, assesses student perceptions of parents’ values. For this measure, students rank-order value statements operationally defined by researchers as either intrinsic and altruistic in orientation, or as extrinsic and competitive in orientation (DeCarlo & Luthar, 2000).

Research findings using these measures indicate that academic achievement pressure experienced by privileged, affluent adolescents is significantly correlated with maladaptive behaviors and psychological distress (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). The question remains whether environmental stressors in the families, schools, and communities of adolescents of high SES contribute to achievement pressure. Thus, in the current study, perceptions and influences of parental values and achievement expectations were investigated.

Parental Influence
Studies of adolescent achievement pressure have attempted to identify environmental stressors in the families, schools, and communities of adolescents of high SES that generate achievement pressure. Luthar and Barkin (2012) contend that “… the ‘pressure cooker’ lives of affluent teens stem from a complex web of multiple influences” (p. 447). These influences rise from adolescents’ interactions within and across the different environments in which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Children’s development is greatly influenced by proximal processes: reciprocal, dynamic, and increasingly complex interactions between individuals with unique dispositions, assets, experiences, and perceptions, and the environmental contexts in which they grow.

Socialization occurs across overlapping and intersecting ecosystems that include, but are not limited to, family, neighborhood, school, community, geographical region, and nation. These ecological systems which introduce and reinforce socio-cultural norms, practices, and beliefs, are classified from smallest to largest: Microsystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. The areas in which different ecosystems overlap, such as at the intersection of family and school Microsystems, are defined as mesosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Individuals’ subjective experiences within these varied ecosystems are central to development. Thus, the key role of the individual in proximal processes makes the individual an instrument of his or her own development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The home/family microsystem is at the heart of the ecological system, and is, arguably, the most influential niche with regard to children’s development from infancy to adulthood (Berns, 2007; Weisner, 2002). Although peers, teachers, coaches, and adult
mentors across other microsystems and mesosystems become increasingly influential in children’s lives as they enter adolescence (Mowder, 2005), research indicates that parenting practices and beliefs continue to affect children’s activities and decisions throughout the teen years (Steinberg, et al., 1992). For this reason, a number of researchers have explored the influence of parents’ expectations and values on adolescent children’s development and general well-being (Hellstedt, 1990; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar, et al., 2006).

In a large, longitudinal sample of more than 6000 American teenagers from nine high schools in the Midwest and Northern California, Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) surveyed student participants about their parents’ parenting practices. Parental acceptance, involvement in children’s schooling, and encouragement to succeed were studied in relation to student reports of GPA, classroom engagement, school misconduct, and personal achievement expectations. Authoritative parenting practices (setting high expectations for children while nurturing growth and encouraging increasing independence) were found to correlate with higher academic achievement and greater school engagement. In analyzing their findings, the researchers argued that “…older adolescents (are not) impervious to the influence of their parents” (p. 1278), despite the common perception that teenagers are more influenced by peers and media. Clearly, adolescents’ growing independence continues to be tempered by parental influences. Just as Steinberg et al. (1992) measured adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ practices and beliefs to more accurately gauge the effect of parenting behaviors and attitudes on their
recipients, the current study also investigated adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ beliefs and expectations.

Exploring adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ values and expectations is important because parents’ intentions do not always correspond to parenting practices and outcomes (Mowder, 2005). Research indicates that parents may misrepresent or exaggerate their parenting beliefs and practices in self-reports. Moderating parents’ self-reports with children’s firsthand experiences of being parented could present a more accurate, multifaceted picture of parenting practices and influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Steinberg et al., 1992). For this reason, the current study investigated the relationships between parents’ self-reported values and achievement expectations, and adolescent children’s reported perceptions of their parents’ values and achievement expectations. Parents convey values and expectations to their children both implicitly and explicitly, inadvertently and intentionally. Studied together, parents’ and adolescents’ perspectives could help discern actual parenting practices.

Socio-cultural values and beliefs shared across family, neighborhood, and community microsystems influence parents and parenting practices across the SES spectrum (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Mowder, 2005). In many families and communities of high SES, accomplishment in academic, athletic, and extracurricular spheres, admission to elite colleges, and substantial material acquisition are shared aspirations (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012; Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar, et al., 2006). In some cases, whether intentionally or unintentionally, affluent parents may emphasize extrinsic, competitive values over
intrinsic, altruistic values, creating a limited, difficult-to-attain definition of success (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Levine, 2012). As one author observed, “The problem is that if you are anxiously trying to make your child a successful adult, you are most likely communicating anxiety—and not success—to them” (Roiphe, 2012, p. 1).

Academic research involving families of high SES appears to support this claim. In one study of academically gifted sixth-grade children and their parents, Ablard and Parker (1997) measured parents’ expectation orientations and classified them as either learning-focused (valued learning process over performance result) or performance-focused (valued performance result over learning process). Results from the Multidimensional Perfectionist Scale (MPS), indicated that children whose parents were identified as performance-focused were significantly more likely to be identified as maladaptive perfectionists. These children were also more likely to report feeling pressure to succeed, and that parental acceptance was based on their performance.

In a rare study exploring adolescents’ perceptions of parental performance pressure in athletics, using a sample of over 100 teens involved in competitive skiing, Hellstedt (1990) found 73% of the adolescent athletes reported moderate-to-high parental pressure to perform at high levels, and 26% reported that parents’ coerced them into competing. In addition, over half of the adolescents reported that poor athletic performance resulted in parental disapproval, and one-third reported that parents would be “very upset” if they chose to stop competing. Other studies confirm that adolescent children of parents who are perceived as valuing children’s accomplishments over
personal character are at greater risk for dysfunctional behaviors and psychological
distress (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b).

Clearly, affluent teens are potentially at-risk for maladaptive behaviors and
anxious-depressive disorders. Achievement pressure could likely be a source of these
risks to healthy adolescent development. Research findings from studies focused on
families of adolescents in affluent, educated, success-oriented communities are providing
greater understanding of this phenomenon (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker,
2002; Luthar & D’Avanzo, 1999; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Latendresse,
2005b; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar et al., 2006). Adolescent reports of achievement
pressure have been significantly linked to adolescent reports of parental emphasis on high
expectations and competitive, extrinsic values (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker,
2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). The relationship between parents’ self-reports of personal
values and achievement expectations, and adolescents’ perceptions, however, remains
largely unexplored (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b). The current study’s exploration of
parental values and expectations from both parents’ and adolescents’ perspectives could
provide greater understanding of the causes of—and possible remedies to—adolescent
achievement pressure in high SES communities.

Affluent parents, like parents across the entire SES spectrum, generally want their
children to grow into happy, well-adjusted, self-supporting adults. But environmental
factors inherent to the privileged ecological context in which children of high SES are
raised (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Luthar & Barkin, 2012) do not appear to safeguard
adolescents of high SES from several risks to their health and well-being. The current study focused on parent-adolescent dyads in one such community.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Data for this mixed-method study were collected from adolescent students and their parents in a mid-sized highly educated, relatively affluent community situated in a university town in Northern California. Likert Scale surveys, supplemented by several open-ended questions, were utilized to collect information about both parents’ perceptions of their own parental values and parental expectations, and their ninth-grade students’ perceptions of their parents’ values and expectations.

Participants and Setting

Participants

Forty-two adolescent-parent dyads participated in this study. The mean age of parent participants was 46 years (range = 38 – 60 years) and the majority of parent participants were mothers (90%). Parent participants reported their educational and
professional backgrounds, in addition to those of their children’s other parents. As a group, the parent participants were highly educated. Ninety-four percent of the parents reported having earned at least a Bachelor’s Degree, and 48% of the parents reported having earned advanced educational and/or professional degrees. In addition, 88% of the parent respondents reported that they were married, and that their children were living in two-parent households. The average annual household income bracket reported was $125,001- $150,000. Twenty-four percent of parent respondents reported having annual incomes in excess of $200,001. In terms of educational level, marital status, and annual income, the parent participants were very similar demographically to parents in other academic studies about adolescents living in affluent communities (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Luthar & Sexton, 2004).

Student demographics reflected that of their parents. Eighty-six percent of students reported participating (or having participated) in one or more selective educational programs offered through the district’s public schools (Spanish Immersion, Montessori, Honors Programs, and/or Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)); of these, 53% reported participating (or having participated) in the GATE program. Only 14% of student participants reported having cumulative junior high school GPAs below 3.5; 40% reported having earned GPAs of 4.0 or higher. All of the students reported having participated in athletic and/or extracurricular activities (i.e., music programs, student government, scouting, community volunteering) during eighth-grade and/or ninth-grade.

The mean age of student respondents was 14.35 years (range = 13.0 – 15.75 years). Nearly 60% of the student participants were girls, and the majority of student
participants (83%) were entering ninth-grade—rather than tenth-grade—in fall. Eighty-one percent of student respondents identified themselves ethnically as white/European-American, whereas 7% identified themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 12% identified themselves as of mixed ethnic heritage.

In general, the participants in this study were similar, with regard to SES and ethnicity, to participants in other academic studies about achievement pressures (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al., 2011) and to the upper-middle class families upon which recent media attention has focused (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Levine, 2012). As did participants in the aforementioned studies, this study’s participants lived in proximity to a larger metropolitan area. But unlike participants in the other studies, the current study’s participants lived in a college town set in a larger historically rural landscape. This contrasts with participants in much of the research about adolescent achievement pressure, who were recruited from suburbs of San Francisco, Seattle, and New York City (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

The highly educated, middle and upper-middle class community in which the current study was conducted surrounds large research university. There is one comprehensive public high school in the city, which, in 2012, boasted a State of California Academic Performance Index (API) of 868. Although the community’s ninth-graders attend junior high schools, they are considered high school freshmen and, as such, are eligible to enroll in advanced courses at the high school, and to participate on high school athletic teams. Ninth-grade coursework is considered part of a student’s high
school transcript with regard to high school graduation requirements and college admission GPAs. Nineteen Advanced Placement level courses are offered at the high school, in addition to eleven honors level courses. The high school sponsors 52 athletic teams. The top decile ranking for college admission GPAs for the graduating class of 2013 ranged from 4.385 to 4.750. Seventy percent of recent graduates earned 3.0 or higher college GPAs, and 88% of students who took Advanced Placement Tests passed with scores of 3 or higher. This university town shares SES similarities with communities in which previous academic studies about adolescent achievement pressures have focused: “…spheres where youth in wealthy, ultra achievement-oriented communities are likely to be vulnerable” (Luthar & Barkin, 2012, p. 429).

**Participant Recruitment**

At the time of recruitment, there were three junior high campuses in the city’s public school district. Because the district permits only district-generated surveying of students and parents, the participant pool was generated through convenience sampling. Using personal contacts and email inquiries, the researcher recruited parent-adolescent dyads from throughout the small city to generate a student participant pool that would include regular-track, honors-track, and GATE-track (Gifted and Talented Education) students to adequately represent the community’s general student population.

Previous studies about adolescent achievement pressures have focused on different ages and grades of students, from 11-year-old sixth-graders to 18-year-old high school seniors (Abeles, 2010; Ablard & Parker, 1997; Frome & Eccles, 1998; Kasser &
Ryan, 1993; Levine, 2006; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Mukhopadhyay & Kumar, 1999). The current study focused on families with ninth-graders, operationally defined as students who had just completed ninth-grade in spring, or who were about to begin ninth-grade in fall. This grade level was selected because these students were undergoing an important transition from junior high school to high school in a highly educated, academically competitive community. Academic stakes increase and intensify at this stage of schooling for these older junior high school students and younger high school students.

Ninth-grade and tenth-grade are critical transitional years for students in this district. For example, although the district’s ninth-graders are technically considered high school freshmen and can participate in high school sports and extracurricular activities, they remain enrolled in junior high school until tenth-grade. Ninth-grade course selections and grade point averages (GPAs) can affect later offers of college admission. In addition, beginning in 2010, the school district in the target community made the controversial decision to administer the PSAT (Preparatory Scholastic Achievement Test) to all ninth-grade students. Although the College Board developed the PSAT to assess college-prep eleventh-grade students, the school district has opted to annually test all freshmen to prepare more students for college requirements at an earlier age, to identify more National Merit Scholars, and to further increase the public high school’s academic index (Ternus-Bellamy, 2010b).

During the summer of 2012, potential participants—parents of students who had just completed ninth-grade in spring, and parents of students who would begin ninth-
grade in fall—were contacted through personal and email inquiries that explained the scope and goals of the research project. Parents who were interested in completing the adolescent achievement-related surveys emailed the researcher to indicate their interest in participating in the study. A total of forty-six parents, who had either learned about the proposed study directly from the researcher, or indirectly through the researcher’s personal and professional contacts, contacted the researcher about possible participation. Forty-two parent-adolescent dyads completed the current study, a response rate of 91%.

**Measures**

**Parental Expectations**

In order to assess adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ performance expectations, student participants completed a modified version of the *Parental Expectations Scale* (see Appendix A), a 12-item survey developed from a five-item subtest of the *Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS)* (DeCarlo & Luthar, 2000; Frost et al., 1990). The Parental Expectations Scale was modified by the addition of seven statements to permit the collection of more detailed information about potential adolescent achievement pressures related to parental expectations. Students indicated how much they agreed with each of 12 statements about their parents’ performance expectations (i.e., “My parents expect me to excel academically.”), rated on a 5-point Likert Scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat agree, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree).
Parent participants also completed a modified version of the Parental Expectations Scale (see Appendix B). This Likert Scale survey completed by parents was identical to the survey completed by the adolescent participants, except that the statements were modified to reflect parents’ beliefs, rather than adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ beliefs (i.e., instead of “My parents expect me to excel academically,” the survey read, “I expect my ninth-grader to excel academically.”).

Because of a lack of strong inter-item correlations, reliable composite scores, or subscales, could not be generated using the data collected from the completed Parental Expectation Surveys. Therefore, study analyses for similarities and differences between parent and adolescent perceptions were conducted for each of the series of the 12 items in the survey.

**Parental Values**

A second measure completed by adolescent participants was a modified version of the *Parental Values Scale* (see Appendix C). The original measure, developed by researchers at Columbia University’s Teachers College (DeCarlo & Luthar, 2000), required respondents to rank-order five internal character goals that are altruistic in orientation, and five external performance goals that are competitive in orientation. In order to allow for easier analyses of students’ perceptions of their parents’ values, the 10-item Parental Values Scale was changed from a rank order measure to a 5-point Likert Scale. Students indicated how much they agreed with each of ten statements about their parents’ values (i.e., “It is important to my parents that I am respectful of others,” and “It
is important to my parents that I excel academically”). The same Likert measurement scales were used for the Parental Values Scale as were used for the aforementioned Parental Expectations Scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat agree, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree.

Parent participants likewise completed a Likert Scale version of the scale (see Appendix D). This measure was identical to the measure completed by the adolescent participants, except that the statements were modified to reflect parents’ beliefs, rather than adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ beliefs (i.e., instead of “It is important to my parents that I am respectful of others,” the survey reads, “It is important to me that my ninth-grader is respectful of others”; instead of “It is important to my parents that I excel academically,” the survey reads, “It is important to me that my ninth-grader excel academically”).

Inter-item correlations revealed reliable composite scores, for both parent and student responses to the Parental Values Survey. The composite scores represent two different value sets: intrinsic and/or altruistic values/character goals, and extrinsic and/or competitive values/character goals.

Intrinsic and altruistic values were represented by five questions on both the parent and student versions of the Parental Values Survey, such as “It is important to me that my ninth-grader be kind to others,” and “It is important to my parents that I am honest” (see Appendices C and D). Likewise, extrinsic and competitive values were represented by four questions on the parent and student versions of the survey, such as “It is important to me that my ninth-grader attends a good college,” and “It is important to
my parents that I make a lot of money in the future” (see Appendices C and D).

Although question seven (“It is important to me that my ninth-grader be a leader in school”/”It is important to my parents that I be a leader in school”) was initially included in the Parental Values Survey to represent an extrinsic, competitive value/character goal (see Appendices C and D), it was eliminated from the extrinsic, competitive composite score because it was not correlated with like items, and reduced internal scale consistency. The final composite scores for the intrinsic, altruistic values and the extrinsic, competitive values were both determined to be reliable, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .78 and .77, respectively. Scale scores for adolescent and parent reports for each of the two scales were obtained by taking a mean of the scale items. Subsequent analyses were conducted using these composite scores.

Demographic/Student Performance Survey

Adolescent participants completed a short survey to assess demographic information and student academic performance (see Appendix E). The survey included questions about students’ age, gender, and self-reported GPA, as well as questions about students’ participation in extracurricular activities, selective educational programs (i.e., GATE, Montessori, and/or Spanish Immersion) and tutoring services.

Parent participants also completed a short demographic/student performance survey that includes questions from the students’ version, plus additional questions about parents’ age(s), gender(s), education level(s), profession(s), family income, and marital status (see Appendix F).
Open-Ended Questions

Two supplementary open-ended questions were added to each of the Parental Expectations Scale surveys to further inform the study’s quantitative findings. The following two questions appeared on the parent survey: “Do you think your ninth-grade child feels pressure to achieve? Why or why not?” and “What future achievement goals do you have for your ninth-grade child?” The following two questions appeared on the adolescent survey: “Do you feel pressure to achieve? If so, what is the source(s) of this pressure?” and “What future achievement goals do you have for yourself?” Data gathered from these qualitative, open-ended participant questions were examined for themes that might inform the quantitative correlational analyses, assisting in the interpretation of the final results.

Procedures

In response to the researcher’s survey participant recruitment inquiries, interested parents contacted the researcher and provided their mailing addresses. Surveys were then mailed via U.S. Mail to the potential parent participants, along with Consent to Participate in Research forms and stamped, researcher-addressed return envelopes. Forty-six ninth-grade parents received survey packets. Forty-two parent participants returned completed surveys and consent forms.
Upon receipt of the parent participants’ completed consent forms and surveys, the researcher mailed surveys, Assent to Participate in Research forms, and stamped, researcher-addressed return envelopes via U.S. Mail to ninth-grade children of participating parents (surveys were numerically coded to ensure confidentiality, and to allow for future within-family comparisons). Five-dollar Jamba Juice gift cards were also enclosed in the mailings to thank student participants for their assistance with the research project. All forty-two potential student participants returned the completed surveys and assent forms to the researcher by the summer’s end.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

The current study was an investigation of parental performance expectations and personal values, and how these expectations and values may relate to adolescent perceptions of their parents’ expectations and values. The following research questions were addressed.

(a) Do relationships exist between adolescents’ ratings of their parents’ *performance expectations*, and parents’ self-reported *performance expectations* for their adolescent children?

(b) Do relationships exist between adolescents’ ratings of their parents’ *personal values*, and parents’ self-reported *personal values*?

(c) Does a relationship exist between reports of adolescents’ participation in selective educational programs and/or tutoring services, and adolescents’ reports of experiencing achievement pressure?

Qualitative analyses of parent and student responses to open-ended questions further informed the third query.

**Comparisons of Parent and Student Ratings**

Parent and adolescent responses on the Parent Expectations and Parent Values scales were compared. For each scale, a series of Pearson *rs* were conducted to test for
agreement between parent and adolescent perceptions. Next, a series of paired t-tests were conducted to test for differences between parent and adolescent responses.

**Parental Expectations**

Statistical analyses addressed a central question posed by the study: Do relationships exist between adolescents’ ratings of their parents’ performance expectations, and parents’ self-reported performance expectations for their adolescent children? Because preliminary analyses yielded no reliable composite scores, analyses were conducted with each of the 12 items on the parent and adolescent surveys.

First, a series of Pearson rs were conducted to test for agreement between parents’ academic, athletic, and extracurricular expectations for their adolescent children, and adolescent children’s perceptions of their parents’ expectations in these same areas. Significant positive correlations were found between parent and student responses to two survey statements about academic expectations and academic coursework pressure. As shown in Table 1, there was a positive correlation between parent and adolescent agreement for the statement, “I expect my ninth-grader to excel academically/My parents expect me to excel academically” ($r = .41$, $p = .007$). There was also a significant positive correlation between the two variables for the statement, “I don’t pressure my ninth-grader to take classes that don’t interest her/him/My parents don’t pressure me to take classes that don’t interest me” ($r = .31$, $p = .045$).

Next, parent and student responses to each of the 12 statements on the parent and student versions of the Parental Expectations Survey were analyzed using 12 paired t-
tests to test for differences between parents’ and students’ reports. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for both parent and adolescent responses to the 12 statements about parental expectations. Significant findings resulted from four of the individual paired sample t-tests.

Ninth-grade students reported parental expectations were higher than their parents’ reports in two different expectation categories: academic and extracurricular activity, $t(41) = -4.56; p = .001$, and $t(40) = -2.25; p = .03$, respectively. Students rated stronger parental academic expectations than did the parents themselves ($M_s = 2.38$ and 1.60, respectively), and stronger parental extracurricular activity expectations than did parents ($M = 2.07$ and 1.71, respectively).

Ninth-graders also reported parents having higher athletic expectations for them than parents reported themselves, $t(41) = -2.29; p = .03, M_s = 3.05$ and 2.57, respectively).

Adolescent students and their parents also responded very differently to a statement about future expectations, $t(41) = -3.44; p = .001$. Parents reported less agreement with this statement than did their adolescent children: “I have different expectations for my ninth-grader’s future than he/she does”/ “My parent has different expectations for my future than I do” ($M = 1.90$ and 2.52, respectively).
Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Parent and Student Reports of Parent Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.   Academic Excellence</td>
<td>4.17 (.83)</td>
<td>4.22 (.76)</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>-.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.   No Pressure: Classes</td>
<td>3.86 (.81)</td>
<td>3.88 (.99)</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.   Academic Exp. Difficult</td>
<td>1.60 (.77)</td>
<td>2.38 (.91)</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-4.56**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.   Athletic Excellence</td>
<td>2.57 (.97)</td>
<td>3.05 (1.21)</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-2.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.   No Pressure: Sports</td>
<td>4.33 (.79)</td>
<td>4.07 (1.20)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.   Athletic Exp. Difficult</td>
<td>1.50 (.63)</td>
<td>1.79 (.90)</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.   Involvement Extracurricular</td>
<td>3.12 (.94)</td>
<td>3.21 (.95)</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.   No Pressure: Extracurricular</td>
<td>4.02 (.90)</td>
<td>4.07 (1.02)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.   Extracurricular Exp. Difficult</td>
<td>1.71 (.60)</td>
<td>2.07 (.88)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-2.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.  Popularity with Peers</td>
<td>2.19 (.80)</td>
<td>2.45 (1.02)</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.  Perfection Not Expected</td>
<td>4.40 (1.01)</td>
<td>4.52 (.74)</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.  Different Expectations</td>
<td>1.90 (.66)</td>
<td>2.52 (.94)</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-3.44**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, ** p < .01
Parental Values

Next, statistical analyses were conducted to address the research question: Do significant relationships exist between adolescents’ ratings of their parents’ personal values, and parents’ self-reported personal values? Two reliable composite scores, *intrinsic, altruistic values*, and *extrinsic, competitive values*, were established for the student and parent versions of the Parental Values Survey and used in comparisons. The final composite scores for the intrinsic, altruistic values and the extrinsic, competitive values for both parent and student reports were determined to be reliable, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .72 and .74 for the two parent composite scores, and .78 and .77 for the two student composite scores, respectively.

Pearson r tests were conducted to test for associations between parent and adolescent reports. As shown in Table 2, these correlations were not significant.

Paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine differences between parent reports of values and student perceptions of their parents’ values. The paired sample t-tests were conducted with both intrinsic, altruistic values composite scores and extrinsic, competitive composite scores.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for both parent and adolescent reports for both intrinsic and extrinsic parental value scores. As indicated in Table 2, there were significant differences in the parent values scores provided by parents and adolescents. Parents rated their support of intrinsic values/character goals for their adolescent children higher than children rated their parents’ support of intrinsic values/goals for them, $t = 2.92; p = .006$, $M_s = 4.89$ and 4.71, respectively.
An opposite trend was evident with regard to parent and student responses to questions about extrinsic values/character goals. Analyses indicated that parents rated their support of extrinsic values/character goals for their adolescent children lower than children rated their parents’ support of extrinsic values/goals for them, \( t = -3.38; p = .002, Ms = 3.15 \) and \( 3.57 \), respectively).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Parent M (SD)</th>
<th>Student M (SD)</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>4.89 (.14)</td>
<td>4.71 (.38)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>2.92**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>3.15 (.58)</td>
<td>3.57 (.66)</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-3.38**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01

Relationships Between Participant Ratings and Demographic Reports

A series of analyses were conducted to test for relationships between demographic variables and parental expectation and parental value variables. Several significant associations, and one significant difference, were confirmed by these tests.
Parental Age

A negative correlation was found between parent age and student levels of agreement with expectations to excel in athletics. The older the parent, the more likely the ninth-grade student was to report lower levels of agreement with the statement about parental expectations of athletic excellence ($r = -.45, p = .005$). This finding was further supported by parent survey results. A significant negative correlation was found between parent age and levels of parent agreement with athletic expectations ($r = -.34, p = .038$). The younger the parent, the more strongly he/she agreed with the statement, “I expect my ninth-grader to excel in athletics.”

A negative correlation was found between parent age and student levels of agreement with the statement, “My parents expect me to excel academically.” Significantly, ninth-grade children of older parents reported lower levels of agreement with the statement that their parents expected academic excellence ($r = -.34, p = .038$).

A negative correlation was also found between parent age and student levels of agreement with the statement, “My parents don’t pressure me to participate in extracurricular activities that don’t interest me,” such that the older the parents, the more apt ninth-grade children were to agree that their parents did not pressure them to participate in activities that did not interest them ($r = -.36, p = .027$).

Parent Education Level

Education levels of responding parents were positively correlated with levels of agreement with both expectations about extracurricular activity and popularity with peers
(“It is difficult for my ninth-grader to meet my extracurricular activity expectations of her/him,” and “I expect my ninth-grader to be popular with his/her peers”). The more educated the parent, the more strongly he/she agreed with statements about expectations for student extracurricular activity and peer popularity ($r = .37, p = .016$; $r = .37, p = .017$, respectively).

**Student GPA/GATE Participation**

Parent reports of student GPAs were negatively correlated with parent levels of agreement with the statement, “I don’t pressure my ninth-grader to take classes that don’t interest her/him.” Thus, parents reporting higher GPAs for their ninth-graders were more likely to agree that they pressured their ninth-graders to take particular classes ($r = -.35, p = .029$). Parent reports of student GPAs were also positively correlated with parent levels of agreement with the statement, “It is difficult for my ninth-grader to meet my academic expectations of her/him.” Higher student GPAs were significantly associated with higher levels of parent agreement that students were not meeting their academic expectations ($r = .42, p = .007$).

Finally, students who had participated in the Gifted and Talented Education (or GATE) program reported that it was less difficult to meet parents’ athletic expectations of them than did students who had not participated in the GATE program ($M = 3.39$ and $2.63$, respectively). This difference was significant ($t (40) = 2.11; p = .041$).
**Student Age**

One negative correlation was found between student age and student perception of parental extrinsic, competitive values. Older students reported parents placing less importance on extrinsic, competitive values than did younger students ($r = -.32; p = .049$).

**Analyses of Open-Ended Questions**

Participant responses to two open-ended questions included at the end of both the parent and student Parental Expectations surveys further informed this study about adolescent achievement pressure, and helped explain potential relationships proposed by the third and final question of this research study: Does a relationship exist between reports of adolescents’ participation in selective educational programs and/or tutoring services, and adolescents’ reports of experiencing achievement pressure? Handwritten responses were coded and analyzed in conjunction with participant reports of participation in selective and supplementary educational programs. For example, words such as “interest,” “like,” “love,” “enjoy,” and “happy” were coded as intrinsic values when examining parent and student responses to open-ended questions about future academic and professional goals. The researcher also reviewed parent and student participants’ explanations about, and particular examples of, adolescents’ experiences with achievement pressure—or lack thereof—in response to open-ended questions, noting proximal processes specifically identified as sources of achievement pressure.
These qualitative analyses revealed consistencies between quantitative results and written responses about achievement pressures.

**Student Reports of Achievement Pressure**

In response to the question, “Do you feel pressure to achieve? If so, what is the source(s) of this pressure?” nearly 79% of the adolescent respondents described feeling pressured to achieve. Students listed many sources for this pressure, including parents, extended family, teachers, peers, community, media, and individual drive. Notably, almost half of these students—16 of the 33 who reported experiencing achievement pressure—specifically identified parents as a source of this pressure. The following survey comments are representative of students who described parental pressure to achieve: “Yes, I feel pressure to achieve. I think a lot of that pressure comes from my parents,” and “I know my parents expect me to achieve because they think that I am capable of much. I also feel pressure from my sister’s reputation as a PERFECT student and an outstanding athlete.” Markedly, every student who reported feeling pressured to achieve also reported participating in a selective educational program (Spanish Immersion, Montessori, Honors, and/or GATE).

**Parent Reports of Achievement Pressure**

In response to the question, “Do you think your ninth-grader feels pressure to achieve? Why or why not?” 76% of the parent participants responded affirmatively. Over half of the parents who reported that their children felt pressure to achieve—17 of
the 32 respondents—cited themselves as possible sources of this pressure. For example, one parent wrote: “Absolutely—we set the bar high to try your best in whatever you do (sports, school, music, etc.). While our attempted emphasis is on effort as opposed to outcome, I’m certain that our child feels pressure to achieve. Our family (us, grandparents, brother, extended family) have all had significant academic achievements, and I’m certain that our child feels he must do the same.” Another parent expressed a similar statement: “Yes. We feel she is capable of excellent grades and at least some extracurricular activities. We try to send the message that she should work academically ‘to her potential,’ but what I think she hears is ‘anything less than an A is not good enough.’”

Parent responses also described adolescent children’s personal motivation (31%), and the strong influences of peers (47%) and community (34%), as sources of elevated levels of achievement pressure. Interestingly, every parent who reported that his/her ninth-grader felt pressure to achieve also reported that his/her child participated in a selective educational program (Spanish Immersion, Montessori, Honors, and/or GATE).

**Student and Parent Reports of Future Goals**

Another interesting theme emerged during the qualitative analyses of participant responses to the second open-ended question on the student and parent surveys: “What future achievement goals do you have for yourself?”/“What future achievement goals do you have for your ninth-grader? Do you think your ninth-grader shares these goals?”
Ninety percent of all students described future academic and professional goals in response to this general question. This student’s response was representative of many: “I want to be successful. I want to go to a good college and graduate and have a good job.” Other students’ responses were more detailed: “I want to go to a good college and work at a worthwhile job. I wish to take some time abroad and I want to go to grad school/get a Ph.D or other advanced degree. I sort of wish to be a professor or to be a surgeon, however, the first thing I want to do is to graduate high school with as high of score as I think I can get.”

In response to a similar question, 79% of parents described future academic and professional goals for their ninth-grade children. This parent’s comment was typical of many: “We would like him to attend college and be successful in a job he enjoys. I think/know he intends to go to a ‘good’ college, and has ideas of what type of career would like to pursue.”

Also interesting was the finding that of the participants who described future academic and professional goals, more parents than children described the importance of children enjoying future fields of study and/or professions (55% v. 37%), including words such as “interest,” “like,” “love,” “enjoy,” and “happy” in their responses.

Perhaps the most notable finding in the qualitative review of the open-ended goal question was the large discrepancy between the frequency in which parents described general happiness/fulfillment/health, and/or connections to family/friends/community, as future goals for their children (40% of all parent participants), and the frequency in which students described similar intrinsic future goals for themselves (12% of all student
participants). The following comment is reflective of parent responses that emphasized more than extrinsic goals: “My goals for her are to be healthy and happy. I would like her to go to college/university, get a degree and find a job she loves, have a family and lots of friends, travel… I want for her whatever her heart desires. I think her goals are more specific but the part about being healthy and happy, she would agree.” Another parent wrote: “I want her to develop her own interests, enjoy the learning process, have ‘Aha!’ moments, explore her creativity/imagination and feel good about her achievements, whatever they are. I want her to have love, laughter, and health in her life. I think she partly shares these goals but maybe has more immediate and/or concrete ideas about goals at this time.”

In contrast, student responses to this question focused much more on extrinsic, competitive future goals. The following student response to the goal question might partially explain why so many student responses described extrinsic, competitive future goals, and why so few described intrinsic, altruistic future goals: “In the future I see myself wanting to strive for perfection like I do now. I change most of my goals every day or week to correspond with what is expected of me, but not because of my own feelings. I hate having to plan 4 or 5 years ahead of where I am academically. Living in the moment is what I want to do, but everyone does not seem to agree with that type of mindset.”
Chapter 5
DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The researcher embarked upon this study to explore how parents and their ninth-grade children would report experiences of adolescent achievement pressure in a local high SES university town community. Of particular interest were the potential relationships and differences between parents’ self-reports of performance expectations and personal values, and adolescent students’ perceptions of their parents’ performance expectations and personal values. The researcher also explored links between ninth-grade students’ participation in selective educational programs and reports of achievement pressure. Analyses of survey data resulted in several significant findings.

Parent Reports and Adolescent Perceptions

Significant differences were found between parent and student reports of parents’ academic, athletic, and extracurricular activity performance expectations. Students consistently rated parents’ expectations higher than did parents. A similar—and significant—discrepancy was found between parent and student agreement with a statement about ninth-graders’ futures. Ninth-graders were more likely to agree that parents have different expectations for students’ futures than they have for themselves.
Another significant finding was the difference between parent and student ratings of parents’ personal values. Parents rated their intrinsic, altruistic values and goals higher than did their adolescent children. In light of this finding, it was not surprising that ninth-graders reported parents’ emphasizing extrinsic, competitive values and goals more highly than did parents.

A strong majority—more than three-quarters—of both parent and adolescent participants reported that the adolescent students experienced achievement pressure. Furthermore, every parent and student who reported adolescent achievement pressure also reported student participation in at least one selective educational program (Spanish Immersion, Montessori, Honors, or GATE). Notably, nearly half of all student participants—and slightly more than half of all parent participants—specifically identified parents as sources of achievement pressure.

**General Conclusions**

Results in the current study indicate that, in many respects, parents and students have significantly different perceptions of parents’ achievement expectations and personal values—a finding not reported in previous studies about adolescent achievement pressure. The current study also supports earlier findings that adolescents in high SES communities report significant levels of both achievement pressure and parental emphasis on achievement and competitive, extrinsic values (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). In addition, participant
responses to open-ended questions in the study indicate that ninth-grade students in this local university town could be experiencing heightened levels of achievement pressure, and that parents are likely a significant source of this pressure. This possibility warrants further investigation. The current study’s general findings also support the relatively new academic proposition that adolescents living in materially and educationally advantaged environments may be at-risk for maladaptive issues more commonly associated with adolescents at the opposite end of the SES spectrum (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Racz et al., 2011).

Empirical evidence in this study of parental recognition and concern about adolescent achievement pressure in this local high SES community also strengthens earlier studies’ conjectures of parental concern about adolescent achievement pressure in high SES communities in other parts of the nation (Abeles, 2010; Levine, 2006; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005; Luthar & Sexton, 2004). Previous studies focusing on adolescent achievement pressure collected survey data primarily from students. In those studies, parents’ concerns about achievement pressure were largely inferred by parental consent to conduct school-wide surveys of students, attendance at informational meetings and forums, and anecdotal reports (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b). By surveying parent-student dyads, the current study expands the understanding of the relationship between adolescents’ perceptions of parents’ expectations and values, and parents’ self-reported expectations and values. It is clear that affluent, highly educated parents’ expectations and beliefs continue to influence children into their teen years, but findings of significant quantitative and qualitative differences between parent self-reports, and student
perceptions of, parental expectations and values could indicate that achievement messages parents intend to convey to their adolescent children are not always heard or are misinterpreted. Parental influences may be unintentionally detrimental to adolescent health and happiness.

**Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Data for the current study was collected through convenience sampling, which may have resulted in a participant pool that was not as reflective of the general community as a participant pool originating from requisite ninth-grade health classes at a public junior high school—the survey method initially proposed by the researcher—might have been. Conducting a similar future study in a high SES community in which the local school district permits university-generated research could maximize data collection, and ensure a more representative sampling of adolescents in a high SES community.

Another possible limitation of the study was the researcher’s failure to differentiate between the expectations and values of individual parents within each family. When rating parents’ achievement expectations and personal values, students did not differentiate between individual parents’ beliefs; instead, students considered two parents a single unit. Actual perceptions of mothers’ and fathers’ expectations and beliefs may have been significantly different. For example, fathers were specifically mentioned as a source of achievement pressure in open-ended questions answered by
students and parents, but mothers were not. Two examples of comments from two different dyads follow: “Her father had her take higher level courses and then told her he was disappointed in her when she got a B in a class” and “My dad pressures me a lot to do well in school.” Also, because the vast majority of parent participants were mothers (90%), the findings related to parent self-reports may be more specifically applicable to mothers, and not broadly applicable to parents as a combined unit. Future research studies could survey either mothers or fathers specifically, or question both parents living within a single household.

Although the researcher cited several practical reasons for surveying ninth-grade students and their parents, the data collected from this particular participant pool—and the subsequent findings about adolescent achievement pressures specific to this grade-level of students—cannot be assumed to apply to younger and older teens in the community. Findings from other empirical studies, however, suggest that the community’s adolescent students could be experiencing the maladaptive effects of achievement pressure beginning as early as seventh grade and continuing through twelfth grade (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al, 2011). Future research studies could extend and further the findings of the current study by surveying parent-adolescent dyads using the same measures at different grade levels, such as seventh-grade (the start of junior high school) and eleventh-grade (often considered the most critical year with regard to college preparation and admission). Findings from these future studies could be compared to conclusions drawn from earlier studies about achievement pressures reported by younger
and older adolescent participant pools in different communities (Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a; Moneta, et al., 2001).

The current study could also be expanded through future surveying of the existing student and parent participant pools. A longer-term study could incorporate questions related to possible effects of the achievement pressures reported by the students in this study, since previous studies have linked adolescent achievement pressure to psychological distress like anxiety and depression, and maladaptive behaviors, like substance abuse and risk-taking, rule-breaking behavior (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Luthar & Barkin, 2012; Luthar & Sexton, 2004; Racz et al., 2011). A follow-up study could indicate whether local adolescents experiencing achievement pressure are also experiencing anxious/depressive symptoms and/or engaging in developmentally detrimental behavior.

Implications

Although parents’ performance expectations and personal values appear to play significant roles in adolescents’ reports of feeling pressured to achieve, participant responses to open-ended questions about the sources of achievement pressure indicate that the problem may have several different bioecological roots. The home/family microsystem is recognized as the most influential developmental niche in childhood, but children also grow and adapt in response to different and overlapping microsystems in which they interact on a regular basis, such as neighborhood, school, peer groups, extended family, and larger community (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner &
Morris, 2006). Comments shared by student participants indicate that adolescent achievement pressure may well be the result of expectations, values, and influences originating from multiple environmental sources: “I feel many different pressures to achieve. Some of these pressures come from my parents, while others come from my teachers or from social media. When all of that pressure builds up, it is hard to keep everyone happy all the time,” and “Yes, I do feel pressure to achieve. I think a lot of that pressure comes from my parents. But I also feel there is a lot of pressure to do well academically in the community.” Parent perceptions of the sources of adolescent achievement pressure provide additional insight:

Yes. She feels pressured to achieve due in part to the high rate of achievement of her peers, older sister, and other members of her extended family (i.e., cousins, aunts/uncles). In addition, I think she is influenced by the high level of achievement of _____ residents in general. She has said to me several times, “Mom, I wish we lived in [neighboring communities] where I wouldn’t have to try so hard.”

Yes, I do. Some of the pressure comes from us, his parents, but when we have deeper conversations with him, he will convey he feels the pressure internally. I believe he internalizes pressure based on _____’s cultural expectations of kids, which are unrealistic. He has even expressed frustration for receiving good grades when others do slightly better. The competition is relentless and visible. We try to encourage him to do his best, not the best of others, but it seems to make little difference in his pressure.

I think my child feels pressure from parents and siblings, but the bulk of pressure is from peers and community. I think a great deal of pressure is from the comparison to outstanding high achievers in our community. I believe our community expects students to be all around amazing, from academics to sports to music and volunteering. As a parent, I try to keep my expectations in check, but I feel peer pressure as well from other parents.
Adolescent achievement pressures appear to be a serious concern of many parents living in the community in which the current study was conducted. In 2010, an award-winning film, “The Race to Nowhere,” a documentary that explores the high-stakes achievement culture experienced by many high SES adolescents, was screened in the city before a ticket-purchasing crowd of over 550 people (Abeles, 2010; Ternus-Bellamy, 2011). Two months later, in the same city, over 750 concerned parents and educators attended a lecture about the relationships between teen affluence, performance pressures, and maladaptive behaviors by Price of Privilege author and adolescent psychologist, Madeline Levine (Levine, 2006; Ternus-Bellamy, 2011). Madeline Levine returned to the community in February 2013 to discuss her latest best-selling book, Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success—Why Values and Coping Skills Matter More than Grades, Trophies, or “Fat Envelopes” (Levine, 2012; Ternus-Bellamy, 2013). The 500 tickets available for this lecture sold out weeks before the event (Ternus-Bellamy, 2013). Judging from attendance at recent community discussions, the topic of the film and books appeared to resonate not only with parents, but also with educators working in this high SES university town.

More recently, in spring 2013, local high school administrators and counselors announced policy changes to help alleviate escalating levels of academic stress reported on campus. These changes were the result of a four-year collaboration between the school board, district and school administrators, counselors, teachers, and students. The goal was to reduce peer competition and achievement stress. Two of the newly adopted policies include requiring students to take prerequisites before enrolling in rigorous
Advanced Placement courses (or to successfully challenge the new prerequisite requirements through an appeals process), and limiting the total number of AP classes a student can take during his/her high school career to eight. Individual student rankings by GPA have also been eliminated. Graduating seniors are now identified by decile rankings of GPA clusters (Hull & Jiang, 2013).

Head Counselor Courtney Tessler explained the reasoning behind the changes: “We want to provide what is balanced, what is realistic, and what is a good, healthy way to approach school and still have time for athletics and activities and fun and socializing” (Hull & Jiang, p. 2). Clearly, concerns are being discussed and solutions proposed. In light of the community’s interest in the issue of adolescent achievement pressure and recent school efforts to address this issue, the results of the current study could help moderate adolescent achievement pressures in this local setting and in similar communities. Information about the study’s findings could be disseminated through publication of an article in the local community newspaper, and at public forums organized in conjunction with school parent teacher organizations (PTOs) and school climate committees. With additional input from adolescent students, problem-solving strategies could be developed, initiated, and implemented through junior high school and high school channels.

Conclusions

Researchers have only recently recognized the possible risks associated with adolescent achievement pressure, and studies about this phenomenon that affects an
adolescent population previously assumed to be insulated from many physical and psychological risks associated with teens of lower-SES, is still quite limited. Adolescent achievement pressure is a multifaceted issue that requires a balanced, bioecological research approach. Future studies focusing on the causes, effects, and manifestations of adolescent achievement pressure could facilitate better understanding of this issue, and assist parents, schools, and communities in formulating effective preventative strategies. Exploration of the effects of both deliberate and inadvertent messages conveyed by parents and through other proximal processes could help alleviate performance pressure in high SES communities, and promote sensible, individualized achievement goals for adolescent children that support healthy growth and development.
Appendix A

Parental Expectations Scale: Student Survey
### Parental Expectations Scale: Student Survey

*How much do you agree with the following statements about your parents’ expectations?*

1= *strongly disagree*  
2= *disagree*  
3= *somewhat agree*  
4= *agree*  
5= *strongly agree*

1. My parents expect me to excel academically.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

2. My parents don’t pressure me to take classes that don’t interest me.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

3. It is difficult to meet my parents’ academic expectations of me.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

4. My parents expect me to excel in athletics.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

5. My parents don’t pressure me to participate in sports that don’t interest me.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

6. It is difficult to meet my parents’ athletic expectations of me.
   
   1  2  3  4  5
Parental Expectations Scale: Student Survey, p. 2

How much do you agree with the following statements about your parents’ expectations?

1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = somewhat agree  4 = agree  5 = strongly agree

7. My parents expect me to be very involved in extracurricular activities.
   1   2   3   4   5

8. My parents don’t pressure me to participate in extracurricular activities that don’t interest me.
   1   2   3   4   5

9. It is difficult to meet my parents’ extracurricular activity expectations of me.
   1   2   3   4   5

10. My parents expect me to be popular with my peers.
    1   2   3   4   5

11. My parents don’t expect me to be perfect.
    1   2   3   4   5

12. My parents have different expectations for my future than I do.
    1   2   3   4   5
Please respond to the following two questions. If additional space is needed, responses can be continued on the back side of this page. Thank you.

1. Do you feel pressure to achieve? If so, what is the source(s) of this pressure?

2. What future achievement goals do you have for yourself?
Appendix B

Parental Expectations Scale: Parent Survey
Parental Expectations Scale: Parent Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements about your expectations for your ninth-grade child?

1= strongly disagree  2= disagree  3= somewhat agree  4= agree  5= strongly agree

1. I expect my ninth-grader to excel academically.
   1  2  3  4  5

2. I don’t pressure my ninth-grader to take classes that don’t interest her/him.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. It is difficult for my ninth-grader to meet my academic expectations of her/him.
   1  2  3  4  5

4. I expect my ninth-grader to excel in athletics.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. I don’t pressure my ninth-grader to participate in sports that don’t interest her/him.
   1  2  3  4  5

6. It is difficult for my ninth-grader to meet my athletic expectations of her/him.
   1  2  3  4  5
Parental Expectations Scale: Parent Survey, p. 2

How much do you agree with the following statements about your expectations of your ninth-grade child?

1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = somewhat agree  4 = agree  5 = strongly agree

7. I expect my ninth-grader to be very involved in extracurricular activities.
   1  2  3  4  5

8. I don’t pressure my ninth-grader to participate in extracurricular activities that don’t interest her/him.
   1  2  3  4  5

9. It is difficult for my ninth-grader to meet my extracurricular activity expectations of her/him.
   1  2  3  4  5

10. I expect my ninth-grader to be popular with her/his peers.
    1  2  3  4  5

11. I don’t expect my ninth-grader to be perfect.
    1  2  3  4  5

12. I have different expectations for my ninth-grader’s future than he/she does.
    1  2  3  4  5
Parental Expectations Scale: Parent Survey, p. 3

Please respond to the following two questions. If additional space is needed, responses can be continued on the back side of this page. Thank you.

1. Do you think your ninth-grade child feels pressure to achieve? Why or why not?

2. What future achievement goals do you have for your ninth-grade child? Do you think your ninth-grade child shares these goals?
Appendix C

Parental Values Scale: Student Survey
Parental Values Scale: Student Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements about your parents’ values?

1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = somewhat agree  4 = agree  5 = strongly agree

1. It is important to my parent that I am respectful to others.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

2. It is important to my parents that I attend a good college.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

3. It is important to my parents that I am honest.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

4. It is important to my parents that I always try to help others in need.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

5. It is important to my parents that I make a lot of money in the future.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

6. It is important to my parents that I excel academically.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

7. It is important to my parents that I be a leader in school.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

8. It is important to my parents that I shine in extracurricular activities.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

9. It is important to my parents that I be kind to others.
   
   1  2  3  4  5

10. It is important to my parents that I am happy with myself and my life.
    
    1  2  3  4  5
Appendix D

Parental Values Scale: Parent Survey
Parental Values Scale: Parent Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements about your expectations for your ninth-grade child?

1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = somewhat agree   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

1. It is important to me that my ninth-grader be respectful to others.
   1   2   3   4   5

2. It is important to me that my ninth-grader attends a good college.
   1   2   3   4   5

3. It is important to me that my ninth-grader be honest.
   1   2   3   4   5

4. It is important to me that my ninth-grader always tries to help others in need.
   1   2   3   4   5

5. It is important to me that my ninth-grader makes a lot of money in the future.
   1   2   3   4   5

6. It is important to me that my ninth-grader excel academically.
   1   2   3   4   5

7. It is important to me that my ninth-grader be a leader in school.
   1   2   3   4   5

8. It is important to me that my ninth-grader shine in extracurricular activities.
   1   2   3   4   5

9. It is important to me that my ninth-grader be kind to others.
   1   2   3   4   5

10. It is important to me that my ninth-grader be happy with herself/himself and her/his life.
    1   2   3   4   5
Appendix E

Demographic Survey: Student Version
Demographic Survey: Student Version

1. *Please record your current age (in years & months)*: _____ (years) _____ (months)

2. Please circle your current grade:
   - entering 9th grade in fall
   - completed 9th grade in spring

3. *Please circle your gender*:
   - female
   - male

4. *Please circle your approximate junior high school GPA (grade point average)*:
   - 4.0 or higher
   - 3.5 – 3.9
   - 3.0 – 3.4
   - 2.5 – 2.9
   - 2.0 – 2.4
   - 1.9 or lower

5. *Please circle any educational programs in which you have participated or currently participate*:
   - Spanish Immersion
   - Montessori
   - GATE
   - Honors (American Studies/Humanities)

6. *Please list all school-sponsored and non-school-sponsored sports teams and/or organized athletic activities in which you have participated—or plan to participate—in eighth, ninth, &/or tenth grades (examples: AYSO soccer, 8th grade boys’ basketball, tennis lessons, JV water polo…)*:

7. *Please list all academic tutoring services and/or individual coaching services received during your eighth-grade, ninth-grade, &/or tenth-grade school years (examples: math tutor, SAT prep class, softball pitching coach…)*:
8. Please list all school-sponsored and non-school-sponsored extracurricular activities in which you have participated—or plan to participate—in your eighth-grade, ninth-grade, and/or tenth grade school years (examples: jazz band, piano lessons, SPCA volunteer, student leadership, AVID, yearbook staff, Scouting, Parks & Recreation volunteer...)

9. Please circle the option(s) that best describe your ethnicity:

- African-American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Middle-Eastern
- Native American
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Other
- Decline to State

10. Please circle the option that best describes the household in which you live:

- One home with one parent
- One home with two parents
- Two homes with different parents
- Other
Appendix F

Demographic Survey: Parent Version
Demographic Survey: Parent Version

1. Please record your age (in years & months): ________(years) ________(months)

2. Please circle the grade of your adolescent child:
   - entering 9th grade in fall
   - completed 9th grade in spring

3. Please circle your gender:  
   - female  
   - male

4. Please circle the gender of your adolescent child:  
   - female  
   - male

5. Please circle your ninth-grader’s approximate junior high school GPA (grade point average):
   - 4.0 or higher
   - 3.5 – 3.9
   - 3.0 – 3.4
   - 2.5 -- 2.9
   - 2.0 -- 2.4
   - 1.9 or lower

6. Please circle any educational programs in which your ninth-grader has participated or currently participates:
   - Spanish Immersion
   - Montessori
   - GATE
   - Honors (American Studies/Humanities)

7. Please circle the option that best describes your current marital status:
   - Married
   - Divorced
   - Single, Never Married
   - Other

8. If currently married, are you married to your ninth-grader’s other parent?
   - No
   - Yes
   - Not Applicable
9. **Please circle your highest level of education:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Some Graduate School</th>
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<td>Master’s Degree</td>
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<td>Ph.D.</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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10. **Please circle your ninth-grader’s other parent’s highest level of education:**

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<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Some Graduate School</th>
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11. **Please circle the option(s) that best describes your current career field:**

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<th>Architecture/Engineering</th>
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12. **Please circle the option(s) that best describes your ninth-grader’s other parent’s current career field:**

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13. Please circle the option that best describes your family’s average gross annual income:

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