# BLACK DEAF STUDENTS

*A Model for Educational Success*

Carolyn E. Williamson

# Black Deaf Students

# Black Deaf Students

*A Model for Educational Success*

Carolyn E. Williamson

Gallaudet University Press
Washington, D.C.

Gallaudet University Press
Washington, D.C. 20002
http://gupress.gallaudet.edu



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Williamson, Carolyn M.
Black deaf students : a model for educational success / Carolyn E. Williamson.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-56368-351-0 (alk. paper)
1. Deaf--Education (Higher)—United States. 2. African American college students. I. Title.
HV2545.W55 2007
371.91'208996073--dc22
2007009139

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984.

# Contents


Preface vii

Introduction xi

1 At-Risk Factors and Resilience 1

2 Backgrounds of Successful Postsecondary Graduates 24

3 Protective Factors in the Family 37

4 Individual Characteristics 68

5 The Role of Schools in Resilience 82

6 Protective Factors in Postscondary Programs 109

7 Community Protective Factors 127

8 Overcoming Obstacles 136

9 A Resilience Program Model 150

10 Conclusions and Recommendations 170

Appendix: Research Design and Method 181

References 191

Index 203

# Preface

This study is a retrospective view of the protective factors that are critical to African American deaf and hard of hearing students' successful transition through postsecondary programs. The data come from a qualitative study of nine African American men and women who were each interviewed twice. During the interviews, some participants used American Sign Language (ASL) only, and some used a combination of voice and ASL to communicate their responses to the questions. Since ASL is a visual language and not a written language, I translated the data from ASL to English. The transcripts from the interviews were reviewed by each of the participants to ensure that my translation accurately represented what the participant communicated.

There were some limitations to the study. All of the participants agreed the first time that they were asked to participate in the study and were enthusiastic about telling their stories. By definition, these were highly motivated people who recognized the implications of a study of the successful transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing individuals. They may not view obstacles in the same manner as persons who did not overcome the obstacles in their lives and did not graduate from colleges or universities. However, they faced obstacles and challenges. I was able to develop themes from their stories that identified factors that helped them reduce and eliminate disruptions in their lives, become resilient, and successfully transition into postsecondary programs and graduate.

Another limitation was the small group of individuals available to the investigator to ask to participate in the study. The size of the sample required several changes in how the data would have to be presented to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

The fact that this was a retrospective study presented another limitation. This meant that individuals had to rely on their memory. The population selected for this study had graduated from both high school and college,

which means the participants' perspective was based on memory of what occurred during those periods in their lives. Maxwell (1996) states that people have selective perceptions. In this case, I relied on the participants to remember events as they were and not as they wished that they had been. Reviewing documents from the participants' past could have helped with recall of experiences. However, a review of their yearbooks had to be eliminated from the document review because the participants did not have them available.

I was acquainted with some of the participants because (a) the African American Deaf community is small, (b) the investigator has worked in the Deaf community for over 20 years, and (c) the investigator is an active participant in the African American Deaf community. Already being familiar with the participants in other contexts required extra caution on my part in interviewing and presenting an unbiased picture of those individuals. I utilized feedback from my peer debriefer to focus on areas that could result in the bias of the investigator in interpreting the data. Also, as an African American female who has encountered some of the situations described by the participants, I had to be careful not to permit my own experiences to influence how I perceived the experiences of the participants.

Another limitation is that the findings cannot be generalized to all African Americans since this was a heterogeneous group living in different parts of the country, confronted by different obstacles. Finally, limitations were inherent in self-reporting about experiences. Each participant based the information on his or her interpretation of each question.

The African American Deaf and Hard of Hearing community is very small, and it becomes even smaller when focusing on African American deaf and hard of hearing professionals. Due to the small number of professionals, most of them know each other and are known in the Deaf community. Special care was taken to conceal the identities of the participants because they could easily be identified through the types of schools they attended, occupations, and their community affiliations. Initially, I decided to use fictitious names in the study. However, I decided to eliminate the fictitious names and use a composite of the case data instead of presenting individual cases to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

A criterion for participation in this study was that all participants would be of African decent and identify themselves as African American.

"African American" was defined as those individuals born to parents who are American born, Black, of African descent, and those of mixed relationships in which one partner is Black of African descent and who identify themselves as African American.

This distinction was made since I have found that some researchers place all Black individuals into the category of African American, when many individuals do not identify themselves that way and come from other countries. They do not have the same cultural backgrounds as African Americans and may not have experienced many of the ethnic and social obstacles that have confronted African American students. Some Black students are from other countries where they represent the majority culture and their cultures are celebrated.

The participants in this study viewed themselves as African American first and deaf and hard of hearing second. This finding is consistent with other literature on how African American deaf and hard of hearing individuals perceive themselves (Aramburo, 1989; Cohen, 1991; Hall, 1998). Though they viewed themselves as African Americans first, they recognize and accept their deafness and hard of hearing status.

# Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to my mother, Ida Minerva Williams; my grandmother, Mamie Estelle Washington; and my uncle, John C. Cabot. They taught me the importance of God, love, positive family and other relationships, open communication, academic excellence, high expectations, discipline, cultural pride, a strong work ethic, societal contributions, and perseverance.

God has blessed me with people in my life who support my vision to disseminate information to students, parents, educators, and community stakeholders that enhances the education of African American and other students and helps them become successful, productive, and contributing members of society.

First, I thank the Lord for the participants in this study. I am extremely grateful for your contributions and ongoing support. This book could not have been completed without your willingness to share information with me about your families, schools, and communities. Each of your legacies will provide a model to inspire other African American deaf and hard of hearing students to prevail beyond the obstacles in life to obtain one or more degrees from a four-year postsecondary program.

To my husband, Alvin, I thank you for your continuous prayers, love, and ongoing support. I appreciate the many hours you have given to reviewing my manuscript, your many sacrifices to ensure that I could focus on my vision and goals, and the wisdom that only a husband who loves me could give. You are truly a blessing. I love you.

To my son, Alvin Cabot Williamson, and my daughter-in-law, Renee, who provide me with love and devotion, I am grateful. I am proud of you as loving and caring parents of my wonderful grandchildren, Julian and Alvin, Jr., and that you recognize the importance of providing them with nurturing, open and ongoing communication, high expectations, academic resources, cultural pride, structure, and abundant experiences

that enable them to flourish in their spiritual, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

To my sister, Laura Brice-Foster; my brother, David Williams; my sister and brother in Christ, Maggie and Dennis Green; other family members; and friends whose lives are living testimonies of how resilience can help you prevail, succeed, and enjoy life, I love you dearly.

I thank all of the pastors and their wives who have provided me with the spiritual substance and empowerment that helped me persevere to complete this book. I am especially grateful for the spiritual inspiration provided by Bishop T. D. and Mrs. Serita Jakes, Revs. Drs. Grainger and Jo Ann Browning, Revs. Brian and Felica Thompson, and Rev. Eddie and Mrs. Brenda Thomas.

Special thanks to Dr. Frank Duffy, Dr. Donna Mertens, Dr. William Marshall, Dr. Simon Guteng, Dr. Howard Busby, and Dr. Linda Delk for encouraging me and sharing in my vision. Your expertise has contributed greatly to the presentation of the data for this book.

I appreciate the time and beneficial postsecondary program perspectives of Ellie Rosenfield, Karen Pines, and Stephen D. Sneed and their willingness to share this information with me.

I very grateful to my editors Ivey Pittle Wallace and Deirdre Mullervy, whose editorial skills and suggestions enhanced the contents of this book.

I thank Darcel McClain for listening to my ideas, looking at my sketches, and helping me develop illustrations.

Finally, I thank all of you who read this book and will make a difference in the lives of all children by helping them become resilient and able to succeed in school and postsecondary programs.

# Introduction

Resilience is the ability to rebound and achieve healthy development and successful learning despite obstacles and adversities. It is the ability to persevere through the challenges and stress that occur in today's world (Benard, Amsden, & Diaz, 2002; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Masten, 1994). Resilience is the foundation that prepares and sustains us to triumph over hardships and to succeed in our goals.

All people innately have the capacity for resilience "that naturally motivates individuals to meet their human needs for love, belonging, respect, identity, power, mastery, challenge, and meaning" (Benard, Amsden, & Diaz, 2002, p. 1). Resilience is an outcome of innate and external protective factors. Protective factors are the buffers, insulators, and modifiers that reduce the impact of risk on healthy development and academic achievement. Protective factors include both individual characteristics (innate assets) and environmental supports (external assets). Internal assets are known as positive developmental outcomes that include cooperation, communication, empathy, self-efficacy, self-awareness, faith in a supreme being, intelligence, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, motivation, self-confidence, self-determination, leadership skills, positive work ethic, cultural identity, care for others, a sense of humor, self-discipline, assertiveness, and a vision and plan for the future (Benard, Amsden, & Diaz, 2002; Masten, 1994; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Environmental protective factors are the external assets which are found within families, schools, and communities. These external assets have been identified as caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation (Benard, Amsden, & Diaz, 2002). In a caring and supportive environment, a student has relationships with positive, competent, and supportive adults. These adults are not limited to the student's parents. They include extended family, guardians, ministers, school personnel, and other significant adults in the student's life. In their relationships with the student, these adults maintain open and ongoing communication, set high

expectations, give positive reinforcement, provide challenging educational experiences, provide meaningful participation in activities, establish discipline and structure, and provide spiritual training (Benard, 1991; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1982).

The positive outcomes of individual resilience can occur in many forms—high academic achievement, graduation from high school, vocational training, or postsecondary programs; a healthy emotional well-being; appropriate social behavior; and positive interpersonal relationships. In other words, resilience is an ongoing process that helps us transition effectively through each stage of our lives. It does not mean that we will not have problems or face crisis situations. However, possessing resilience means we will be better prepared and have the courage, confidence, stamina, resourcefulness, skills, and supports in our environment to persevere despite hardships. Resilient people are not perfect; they make mistakes. However, they learn from their mistakes, let go of them, and move on with their lives in a positive and productive manner.

## The Significance of This Book

The increasing body of knowledge about resilience, protective factors, and school success points to individual characteristics and environmental factors that can be developed, reinforced, and altered to increase a student's potential for educational achievement. I am particularly interested in how these factors can be applied to African American deaf and hard of hearing students. Though data clearly show a link between students' resilience and academic achievement, my review of the literature revealed that the underachievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students has received considerable attention while comparatively little notice has gone to those who have succeeded in high school and postsecondary programs. Most of the research data I found focused on high-achieving African American hearing students. To rectify this situation, I interviewed nine African American deaf and hard of hearing postsecondary graduates on the factors that contributed to their graduation from postsecondary programs, what they viewed as obstacles, how they overcame them, and their recommendations for facilitating graduation from postsecondary programs. For this study, postsecondary programs were defined as four-year colleges and universities.

This book provides insights by giving "voice" to a group that is rarely heard in research. The perspectives of the participants in my study enable readers to view them as a heterogeneous rather than as a homogeneous group. Their stories provide vital information for parents, other caretakers, school personnel, community stakeholders, and those enrolled in education and mental health preparation programs. In addition, the insights gained from them about how they succeeded can be useful in facilitating positive outcomes for students who are going into two-year colleges, vocational training, and work settings.

The low graduation rates of African American deaf and hard of hearing students from postsecondary programs strongly suggest that there is a need for immediate interventions; otherwise, a large group of the next generation will be lost to dependency and other dire situations. There is a need to redirect research and develop programs to perpetuate success among African American deaf and hard of hearing students. To enhance school academic achievement and postsecondary program completion, I propose that parents, educators, researchers, and community stakeholders develop a collaborative partnership-based program to build and enhance resilience in African American deaf and hard of hearing students. I believe that African American deaf and hard of hearing students can achieve on the same level as their White peers if they have the appropriate protective factors in their homes, schools, postsecondary programs, and communities to help develop and reinforce individual characteristics that build resilience.

# 1 At-Risk Factors and Resilience

A COMPREHENSIVE and collaborative educational approach needs to be taken to improve the educational achievement of African American students. Large achievement gaps in educational outcomes still persist between diverse groups, and by some measurements, these gaps have widened in recent years (Edelman, 2002, citing Tidwell, 2000). The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test, referred to as "the Nation's Report Card," measures what America's students know and how they perform in various subject areas. Assessments are conducted in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts. The reading assessment shows that as early as the fourth grade, there is a difference between the reading scores of African American, White, and Hispanic students. Although 75 percent of White students' test scores are at the basic level or above, only 44 percent of Hispanic and 40 percent of African American students are reading at the basic level or above (Legler, 2004).

When compared to their percentages in the student population, African Americans are underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. For example, African Americans represent 17 percent of the student population and 5 percent of AP calculus tests, and White students represent 60 percent of the student population and 72 percent of AP calculus tests. Furthermore, African American students have lower high school and college graduation rates than White students. Only 51 percent of African American students who began high school in 1997 graduated in 2001, whereas 72 percent of White students graduated. Of those students who entered college in the fall of 1998, 40 percent of African American students graduated in four years, and 59 percent of White students graduated (Legler, 2004).

There have been school reform programs, innovative strategies, and discussions by school administrators, researchers, politicians, the media, parents, and community stakeholders about how to improve the school achievement of African American students; however, the gaps in academic

achievement between African American and White students continue. The African American students who are failing to achieve at grade level are from all income levels, one- and two- parent homes, stable and dysfunctional families, and suburban and inner-city schools.

However, some African American students from these same backgrounds have overcome the odds and have succeeded in school. They have graduated from colleges and some elite universities. Some hold prestigious positions and earn high incomes. This obviously dispels the myth that African American students do not have the innate abilities to succeed in school and attend colleges and universities. What protected this group of African American students from succumbing to the challenges and adversities that confronted them and allowed them to pursue successful educational and life goals? How have these students obtained the strength to overcome problems and obstacles and succeed while others from the same backgrounds have not been able to do so? Instead of focusing on a deficit model of African American students, research is beginning to focus more on successful African American students who are resilient, can overcome obstacles, and have successfully achieved in and transitioned through high school, colleges, and universities. Also, research is focusing on schools that have been successful in increasing African American students' standardized test scores and graduation rates and preparing them for college, as well as college programs that provide protective factors that result in graduation.

Like their hearing peers, too many deaf and hard of hearing African American youth and young adults are functioning below academic grade level, have low standardized test scores, are overrepresented in low-level and special education classes, have lower graduation rates, and are less prepared to enter and graduate from college. Too many of them are ending up dependent on public financial aid, in low-paying and dead-end jobs, unemployed, loitering on the streets, and increasingly in penal institutions.

The transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing students from high school to four-year colleges and universities is one of the more important but least researched issues in the field of Deaf education. Little is known about what contributes to their success in school and postsecondary programs. The majority of the educational research on deaf and hard of hearing students has been done on White students and their families. Research data indicate that the positive effects on students'

school achievement based on samples of White students may not apply to African American students (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, l992). It is also important for studies to focus on African American deaf and hard of hearing students as a heterogeneous group. There are differences within the African American race as in other ethnic groups. Like other minority groups, African Americans are not a homogeneous group.

The small amount of research that has been done on African American deaf and hard of hearing students has been mostly from a deficit perspective. Most of this research focuses on three factors: (a) the characteristics of the population, (b) factors that contribute to failure, and (c) low academic outcomes. Based on deficit research, recommendations have been made for additional research, a change in educational policies, innovative program planning, creative instructional methods, school and parent partnerships, interagency alliances with community organizations, and national school reforms to improve educational outcomes for this group of students (Allen, Lam, Rawlings, Rose, & Schildroth, 1994; Allen, Rawlings, & Schildroth, 1989; Cohen, Fischgrund, & Redding, 1990; Moores & Oden, 1977). However, this author could find no evidence of improved educational achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students based on recommendations from deficit research.

There was little research found that focused on successful African American deaf and hard of hearing high school and postsecondary program graduates and the factors that contributed to their graduations. The lack of data leaves a large gap in information that could be useful to parents, educators, and other stakeholders in providing effective programs and resources to upgrade the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. In addition, there was no study found that focused on protective factors that contribute to the resilience of African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

The last comprehensive study of the school-to-work transition of African American deaf students, which showed a comparison to their White peers' achievement, was completed by Allen et al. (1989). That study focused on enrollment and exiting patterns, academic achievement, vocational training and coursework, employment while in school, and assessment of these groups of students. The study showed that African American deaf students' academic achievement level was low.

## Impact of Deficit Research on Developing Programs to Enhance Achievement

A concentration of deficit research on African American deaf and hard of hearing students has precluded gaining data about what factors contribute to success for this group of students. This diminishes the amount of useful data, based on successful outcomes, for educational program planning that could possibly increase student academic achievement.

The "at-risk" concept has been used in education for over 20 years and is grounded in the medical field (Brown, D'Emidio-Caston, & Benard, 2001). The present use of the term "at-risk" in education also evolved from its usage in sociology, psychology, child welfare and social work, early childhood education, special education, public policy, economics, and demography (Brown et al., 2001; Spencer, Dornbusch, & Mont-Reynaud, 1990; Swadener, 1995). Using this medical model, educators and researchers focus on how appropriate interventions can prevent, reduce, or eliminate low academic performance of students identified as at-risk. Educational policies, programs, and funding have been developed and based on the identification of risk factors (Brown et al., 2001). The National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 and the Education Commission of the States in 1988 used the term at-risk in their reports. These reports suggest that the environments where children live had more impact on their success in school than the school environment (Brown et al., 2001). Researchers and educators found that the focus on risk factors led to a deficit model of viewing students placed in this category. This focus resulted in labeling, stereotyping, and developing low expectations of this group of at-risk students, which in turn resulted in some students' placement in special classes (Brown et al., 2001; Spencer et al., 1990). This focus also contributed to some educators developing the conviction that those students identified as at-risk would probably fail to succeed in school (Brown et al., 2001). This approach—viewing risk factors as having a negative impact on success in school—places the blame for a student's failure in school on factors innately within a child and within his or her family (Brown et al., 2001; Spencer et al.,1990; Winbourne, 1991). This deficit model attributes the failure of minority students in school to family backgrounds that are seen as disadvantageous and dysfunctional compared to what is considered a "norm" in the White middle class (Spencer

et al., 1990). Benard (1991) refers to this as the "pathology paradigm," or the "blaming the victim syndrome," which focuses on a "fixing the kids perspective" (p. 7). Swadener (1995) states that this deficit model emphasizes "getting the child ready for school rather than getting the school ready to serve increasingly diverse children" (p. 18). He further points out that children's race, gender, socioeconomic class, native language, family composition, and community where the family lives places them in at-risk categories for interventions. Benard (1991) suggests that successful prevention interventions need to focus on fostering and building on the positive environmental contexts of the families, schools, and communities that strengthen positive behaviors. Research data indicate that, although programs have been funded to correct the problems identified as risk factors, the academic achievement of "at-risk" African American students has not improved significantly (Brown et al., 2001).

Boykin (2000), who does extensive research on African American students' academic achievements, suggests another way of identifying children referred to as "at-risk." In proposing a framework to help eliminate some of the negative stigmas that relate to this term, he recommends using the term "children placed at risk." He concludes from his research and his review of others' research that there are factors outside of the child that place the child at risk. He suggests that children placed at-risk can succeed,

> if they are fortified where they are vulnerable through providing supportive and integrated academic, personal, and social services; through tutorial assistance and academic, cultural, and social skills enrichment activities as needed; and through fostering resiliency so that they can succeed even in the face of adverse circumstances. Children can succeed in school if we ensure that their peers are supportive of enhanced outcomes through peer tutoring, and through cooperative and communal learning activities. Students can have enhanced outcomes when school-, family-, and community-partnership activities, which benefit schools and students on the one hand, and families and communities on the other, are implemented. Children can succeed in school if we reinforce the idea that teachers and other school personnel serve as advocates rather than as adversaries for children that they believe and are committed to the proposition that all children can learn. (p. 9)

Too often the strengths of special education students are not identified or enhanced through appropriate curriculum and instructional practices.

Instead, schools focus on the students' weaknesses (Gartner & Lipsky, 1993; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). The Individualized Educational Program (IEP), which is supposed to be a blueprint for a student's education, is often developed around a student's disabilities rather than his or her talents and strengths (Anzul, Evans, King, & Tellier-Robinson, 2001; Fine, 1993; Trent et al., 1998).

By focusing on the risk factors, educators do the following:

1. Ignore the theory that risk factors do not consistently result in negative long-term outcomes for students
2. Identify students who are at-risk, but not the possible outcomes
3. Promote stereotypes and focus almost exclusively on them, which does not contribute to success for minority students (Brown et al., 2001; Trent et al., 1998)

Focusing on factors that contribute to success for students could assist educators in better understanding policies and programs that reinforce resilience and enhance student academic achievement (Brown et al., 2001; Trent et al., 1998). To facilitate this process, researchers recommend making more use of qualitative research methods to collect data and to move beyond this deficit perspective (Anzul et al., 2001; Madison, 1992). By using qualitative methods, researchers can observe African American deaf and hard of hearing students in their environments (e.g., home, school, postsecondary programs, and community). Research on African American deaf and hard of hearing students indicates that they have been identified as high-risk for below-level academic functioning as well as school failure (Allen et al., 1989, 1994). Just as the resilience research suggests different methods for collecting and analyzing data on other minority students, there is a need to utilize different methodologies that focus on the strengths of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. This could redirect the paradigm from one of deficits to one of resilience.

As with African American hearing students, a lack of academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students is a concern for parents, educators, and community stakeholders. These groups need research-based answers to questions such as, what are the factors that help

students overcome obstacles and become successful in their school adjustment and academic achievement?

The questions become, how can information regarding protective factors be communicated to parents to enhance their ability to help their children overcome obstacles in their environment? What factors can be changed, modified, or introduced into the classroom setting to help all African American deaf and hard of hearing students have a sense of belonging and achievement in the classroom? Parents, many educators, and community stakeholders want to move beyond political, racial, and educational debates; trial and error; "finger-pointing"; and low academic outcomes. They want to have measurable academic improvements for African American deaf and hard of hearing students. Researchers need to find a method for disseminating resilience data to parents, educators, and community stakeholders in a user-friendly manner.

## Present Status of Education of African American Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

The percentage of African American deaf and hard of hearing students who graduate from high school and are prepared to enter postsecondary programs is very low compared to White deaf and hard of hearing students. This low achievement level and lack of preparation has been a concern for decades (Allen et al., 1989, 1994; Cohen et al., 1990; Moores & Oden, 1977). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, of the 3,360 deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in two- and four-year colleges from 1995 to 1996, only 4.9 percent were African American, whereas the enrollment for White students was 85 percent (Horn, Berktold, & Bobbitt, 1999).

The graduation rate for African American deaf and hard of hearing students is very low. MacLeod-Gallinger (1993) analyzed postsecondary data from the Secondary School Graduate Follow-up Program for the Deaf for the years 1982 through 1992. She found that for bachelor's degrees or higher, White graduation rates were at 6 percent, and African Americans represented less than 1 percent (0.4 percent) of the graduates. The National Center for Education Statistics found that 16.8 percent of White students who were deaf or hard of hearing received bachelor degrees, and the sample size for African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American

Indian/Alaskan Native was considered too small for a reliable estimate (Horn et al., 1999).

### Demographics of Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Even in postsecondary programs specifically designed for deaf and hard of hearing students, enrollment figures for African American students are low. At Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts university for the deaf in the world, only 13 percent of the undergraduates and 7 percent of the graduate students enrolled in 2003 were African American (Gallaudet University, 2000–2004; C. Yeh, personal communication, November 12, 2004). At the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), the largest technology college for deaf and hard of hearing students, 9 percent of the students enrolled in 2003 were African American (National Technical Institute for the Deaf, 2003).

Gallaudet and NTID recognize the need to make a more concerted effort to address diversity and inclusion. Both have initiated efforts to increase the admission, retention, and graduation rates of minority students. Both postsecondary programs have African American students as their largest minority population.

Gallaudet is in the planning stages of its diversity plan. The university has appointed a Campus Climate Team and Work Groups, conducted a climate study (the president of the university held a town meeting to discuss the results), established priorities for addressing the recommendations from the climate study, created an Academic Affairs Planning Committee and selected three fellows, and made it a part of the Academic Affairs New Direction plan to address diversity initiatives (Gallaudet University, 2003; Gallaudet University Division of Academic Affairs, 2004; L. Page, personal communication, November 28, 200; C. Yeh, personal communication, January 26, 2005).

The following are the initiatives for the three fellows as stated by Gallaudet's president:

> They are to work together to develop a plan to manage diversity initiatives throughout the University. They will address recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students, plan training for faculty and staff on what diversity means at Gallaudet, develop awareness programs, work to increase diversity in the curriculum… They will work collaboratively, and they will

> also work in support of the good efforts already made by the Office of Diversity and Community Center's workshops and trainings, faculty efforts to continually increase diversity intensive courses, the mentoring program, the teaching fellows program at the Clerc Center, and other good efforts that are happening on campus. (Gallaudet University, 2003)

The offices of the president, provost for the university, and vice president for administration and finance at Gallaudet have taken an active leadership role in the assessment, planning, and setting of priorities for the university in this process. Evidence clearly supports strong and visible leadership in establishing a racial, ethnic, and cultural environment that is inclusive, welcoming, accepting, and respectful of all diverse groups (Hurtado, Milem, Pedersen-Clayton, & Allen, 1998; Jones, 2001).

NTID has initiated a plan to increase the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of minorities, and each department is responsible for planning and implementing initiatives to support this plan. The Student Life Team provides one element of this support. The activities of the Student Life Team indicate that the strategies used to increase minority enrollment, retention, and graduation are those that have been identified in the resilience research on protective factors that enhance educational achievement, which include a nourishing and supportive environment. The staff is multicultural and provides role models who can relate to students' cultural experiences. The team provides meaningful activities for student participation that promote feelings of belonging and acceptance into the college. From 8:00 a.m. to midnight, they make available resources and referral services to promote academic excellence, such as tutoring and counseling services. Experienced staff members are available during these hours. Services include ongoing tutoring, monitoring, follow-up, and support services. Organized cultural and peer support activities further enhance the students' sense of belonging in the campus environment (K. Pines, personal communication, January 21, 2004). All of these factors increase the integration of students into the social and academic environment of postsecondary programs and have been shown to contribute to high retention and graduation rates of African American students (Jones, 2001; Slater, Clarke, & Gelb, 2003).

## Factors that Contribute to Lack of Achievement

Why it is that such a large percentage of African American deaf and hard of hearing students are so poorly prepared for college? As early as 1977, Moores and Oden recognized that African American students were not receiving equal services in schools. Moores and Oden (1977) reviewed data from the United States Census; studies of the adult deaf population from World War II to 1977 on acceptance of African Americans in deaf organizations; school enrollment in programs for the deaf; preschool enrollment; the number of African Americans with acquired deafness; and the number of African Americans identified as mentally retarded. Their findings reveal that African Americans made up 13 percent to 15 percent of the total population of deaf students; yet, they made up 22 percent of all deaf children identified as mentally retarded, more than double the percentage of White students who were so classified. In addition, they found that educational services to this group were inferior to those provided to other deaf individuals; there was an assumption that deafness was infrequent in the African American population; there was underestimation of the needs of the population; and the African American deaf child was not discussed, written about, or thought about very much.

Moores and Oden (1977) conclude that some of the problems related to lack of services and the high incidence of identifying this group of students as retarded could possibly be "attributed to ignorance and a lack of sensitivity on the part of hearing White adults when dealing with Black children in educational and clinical settings" (p. 316). They recommend special training of teachers, administrators, and psychologists as a possible solution for eliminating biased diagnostic and assessment procedures and insensitivity to cultural differences. In addition, they recommend a national mandate for human relations training for professionals working with African American deaf students to eliminate these problems.

The statistics on placements of African American deaf and hard of hearing students as well as other students in special education classes continue to exist today. SRI International, a nonprofit, independent, scientific research institute under contract with the Office of Special Education of the U.S. Department of Education, conducted the National Longitudinal Transitions Study of students with disabilities from 1987 to 1993. It is

the first national representative database on students with disabilities that addresses the characteristics of the students, school programs, school performance, postschool outcomes, factors related to variations in school performance, and postschool outcomes. The study reported data according to disability categories; however, ethnicity was not reported within all of the disability categories.

The study indicated that "African American students were represented in special education at about twice their rate in general education (24 percent vs. 12 percent)." The report found this imbalance to exist for all disability categories (SRI International, 1997, p. 3). The study suggests that this high concentration of African American students in special education is due mainly to a larger group of poor students in special education than in general education. What this study does not address is the finding that there are a large number of African Americans in special education who are from middle class families. The overrepresentation of African Americans in special education programs and low-level academic classes has long been a concern for African American parents and the African American community (Losen & Orefield, 2002). Overrepresentation in special education, placement in low-level academic courses, and low standardized test scores have contributed to the distrust that some African American parents have toward school systems.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2, begun in 2001, will continue for 10 years and focus on approximately 13,000 youth who were 13 to 17 years old and in special education programs during the 2000–2001 school year. This study is important since it will include information on the transition of students with disabilities from secondary to postsecondary programs and from school to work (SRI International, 2003). By the year 2010, these statistics could change if there is a strong effort to equalize the educational services provided to African American deaf and hard of hearing students. A major step to equalizing instructional practices and other educational services would be to implement educational programs that foster protective factors and promote resilience in the schools for the deaf and mainstream programs. A resilience approach to education opens opportunities and resources to African American students.

In listing factors that contribute to low academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students, Cohen et al. (1990) state:

> It is likely that culturally biased curricula, inappropriate school placement, and/or tracking, and lack of understanding of learning style differences, coupled with a lack of awareness about cultural differences, family practices and value systems, have contributed to educational practices that have ill-served minority deaf children and youth. Unfortunately, when children's needs and background are poorly understood and opportunity to learn is limited, depressed achievement is an expected outcome. (p. 69)

African American deaf and hard of hearing students receive fewer diplomas upon graduation from high school in comparison to their White peers. A large percentage of African American deaf and hard of hearing high school graduates receive certificates of completion upon graduation from high school. Certificates are given to students who have not completed all of the course work and test requirements established by the state for a high school diploma. While 65 percent of White graduates receive diplomas, only 35 percent of African American graduates receive diplomas (Schildroth & Hotto, 1995).

In their study of school-to-work transition of deaf students, Allen et al. (1989) found that 62 percent of the White students in the sample were in mostly academic courses and only 44 percent of African American students were in those courses. Further, only 13 percent of White students were placed full time in vocational programs while 30 percent of African American students were in those programs. The remainder of both groups were in mixed academic and vocational programs.

In a later study, Allen (1994b) reported on the reading achievement of 6,572 students on the eighth edition of the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT). Students ranging from 17 to 21 years old were divided into two groups—those with severe profound hearing loss (SP) and those with moderate to profound hearing loss (MP). Allen found that, although the full SP group was made up of 8 percent Whites, 21 percent African Americans, and 15 percent Hispanics, the group of students who were able to read at the fourth grade level or above was composed of 77 percent Whites, 12 percent African Americans, and 7 percent Hispanics. The results further indicated that of the 218 profoundly deaf students who were achieving at the eighth-grade reading level, 88 percent were White and only 3 percent (6 students) were African American.

The data for the MP pool showed that the group of students who could read at the eighth grade level was "nearly 90 percent White though White

students accounted for 56 percent of the deaf students leaving school" (p. 9). Allen suggests that "an important aspect to these data is that, if admissions criteria are established that are too high, the vast majority of Black and Hispanic students will be excluded from the pool of potential college students" (p. 13). Two relevant questions come to mind when looking at this data: Are all White students reading at this level from middle income, intact families, and if not, what factors account for their reading levels? If the African American and White students were in the same classrooms, why did the African Americans fail to achieve the same reading level?

Studies and professional literature related to achievement of African American students have focused on increasing academic achievement, not lowering academic standards (Denbo & Beaulieu, 2002; Gordon, 2004). This is also true of the literature on African American deaf and hard of hearing students (Cohen, 1991). In all the years that I have worked with African American deaf and hard of hearing families, I have not once had a parent come to me to discuss the need for lowering academic standards for their child. Instead, the question has been, "what do we need to do to help our child prepare to go to a postsecondary program?" African American parents of deaf and hard of hearing students want their children to have the same academic preparation as their White counterparts. Lowering standards for college and university entrance does not provide an answer to the root of the problem, which is a lack of academic preparation for postsecondary admissions. Parents and guardians, school personnel, and community stakeholders need to work together to provide for the educational needs of children regardless of their demographic backgrounds.

Findings in research on African Americans indicate that there are African American students and their parents who are interested in them obtaining the necessary academic preparation to compete on an equal basis for entrance to college (Clark, 1983; Hrabowski, Mato, & Greif, 1998). One African American student enrolled in Texas A&M University stated, "I feel like it proves I did get in on my own merit…getting to A&M was not because I'm Black, it's because I'm qualified" (Clark, 2004). African American deaf and hard of hearing students want the same educational opportunities afforded to their White peers in the classroom. They want to be educationally prepared to finish high school with a diploma and to

enter postsecondary programs. The data collected in the study for this book suggest that the participants, as well as their parents, wanted to have the academic preparation for admission to postsecondary programs and the ability complete the program. The results show that this can be done when students have the necessary protective factors in their environment.

Another problem that interferes with African American deaf and hard of hearing students' academic advancement is the type of tests administered to them. Traxler (1989) found that they are tested more often with vocational tests than White students, and these tests result in placement in lower-level academic programs. Students placed in lower-level academic programs receive minimal academic instruction and therefore have less opportunity for academic advancement (Allen et al., l989; Oakes, 1985). Further, it has been found that once low-level academic placement decisions are made, they are rarely reversed (Oakes, l985). Once African American deaf students are placed in vocational training, studies reveal that they also receive vocational training skills at a much lower level than White students. Most of the African American students are trained in food service and automotive trades, whereas White students are more likely to receive computer training (Allen et al., l989).

### Impact of Low Achievement

The educational achievement of a majority of African American deaf and hard of hearing students presents a bleak picture. Many of these high school graduates are only able to work at jobs earning minimum wages (Allen et al., l989). In a discussion of the need for deaf and hard of hearing students to acquire degrees at the four-year level and above, Rawlings (1994) pointed out that deaf and hard of hearing individuals are affected by the same economic and societal forces as the hearing population. These societal forces include increased competitiveness in the labor market, technological advancements that require more skills, and a better-educated labor market. They also include the economic advantages associated with training beyond high school. Obvious examples are higher earnings associated with college degrees (Rawlings, l994). Too often, African American deaf and hard of hearing students, after leaving high school with or without a diploma, are either unemployed, earning minimum wages, or dependent solely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or welfare.

Early achievement in school is a prerequisite for successful transition in school and enhances opportunities after graduation from high school (Taylor, 1991). It is important to focus on what contributes to this success in school. Often a focus on transition is misconstrued. Some educators believe that transition planning should occur close to the time that the student is ready to graduate from high school, which is usually too late to develop a plan that will result in a positive outcome. Transition planning usually reflects the student's course of study while in school. Students enrolled in rigorous programs are more likely to be prepared to enter a college or university than students enrolled in low-level academic classes (Allen et al., 1994; Oakes, 1985). Transition skills should be taught when the child first enters school. Schools should have programs that focus on teaching effective transition skills to students from the time they enter school and throughout the student's enrollment in school. Every effort should be made to involve parents in a collaborative relationship with the school to help students develop effective transition skills.

A relationship also exists between students' scores on the SAT and their postsecondary experiences. Those who score low in reading generally attend low-level academic classes and do not have the skills to attend postsecondary programs. The majority of the students who had low reading scores were African American. Rose (1994) found that 62 percent of high school students who scored in the bottom quartile of the SAT reading comprehension subtest in 1983 were enrolled in vocational tracks and 38 percent were enrolled in both vocational and academic tracks; those students in the top quartile were enrolled in academic tracks. Rose's findings suggest that none of the students in the bottom quartile in reading comprehension on the SAT in 1983 attended a college or university, whereas 81 percent of those in the top quartile attended a college or university. The research indicates that low academic placement greatly reduces the opportunities for advancement in school and professional jobs later in life (Rose, 1994).

There is intellectual, political, social, and economic power in education. African Americans throughout the years have placed high value on education, and they understand that social, political, and economic advancement in American society has been positively impacted by educational gains (Mincy, 1994). African Americans have struggled many years, since slavery, to obtain the right to an equal education, yet this has not

happened for a majority of them. Like all members of other ethnic groups, not all African American students have the intellectual ability to enter college; however, the issue here is that too many who do have the ability are not being adequately prepared to enter four-year postsecondary programs. I believe that the lack of adequate preparation has been a primary reason for African American deaf and hard of hearing students' low SAT scores and poor academic performance. Though there has been some progress, attaining postsecondary educational opportunities and achieving high academic goals still constitute a challenge for many African American students (Solorzano, 1992).

The findings of research on what factors contribute to the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students suggest that administrators and educators would see an increase in the academic performance of this group of students when (a) administrators, teachers, and staff believe that all children can learn; (b) strong leaders take steps to make the school setting a learning and inclusive environment; (c) teachers and staff receive professional training; (d) resources are provided to implement programs and practices based on school improvement research; (e) schools develop outreach programs to involve parents in the education process; and (f) deficit research models are no longer used in schools (Cohen, 1991; Irvine, 1985; Ladson-Billings, 1994a, 1994b; Thompson, 2003).

The rich data on the educational benefits of protective factors in the home, school, and community can provide parents, educators, and community stakeholders with the evidence they need for developing new strategies to advance the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

## Redirecting Research and Practices from an At-Risk Paradigm to a Resilience Paradigm

The resilience model developed from research on risk factors that adversely affected the lives of individuals. In an effort to understand the impact of risk factors on individuals' lives, Dr. Norman Garmezy (1971) and other researchers began to look at other factors that, despite the risk factors, protected individuals from negative factors. They found that a large group of children who had been placed at risk developed skills that included good

interpersonal relations and academic achievement. They had a commitment to education, meaningful life goals, and successful work histories. Garmezy (1971, 1987), Rutter (1990), and Werner and Smith (1982) examined the variables associated with resilience, their influence on the development of individuals, and the process by which resilience occurs. In studying resilience, the researchers found that individuals can and do successfully overcome risk factors. They studied children in at-risk environments such as low-income communities and war-devastated areas. They studied children who had been in environments involving abuse, mentally ill caregivers, alcohol and drug abusers, neglect, and different ethnic groups (Benard, 1991; Masten, 1994). As the researchers continued their studies, they continually found that 50 percent to 70 percent of those children in "at-risk" situations succeeded academically, in jobs, and in interpersonal relationships (Benard, 1991).

Cooper (1999) and Yan (1999) point out that educational researchers are shifting from a deficit perspective to one that examines factors that contribute to African American students' resilience and success. Cooper (1999) cites studies that focus on parental involvement, the educational context, educational policies and practices, curriculum and instruction, and intergroup relations that promote higher academic achievement in African American students. This shift in perspective needs to occur in research and educational programs and practices involving African American deaf and hard of hearing students. No study to date has offered data specifically on African American deaf and hard of hearing students and how some have graduated from postsecondary programs despite race, hearing loss, socioeconomic status, single-parent families, and other factors that placed them at risk. This lack of a success model has left educators without evidence-based data that African American deaf and hard of hearing students are more likely to achieve in school if they have the necessary protective factors in their environment.

Research data on the resilience concept provide an understanding of what protective factors help individuals overcome obstacles in order to recover and continue to advance in their development despite traumatic situations (Masten, 1994). In their efforts to identify the factors and processes that promote academic achievement in the lives of minority children, researchers have found that demographic characteristics such as

poverty, minority status, and single-parent home status do not always lead to negative educational outcomes (Clark, l983; Comer; Jones, l990; Nelson-LeGall & Scott-Jones, l987; Wang & Gordon, 1994; Winfield, 1991).

To better understand the impact of risk factors, stressful life events, and protective factors on the development of youth and adults, Werner and Smith (1982, 1992) conducted a longitudinal study of a group of children born in Kauai, one of the Hawaiian Islands. The study followed nearly 700 children in the community for over three decades, from their prenatal period to adulthood. Their at-risk factors included poverty, prenatal stress, family discord, and low parental education. More than half of the children's fathers were semi-skilled or unskilled laborers, and more than half of the mothers had not graduated from high school.

The findings showed children's successful development was a result of the interaction between the inherent characteristics of the children and the quality of the caregiving environment over a period of time. The findings suggest that the balance between risk factors and protective characteristics in the children and their caregiving environment accounted for developmental outcomes (Werner & Smith, 1982).

The following are factors that contributed to resiliency and positive outcomes in youth and in adulthood:

1. Positive relationships with caregivers
2. Adequate attention from the primary caregivers
3. Infrequent separations from caregivers
4. Cohesiveness of the family
5. Presence of informal multigenerational relatives and friends
6. Exposure to fewer ongoing chronic life stressors
7. Structure and rules enforced in the house (Werner & Smith, 1982, pp. 154–155; Werner & Smith, 1992)

Follow-up studies further showed that the youth who had developed serious behavioral or learning problems did so as a result of untreated medical problems that prevented normal development, living in chronic poverty, or growing up in disorganized families. Problems in the children's developmental outcomes were caused by the frequency and interaction of these factors as well as the cumulative effects of these factors (Werner & Smith, 1992, pp. 19–82).

The researchers found that the children became more resilient as they became older. At age 31 to 32, it was found that the majority of those in the study had become resilient adults. The data collected in adulthood at ages 31 and 32 showed that 97 percent of the 1,955 men and women had graduated from high school; more than half had attended either a local junior college, university, or a four-year college; and 90 percent of the men and 88 percent of the women were employed. The majority of the resilient men (67 percent) and women (79 percent) viewed themselves as happy or satisfied. The qualities found in the men and women were competency, determination, and faith. They "worked well, loved well, and were caring parents" (Werner & Smith, 1992, pp. 37–81).

Werner and Smith (1992) state:

> Our findings and those by other American and European investigators with a life-span perspective suggest that these buffers make a profound impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than do specific risk factors or stressful life events. They appear to transcend ethnic, social class, geographical, and historical boundaries. Most of all they give us a more optimistic outlooks than the perspective that can be gleaned from the literature on the negative consequences or perinatal trauma, caregiving deficits, and chronic poverty. They provide us with a corrective lens-an awareness of the self-righting tendencies that move children toward normal adult development under all but the most persistent adverse circumstances. (p. 202)

Subsequent studies have revealed that an identifiable set of protective factors contributes to adaptation (Masten, 1994). These are protective factors that parents, schools, and communities can provide to help children develop strong intellectual skills, social competencies, and healthy emotional attitudes despite everyday challenges and traumatic situations in their lives:

1. Reducing negative outcomes by altering the child's exposure to risk
2. Decreasing the chain reaction to exposure to risk
3. Developing and maintaining self-esteem and self-efficacy
4. Opening new opportunities (Winfield, 1994, citing Rutter, 1987, p. 5)

These processes are not mutually exclusive, but they must be understood and taken into consideration in the program planning process (Winfield, 1994). Parents, school administrators, teachers, support staff,

and community stakeholders need to be aware of these processes so they can intervene at appropriate times with appropriate interventions to prevent crisis situations from occurring. Professional development training can help administrators, teachers, and support staff develop these skills.

School personnel especially must be aware of the indicators of stressors that interfere with children's social, emotional, and academic progress because they make the necessary referrals for services that can alleviate at-risk situations. Professional development workshops would help educators accomplish the following:

1. Identify factors that place students at-risk
2. Reduce factors that produce stress in the children's environment
3. Increase needed resources for at-risk children
4. Provide protective processes to help children reduce stress and increase resilience

Educational researchers have explored factors that contribute to educational success models for African American students. By looking at success from a multidimensional perspective, school personnel, family members, and community members can support and enhance academic success of African American hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing students (Benard, 1991). Further, they can develop policies, procedures, and programs within schools to help facilitate student school success and thus facilitate the transition of African American hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing students into postsecondary school programs (Benard, 1991).

### Review of Individuals with Other Disabilities and Resilience

Research suggests that deaf and hard of hearing people have a lot in common with people who have other disabilities. People with disabilities face obstacles related to a lack of understanding about their disability, have difficulty attaining devices that facilitate their independent functioning, and encounter low expectations of their intellectual and other abilities. As with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, there is little resilience research on people with other disabilities; however, data on students with other disabilities is consistent with data on students without disabilities and with the data collected from the participants in this study. Individual characteristics and environmental protective factors are vital to the positive social,

emotional, and intellectual development of students (King, Brown, & Smith, 2003; Mooney & Scholl, 2002). Resilient students exhibit strong self-image, self-efficacy, confidence, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, belief in their own abilities, and spiritual beliefs. Supportive and caring environments in which teachers and staff promote open communication, discipline, and structure; provide challenging educational programs; and encourage opportunities for meaningful participation help students achieve in educational and vocational programs.

Data on resilience for students who have disabilities, as well as those who do not have disabilities, emphasize the importance of a collaborative approach that involves the home, school, and community working together to foster resilience in children, youth, and young adults. By studying and understanding resilience in the lives of children, youth, and young adults with disabilities, adults can help (a) identify the protective factors that create shields from failure, (b) develop strategies that individuals can use to prevail when faced with obstacles, (c) provide a research foundation for designing programs that facilitate the development of resilience in a variety of environments, and (d) identify individual characteristics and environmental resources that buffer problems (Mooney & Scholl, 2002, p. 12).

In exploring the personal qualities of disabled high school juniors and seniors who stayed in a two-year school- and work-based learning program, Mooney and Scholl (2002) found that the following characteristics contributed to the students' success: acknowledgement, understanding, and acceptance of one's disability; understanding one's strength; the ability to request needed resources; high motivation and persistence; engagement in academic tasks; communication and problem-solving skills; and self-efficacy (p. 13). Mooney and Scholl also found that the program provided quality jobsite placements that allowed rotation through occupations in which a student was competent, knowledgeable, and had experienced mentors; classroom instruction that integrated academic, career, and technical materials; quality classroom instruction; rewards for achieving program competencies; and accessible and appropriate accommodations and resources (p. 13). The same protective factors were needed to help students succeed in both academic and vocational programs.

In addition to studying personal qualities and program characteristics, researchers look at "turning points" that lead to resilience in the lives of people with disabilities. Turning points are "profound and transforming experiences or realizations in people's lives…that introduce change into our lives—into our behavior, our relationships with others and the way we view ourselves and our lives" (King et al., 2003, p. 34). In their study of individuals with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and attention deficit disorder, King, Brown, and Smith (2003) found that the participants identified educational institutions as the key settings where their crucial turning points occurred. The participants identified their parents, teachers, friends, doctors, wives, and husbands as protective factors that helped them handle and accomplish their goals despite the turning points in their lives. The evidence in resilience research reveals that adults who play a significant role in the lives of students can provide protective factors that promote resilience. These factors help students overcome difficulties and obtain their goals regardless of disability, socioeconomic group, or demographic background (King et al., 2003; Wang, Haertel, &Walberg, 1994).

## Conclusions and Implications of Resilience Research

All people—regardless of race, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, or disability—need to have the resilience to rebound when faced with obstacles and everyday problems. The ability to rebound is made possible by protective factors found within the individual's characteristics and environment. There are individuals and institutions that have protective factors within them that help develop, support, and reinforce resilience. These environmental factors can be found in families, schools, postsecondary programs, churches, and other community stakeholders.

There is an immense need for research, policy development, and implementation of programs that focus on protective factors that contribute to the resilience, academic success, and smooth transition through postsecondary programs for African American deaf and hard of hearing students. Very little empirical research focuses on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents, and much of the research that exists is dated. A review of the literature shows that there are no longitudinal studies and no studies that use the resilience construct as a frame of reference. It is crucial that the research on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents

move beyond identifying risk factors. It is critical for research to focus on protective factors that foster academic achievement and postsecondary transition. The presence or lack of these factors has been found to have a profound impact on educational outcomes. Administrators, teachers, and support staff must know what they can do to facilitate and enhance protective processes.

African American deaf and hard of hearing students, though in desegregated schools, are still receiving below-standard education. With a deficit frame of reference, some researchers, educators, and administrators are continuing to reinforce stereotyped theories about African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents. This deficit perspective perpetuates low achievement, and subsequent transition results in a low percentage of African American deaf and hard of hearing students who are prepared to enter postsecondary programs.

Research on resilience needs to focus on the interrelationship of parents, schools, and communities in providing protective factors to enhance the academic functioning of African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

# 2

# Backgrounds of Successful Postsecondary Graduates

The participants in this study* are all African American deaf and hard of hearing college or university graduates. They have encountered obstacles that could have interfered with their academic achievement; however, they persevered, overcame these challenges, and earned bachelor's degrees. Some have continued their education beyond bachelor's degrees. In this chapter, you will learn about the participants' backgrounds and their families.

## Family Backgrounds of Participants

The nine participants in this study are African American women and men who are self-confident, highly motivated, and self-determined individuals who have overcome obstacles to succeed. All have bachelor's degrees. All of the participants, except one, work in professional jobs requiring a bachelor's or graduate degree. The one exception is a participant who is in graduate school full time and, to support himself in graduate school, is working full time in a position that does not require a degree to support him in graduate school.

As members of a minority group on predominately White campuses, with few African American graduates, the participants viewed graduation from college as a challenge. They also viewed graduation as evidence that African Americans can succeed in college. Many of them view themselves as role models for other African American deaf and hard of hearing individuals and for other minorities. They have demonstrated that they can enter and graduate from a college that has a large population of deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The college that they graduated from is located in the Northeastern part of the United States. It serves a large population of deaf and hard of hearing students and is a predominately White college.

* See the appendix for an explanation of research methods.

### *Ages and Genders of Participants*

This study involved five female and four male participants. All are employed in professional jobs with the exception of one who is enrolled full time as a master's student. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, no names or individual identifying information will be used. The participants in this study ranged from 21 to 49 years of age. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 21 and 34. Two were between 35 and 44 years of age and one was between 45 and 49 years old. Though there was a wide age range, there were many similarities in individual, family, school, cultural, and community factors within this group, and there were strong thematic similarities in their interviews.

### *Geographical Areas Represented*

The data from the demographic survey indicated that the participants represented five states and the District of Columbia. However, most of the participants grew up in Washington, D.C., and the majority presently live in the D.C. metropolitan area.

### *Family Composition*

Five of the participants lived with both parents during the time that they were in elementary and high school. There was one participant whose parents divorced during his early years in school. He initially lived with his mother and later with his father after he finished elementary school. Both of his parents had high expectations and were supportive of him in school. He maintained a good relationship with his mother, whom he visited on weekends while living with his father. However, his relationship with his father became strained. He viewed his father's academic expectations as being beyond the level that he was able to maintain in school. Changing schools, coupled with his father' expectations and prolonged punishments, led to problems in his relationship with his father.

The other three participants—one female and two males—had no fathers in their homes while they were in elementary, school, high school, and college. The female participant's father died when she was very young. Her mother had the help of a community volunteer, a White female who assisted by providing moral and financial support for the participant as she entered high school away from home. This same volunteer maintained

contact with and provided support for the participant during the entire time that she attended high school and college away from home.

One of the two males, who had no contact with his father, had a male extended family member who took an active role in his life and became a father figure. The other male participant found his own mentors by visiting a nearby college campus. He talked to college students and became attached to two teachers. One was African and one was African American. They helped him understand Deaf culture and learn sign language. He selected them as his mentors. He also communicated with college students on the campus. He stated that his mentors and his communication with the college students played a major role in helping him become "who I am today."

The participants' families varied in size from two to seven children. Four of the participants were the oldest children in their families. This data revealed, in one case, that the oldest child was expected to set an example for the other children. This is unusual because many hearing parents do not set high expectations for their deaf and hard of hearing children to be role models for their younger hearing siblings. Instead, they expect more from younger hearing siblings than from the older deaf or hard of hearing child. This has contributed to some deaf and hard of hearing children feeling less valued by their parents. It also has denied them the opportunity to learn and demonstrate responsible behaviors.

### *Family Income*

Six participants described their parents' incomes as average, two participants described their parents' incomes as below average, and one participant described her parents' income as above average. None of the participants discussed income as so great a problem for the family that it interfered in their educational progress in elementary through high school. However, one participant stated that his parents were not able to afford a college education for him. At the time that he entered college, he did not know how to access Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds. He related that his concentration on obtaining funds for his education was one of the reasons for his lack of concentration on academics and contributed to his dropping out of college with low grades in his second year of college. He worked, earned money to return to college, and later learned how to access VR funds.

### *Educational Level of Parents*

The majority of the participants' parents completed high school. Three parents graduated from college, and both parents of one participant were college graduates. The other participant's father was a college graduate, her mother attended college for three years, and she had siblings who graduated from college. One participant had a sibling who graduated from college. One parent did not graduate from elementary school and one parent did not graduate from high school.

### *Hearing Status and Mode of Communication Used in the Home*

The participants were asked on a demographic survey to classify themselves as either deaf or hard of hearing. Five of the participants identified themselves as hard of hearing and four identified themselves as deaf. Only one of the participants had other deaf or hard of hearing persons in the immediate family; this participant had a deaf sibling and hard of hearing parents.

All of the participants use sign language as their primary mode of communication in the Deaf community. Six of the participants use sign language and their voices in communicating with hearing and hard of hearing persons. Three of the participants primarily use sign language.

One of the three participants' parents and sibling used sign language. The other two participants whose parents did not use sign language said this presented a problem in communication. One of the two viewed it as "sad" that his mother was unable to use sign language and communicate directly with him. His siblings had a major role as conduits for communication between him and his parent. However, though his mother could not sign, he felt his mother was supportive of him in school and proud of his academic performance. He described how she provided him with a firm foundation in reading, supported him by attending school conferences, and praised his academic performance.

The other participant stated that her mother's inability to sign had presented a problem with communication. Her siblings helped with communication through some finger spelling and gesturing. In addition, the participant was also able to use her voice somewhat. She also stated that her mother was supportive of her education.

Six of the participants use voice primarily in communicating with their parents and siblings. The mother of one of the participants had learned

sign language and for a while had used it with the participant and her deaf sibling. However, since she and her sibling did not continue to communicate with their mother in sign language, their mother stopped signing. One of the six participants' parents and family members use sign language. This participant, who identifies herself as hard of hearing, has siblings, aunts, and grandparents who use sign communication with her. The two participants who had parents and family members who signed felt that their family members' ability to sign had enhanced open and ongoing communication. This was very helpful in their academic achievement and contributed to their positive feelings about themselves.

## Educational Backgrounds of Participants

The participants had different experiences at different levels of school. Appropriate educational placements were a problem for some of them in elementary, middle, and high school.

### *Elementary to Middle School*

Four of the participants attended elementary schools for the deaf, and five attended mainstream programs. Two of the nine participants discussed moving from school to school in elementary school because of inappropriate placements related to their hearing loss. One of the participants stated that she did not understand all of the reasoning behind her school movements since her mother did not sign. She was initially in a mainstream program where she did not understand the teachers. She was placed in a self-contained class in the same school when her deafness was diagnosed. She was later moved to another school with a day program for the deaf and completed her elementary school years in that program. One of her "favorite teachers," whom she describes as a teacher who was always looking out for her students told her and her mother about a deaf school that was out of their state. At the time that she was sent away to a distant high school for the deaf, she did not understand why she was being separated from her family while the other children could remain at home and attend school. Her mode of communication is sign language, and her mother could not communicate with her in sign language. She stated that she wished that her mother had been able to communicate with her in sign language so she would have understood why she was moving from school to school.

She did not recognize until she graduated from college that the moves were because "my mother wanted the best education for me and was thinking about my future."

In the other case, the participant was placed inappropriately in a class for learning disabled students. However, test results and the participant's academic performance indicated that she had been misplaced. The participant stated, "The teacher began noticing something was wrong with me, but she didn't know what was wrong." She was given many tests and because she continued to pass the tests, her teacher told her mother that she thought the participant had a hearing loss.

> My mother took my brother and me to have our hearing checked. My mother suspected that my brother had a hearing loss too. She found out that we really had a hearing loss. I went back to that same school. We knew nothing about deaf classes, schools, and services. We knew nothing about those services. An audiologist told my mother about deaf programs where I could go that had self-contained classes. When I was in elementary school, I was moved to a deaf program. I moved to a different school. I was hard of hearing. I knew nothing about signing. My brother was placed in that school, too. The teacher began testing and evaluating me. She told me that I tested on the advanced level in reading and math. I went to regular classes for reading and math. Later, I went to more regular classes and by middle school I attended half self-contained classes and half regular classes. I attended those mainstream classes with no interpreters. By high school I was attending all mainstream classes. I progressed well from then on.

There were three other participants who moved to different schools. One of them initially moved from a mainstream program to a school for the deaf when it was time for her to attend the middle school grades. Her parents were concerned that she would not be able to function in a large middle school and to depend on bells to change classes. After visiting the middle school, the participant agreed with her parents that she would not be able to function in the school. Through the advice of a friend, her parents found what they thought would be a quality middle school education in a school for the deaf located out of state. Her parents moved the family so that she could attend the school. When it was time for her to attend high school, her parents were dissatisfied with the quality of education she was receiving in the school for the deaf. To ensure that she would receive challenging coursework, her parents changed her school. Again,

the family moved to another state so that she could receive a quality education. She was transferred to a mainstream high school and earned her diploma from that school.

The second participant who moved from a school for the deaf to a mainstream high school program also moved because her parents were dissatisfied with the quality of education she was receiving in the high school for the deaf.

The third participant attended mainstream programs from elementary through high school. He talked about his middle school years as the beginning of his difficulties in school. His parents were divorced, and he moved to live with his father. It was a time period in which he moved from feeling comfortable with himself in elementary school as a hard of hearing person to feeling uncomfortable about his hearing loss. In elementary school, he had been in a familiar environment with people he knew. Academically, he was at the top of his class in elementary school. However, when he went to live with his father in a new environment and entered a parochial middle school, he stated that he recognized right away that the academic level was above where he was functioning, and he did not feel comfortable in his new setting. He went from being a top academic student in his class in elementary school to a school setting in which he struggled academically and no longer felt comfortable wearing his hearing aid. He did not want his hearing loss to become another barrier to making friends in his new environment.

> When I moved in with my father, he placed me in a parochial school. That is when my problems started. I struggled with education and it was an adjustment for me. I think it was because of the different level of education, the teaching style, and the course material.
>
> The high school I attended later was more like a college preparatory school. It didn't help that I refused to wear my hearing aid. So, the combination of those things made it difficult for me. When I went to the parochial school I knew immediately that it was a different level of education. If I had started in parochial schools at the beginning of my schooling then I probably would have felt more comfortable. That was not the case. I'm not saying that the public school system of education is not good. I think there's a comfort level. For example, in the public school that I attended I knew the people there and I wore my hearing aid. In the parochial high school, I didn't wear my hearing aid and that could have been the difference.

In another situation, the participant's teachers recognized his hearing loss. He stated that his teachers expected him to sit in the front of the class so he could obtain the information. He recognized that if he did not sit up front he would miss information. He was used to sitting up front in church. His family had trained him to do that. As a result, he was also assertive enough to inform his teachers when they turned their backs and he could not read their lips.

The mainstream schools that the participants attended responded to the hearing loss of the participants in different ways. The six participants also responded in different ways to their placements in mainstream programs. In two situations, their teachers made accommodations. They had interpreters and they had a hearing resource program. They also participated in the IEP meetings to discuss their needs.

One participant related that she was able to function in the mainstream program without an interpreter. Two others stated that their teachers did not recognize their hearing loss and made no accommodations. One of the two participants stated he was expected to wear his hearing aid. However, he did not wear it and missed information.

### *High School*

Six of the participants attended mainstream high school programs and three attended high schools for the deaf. Most of the participants describe themselves as having been average students while in high school. Three were in advanced classes and one was placed in the academic level just below the advanced level. Three of the deaf participants were in advanced academic programs. Two of those participants were in schools for the deaf and one was in a mainstream program.

Seven of the participants described how they received support from their teachers and other adults in their school setting. Two of the participants, both of whom were separated from their mothers during their high school years, had difficulty in high school. One was in a school for the deaf away from home and the other had moved in with his father due to a custody decision.

Though the participant who attended a school for the deaf many miles from home stated she had the support of her mother to attend the school, she initially did not understand why she was placed away from home to

obtain an education because her mother could not use sign communication and was unable to communicate the reasons to her clearly. This is a problem faced by some deaf children whose parents are unable to communicate directly about their placements in residential schools for the deaf. Sometimes, students do not understand the reason for the placement until a person in the school can interpret for their parents. This can be quite traumatic for deaf youth. Parents need to make every effort to learn how to sign, and schools need to make sign language classes available to parents at convenient times and locations. Also, the sign classes need to focus on vocabulary that parents will find useful in communicating with their children.

Further, this participant stated that she did not have caring and supportive adults in her school environment. As a result, she had to face many challenges without the guidance she needed within the school. She said her mother would contact her through letters and TTY calls in which she encouraged her and expressed support of her efforts to do well in school. Within the school, she relied on an older student from her hometown to guide her. She lamented that the lack of academic, social, and emotional support during her separation from home caused her many difficult times. She also stated that it would have been helpful to have had more African American teachers and staff in the school setting to talk to about her feelings and to provide her with support. There were two African American staff members. However, she pointed out that these two staff members were overwhelmed with meeting the needs of a large group of students and could not focus on the needs of individual students.

Of the five students who attended high schools for the deaf, two were very satisfied with their classes, their teachers, and their support services. Three participants were dissatisfied. Two were dissatisfied with the lack of support by teachers, guidance, and dormitory staff, and the third participant and her family were dissatisfied with the lack of challenging courses and support services. Three of the five participants remained in the school for the deaf and graduated, but two transferred to a mainstream high school. One of these students was dissatisfied with the lack of challenging courses and support services, and the other was dissatisfied with support services. Both students earned a diploma from the mainstream high school.

African American parents will need to understand the educational process and be assertive in obtaining needed educational resources for their deaf and hard of hearing children. From the participants' descriptions, their parents were assertive about obtaining the services their children needed, and they did not let educators and other service providers make all of the decisions about their children. They were willing to step forward—not aggressively, but assertively—and they got the services needed for their children. They were able to see their children obtain the degree or degrees that they deserved.

With the exception of one student, all six who graduated from mainstream high schools were very satisfied with their school placements, their teachers, and support services. One was dissatisfied with his teachers because they did not understand the needs of deaf students. Another participant expressed his dissatisfaction with White administrators who held low expectations for African American students. His school administrators focused on vocational training rather than preparing students for college.

Another participant felt that the resources provided for deaf students within the mainstream program that she attended presented problems for her. She did not have any problems with the mainstream teachers. She stated that they treated her as an equal with hearing students and had the same expectations of her. The problems she mentioned concerned the resource room for deaf students. The resource room separated the deaf students from the hearing students and the staff's expectations for them were different from those for hearing students. Also, too much emphasis was placed on developing their speech. She stated that the hearing resource staff members, who were the support unit for the deaf and hard of hearing students, fostered separation of the deaf and hard of hearing students from the hearing students and advocated inequitable treatment of them. She described her concerns about this in the following excerpts:

> All day you were in regular classes and then one period of the day, you were with a resource teacher, a deaf resource teacher. If you needed to study, you could do it there. If you needed help, the resource teacher would help you. I felt it separated me from everyone else, and I wanted to be the same as everyone else. I wanted to make decisions.
>
> One time my friends and I sat in the back of the auditorium. It was a senior assembly and we didn't want to sit in the front. We wanted to sit with our

> friends and classmates. Of course, the hearing resources director had a meeting with us in the afternoon and said we couldn't do that. I asked "Why, tell me why?" The interpreter could have sat right there in front of us. There was an empty row in front of us.

### *Colleges and Universities*

All of the participants completed their undergraduate work for the bachelor's degree. Six of the participants either have advanced degrees or are in the process of obtaining one. Two participants have master's degrees, three are presently enrolled in master's degree programs, and one is enrolled in a doctoral program. These include both deaf and mainstream postsecondary programs.

One participant attended two mainstream undergraduate college programs before transferring to a college for the deaf to complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree. She shared that she was not prepared to attend a college for hearing students, but an African American administrator had recommended that she attend an African American university instead of a school for the deaf. She found that the African American university that she attended did not provide the necessary supports such as interpreters, notetakers, academic advisors, or mentors to help her succeed. At the time, she used sign language, but she depended on oral communication. She found instructors at the university level were insensitive to the needs of a deaf person to lip-read and were constantly turning their backs to her when talking, though the participant had requested that they face her when talking. She described how she ended up enrolling in and attending an incorrect class for part of a semester due to the many obstacles she faced with communication and lack of an advisor. She finally withdrew from the university as her grades plummeted, and she lost her financial support from VR. Her parents refused to provide financial support because of her low grades. She returned home. She later entered a second mainstream university. Though she was able to obtain the support she needed (a notetaker) and to improve her grades, she was not able to decide on a major. Eventually, she transferred to a university for the deaf, where she succeeded and earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree.

Three of the participants did not go directly to college after graduation from high school because they had no guidance about colleges for the deaf

and how to apply for college. Teachers and guidance counselors had not provided that information for them, and their parents were not college graduates and could not give them information that their schools had not provided. Two learned about colleges for the deaf through their VR counselors, whom they had gone to for additional vocational training. Because their test scores were high and they had a hearing loss, their VR counselors recommended that they apply to a college for the deaf:

> I did not go directly to college after I graduated from high school. I was frustrated with my inability to find a job, and my mother suggested perhaps I could go to the hospital and see if the hospital could perform some kind of surgery to improve my hearing. So I went to the hospital and signed up for a hearing test. I was specifically trying to find out if my hearing loss could be corrected or my hearing improved. The nurse informed me that because of the type of hearing loss that I have, surgery was not an option for me. She was the person who referred me to vocational rehabilitation. At the time, I had been out of high school for about two years. I met with a VR counselor. Initially, I was only interested in employment. But the VR counselor felt I had the potential to attend college and succeed. He told me he would give me a job after I finished college. That VR counselor arranged for me to go to college to get my education. He is the one who contributed to me going to college.

Another participant had a similar experience:

> I always wanted to go to college, but there was no one in high school that supported me. There was no one to say fill out an application and do this or that to get into college. I sat around the house almost a year thinking that I was going to a local community college and that eventually I would go to a four-year university in my home state. I went to see my Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and I was told there was another option. I was told I could go and get training from Goodwill Industries to become a medical records analyst. I would feed medical records information into a computer.
>
> My VR counselor planned to send me to training for 30 days and help me get an apartment. She sent me to a psychologist for IQ testing and that was when the VR counselor brought up the topic of going to a college for the deaf. I had a lot of misconceptions about a college for the deaf. As a result, I said, "No." But she continued to explain about the college to me. She said I needed to visit the university and that there were people just like me there.

The third participant decided herself to apply to a college for the deaf. She had attended a high school for the deaf where she stated she did not

receive guidance from guidance counselors or teachers about college. She recognized that she would not be able to function academically in a hearing college due to lack of accommodations for deaf individuals during that time period:

> I began to think about college when I was in high school. I saw people talking about college. At first, I didn't understand why they were talking about college, so when I graduated, I went straight home to get a job. When I arrived home, I was frustrated. I couldn't find a job. I thought about going to a hearing college, but I knew they would not understand me. I thought I should go to a college for the deaf. I had planned to go to college, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to major in at that time. While in high school, I didn't have any Black teachers to inform me about college. I had no one to help me or guide me to go college, so I went back home. Then I realized that if I wanted to go to college, I would have to go to a college for the deaf. The people that I looked up to, whether they were deaf or hearing, had gone to college to succeed. I realized that if I wanted to succeed, I would have to be willing to struggle to earn a degree for myself.

# Protective Factors in the Family 3

The African American family has been the subject of many studies that have focused on the weakness of the family structure and culture. Historically, African American families have had to overcome major obstacles to obtain an education for their children. Many African American families believe that a top-quality education is the key that opens the door to socioeconomic opportunities in this society and the global community. Parents make sacrifices, sometimes working more than one job, so that their children can have the resources needed to attend school and complete postsecondary programs. Working to earn enough income from low-paying jobs to support their families has precluded some from taking as active a role in the school as they would want. However, they seek out the best educational opportunities for their children, and they make an effort to help their children in school.

Though the media and other sources often provide negative information about African American families, research has revealed that over two-thirds of African American families within all income groups are stable and care about their children's success in school, and help their children to succeed in school (Morial, 2003, p. 11). The data about demographics and academic achievement have revealed that students from African American and other diverse backgrounds who are in stable environments with supportive caregivers who provide protective factors will most likely achieve in school (Clark, 1983; Rutter, 1979, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1982). Unfortunately, this has not consistently held true for African American students; a disproportionate number of students from middle-class African American homes have been placed in low-level academic classes and special education (Gordon, 2004).

Similar to other ethnic groups, some African Americans have less stable family situations. Through my work in Deaf education, I have seen students from these homes graduate from postsecondary programs. This

has occurred when significant adults, other than the parents, have helped students to succeed in school. More information is needed about these students as well as this group of caregivers and significant others who provide the encouragement, resources, and other supports that help children succeed when there are no parents available or willing to take this responsibility.

Little research is available on parents of African American deaf and hard of hearing students and how they help their children succeed in school. Viewing African American families as one homogeneous group can lead to stereotyping and low expectations of the families and their children; therefore, researchers need to view families as a heterogeneous group.

A majority of the research on deaf and hard hearing children, youth, and young adults has primarily been based on samples of White students and their families. Some authors suggest this lack of focus on African American deaf and hard of hearing children, youth, and young adults is due to stereotyped ideas, discrimination, and low expectations of the children and their parents. With the exception of deficit research, this group has been largely ignored in the literature (Cohen et al., 1990; Moores et al., 1977), yet clearly there are a number of high-achieving African American deaf and hard of hearing students. What strengths have been developed and mobilized to enhance these students' school performance? Over 90 percent of deaf and hard of hearing students are born to hearing parents who have no knowledge about deafness. We need to learn how African American parents who are faced with obstacles such as lack of understanding of deafness, inability to use sign language, racial discrimination and oppression, and societal attitudes about disabilities, have found ways to overcome these obstacles and obtain deaf-related services and the best education possible for their children. How do these families navigate the Deaf educational system to help their child succeed? What protective factors exist within these families that enable their children to prevail in spite of the odds?

## Strengths of African American Parents in Overcoming Obstacles

African American parents and guardians with successful hearing children provide a caring environment (Hrabowski et al., 1998), spirituality training (Clark, l983; Ford, 1993; Hrabowski et al., 1998), open and ongoing communication (Clark, 1983), high expectations (Scott-Jones, 1987; Solorzano, 1992), discipline and structure (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Cole,

1990; Clark, 1983), positive and intimate relationships, support, parent-school involvement (Clark, l983; Comer, 1980; Epstein, 1995; Yan, 1999), and positive racial and cultural socialization (Sanders, 1997; Hrabowski et al., 1998). The majority of these parents and guardians place high value on their children's education, and they take responsibility for their children's education by monitoring their homework, providing educational resources, and following up with the teachers. They want their children to attend college and talk to them about it (Thompson, 2003). The positive results of these factors hold true for children from different income levels and ethnic groups.

African American parents of deaf and hard of hearing children provide the same protective factors as their counterparts who have hearing children. In addition, they accept their children's differences and emphasize their strengths. They view their children "as children first," and not as their disabilities or labels (Borum, 2001). African American parents of resilient deaf and hard of hearing children have ongoing discussions with them about the importance of education as an avenue to intellectual growth and socioeconomic advancement.

These parents also provide a strong spiritual foundation in their families. They view God as an active force in their lives that provides them with understanding and acceptance of their life experiences, courage and fortitude to confront challenges, and the ability to persevere through difficult situations (Borum, 2001).

Despite their ability to provide protective factors, African American parents still face barriers in securing quality educational and auxiliary services for their deaf children. Educational and other service providers frequently criticize African American parents for their parenting styles. Parents are labeled as dysfunctional, and they, along with their children, are blamed for the children's low academic placements and school failures (Borum, 2001). This "judgmental" view of parents often deters them from becoming involved with school personnel. The lack of respect and understanding of the strengths of African American families and their culture leads school personnel to have low expectations of African American students (Brown, D'Emidio-Caston, & Benard, 2001). Parents of deaf and hard of hearing children "must also contend with the rejection from the larger Deaf (White) community and witness this same rejection of their deaf children

for whom they state should have the option of being both Deaf and African American (Borum, 2001, p. 256). It is not surprising, then, that parents sometimes are hesitant to trust decisions and recommendations made by school personnel because of past problems and negative experiences they have had with them.

These data provide a framework for educators to consider when examining some of the barriers that interfere with or prevent African American parents from having the same access to education and related services as White parents. White parents do not have to think about how they will be received in their child's school. In most situations, they are in an environment where administrators, teachers, and staff look like them, have had similar experiences growing up, and think like them. There are no predetermined stereotyped ideas about parents and their children's abilities and behaviors. School personnel expect their children to learn, so they contact the parents if a child is not progressing. They expect and welcome White parents' involvement in the process (Denbo & Beaulieu, 2002).

Positive attitudes toward and outreach to African American parents can create strong collaborative working relationships between the school and home and promote academic achievement. It appears this type of positive outreach and involvement by schools has not occurred consistently with African American parents, and this lack of outreach reduces the educational services for children and their families. Also, lack of outreach to families contributes to the widening gap in achievement for this group of students (Borum, 2001). Understanding these barriers could help educators improve educational services to families. It could help some educators avoid, unknowingly, setting up barriers to parents' involvement and students' progress in school. All parents need some type of support, whether formal or informal or both, but where, how, and when do African American families of deaf and hard of hearing children obtain this support? Like other parents who are confronted with obstacles, they need to have the support of the Deaf community to help them overcome barriers that interfere with their children's educational achievement. A few professionals committed to working with families of African American students cannot do the job alone (Borum, 2001, p. 20).

The educational system has presented hurdles for many African American families of deaf and hard of hearing students to overcome.

Some families have survived educational systems that have not provided them with needed support and resources for their children because they have been able to provide the protective factors needed to help their children graduate from postsecondary programs.

## Participants' Families and Protective Factors

The participants in my study had experienced a variety of school programs, including schools for the deaf, self-contained classes, and mainstream programs. Most were average students, but they graduated from college with a bachelor's degree. Some hold master's degrees, and some are in advanced degree programs, which include master's and doctoral programs. All are professionals employed in a job that requires a college degree, with the exception of one participant who is in graduate school full time. To pay for his education, he is working in a position that does not require a degree.

All of the participants are from hearing families, with the exception of one participant who has a hard of hearing parent and a deaf sibling. Five of the participants are from two-parent homes and four are from single-parent homes. Most of their parents were high school graduates who earned average incomes. Three parents had completed college.

The families ranged in size from two to seven children. In one family, the parents expected the hard of hearing older boy to serve as a role model for the other children. This is uncommon in hearing families with hard of hearing children; however, it is a practice that should be implemented in hearing families with deaf and hard of hearing children because it sets high expectations for them, gives them a sense of being a part of the family, and provides a sense of responsibility for their actions as well as a possible positive influence on their younger siblings. All participants have overcome various obstacles to succeed.

All of the participants reported that the protective factors within their families were critical to their successful transitions from elementary school through college. They talked about the positive steps that their parents took to nurture, support, and encourage them and how they internalized and were sustained by what they were taught in their homes. As a result, the participants succeeded in their educational programs.

Children learn the importance of resilience and the protective factors that nurture it from their parents. Therefore, parents need to actively teach their

children how to become resilient. Information about protective factors can be communicated in informal discussions; through the use of life examples, books, educational games, and exposure to cultural programs; and by modeling appropriate behaviors. Parents need to be aware of the impact of their own behavior on their children since this is more important than what they sign or verbalize. The participants' parents talked to their children about why they emphasized specific behaviors, and they used their experiences to illustrate the importance of these behaviors. For example, the participants in this study mentioned their parents' work ethic; their parents went to work on time and told them repeatedly about the importance of doing a good job and being punctual. All of them internalized the importance of working hard and performing well, whether in the classroom, cleaning their rooms, or on a job. The parents modeled appropriate behaviors, helped their children confront new challenges, and also provided them with relevant information about life experiences and educational resources. These parents worked diligently to provide for their children's needs, discussed with them some of the obstacles that could confront them and how they could avoid them, and taught them strategies for handling obstacles that they could not avoid. The participants learned from what their parents said and what they did.

Evidence has revealed that a lack of protective factors or limited exposure to these factors may cause a child to have difficulty with developmental and coping skills, interpersonal relationships, and other social skills (Benard, 1991; Rutter,1984; Werner & Smith, 1982). This may be demonstrated in the form of problems in interpersonal relationships, low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and below-grade-level school performance (Benard, 1991). Two of the participants discussed separations from their parents during the time they were in school, one in middle school and the other in high school. Both found the separation difficult. One participant lived with one parent after his parents were divorced; however, he maintained contact with the noncustodial parent. Another participant lived in a residential school far from her home while attending high school. Though she found this difficult, she was able to adjust to high school and graduate by maintaining communication with a parent and another adult in her hometown.

These participants illustrate the importance of children having ongoing contact or communication with their parents or a significant adult during

their school and college years. Many deaf and hard of hearing students leave home to attend junior and senior high school at approximately age 14, an age when most children are still receiving the daily care, nurturing, support, and supervision of their parents. High school students who are living in residential schools for the deaf need ongoing contact with their parents. Parents need to work out scheduled times for telephoning and visiting their children so that their children will know that they care and support them.

As in studies of high-achieving hearing African Americans, the participant's achievements revealed that family protective factors were not impacted significantly by the family composition, parental marital status, level of parental education, income status, or geographic locale (Benard, 1991; Clark, 1983; Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Regardless of whether they were from below average income, average income, or above average income homes, there were commonalities and consistency in the protective factors the participants discussed as important to their school and postsecondary achievements. What has emerged from this study and the research literature is that the involvement of at least one adult who provides care and support is a strong predictor of resilience in children. Furthermore, the quality of family interactions and family dynamics has determined students' educational and behavioral outcomes (Benard, 1996; Clark, 1983; Hrabowski et al., 1998; Rutter, 1984; Werner & Smith, 1982).

All of the participants viewed their families, especially their parents, as instrumental in their successful transition through school and college. In one situation, an extended family member, an uncle, played a pivotal role in a participant's academic achievement and served as a role model. In two other cases, siblings and other relatives provided educational support. All of the parents and other influential adults placed high priority on education from elementary school through college. They expected their children to complete high school, and they took specific actions to help the children transition successfully into college and graduate.

The most prevalent themes in family factors were caring and supportive relationships, high expectations, positive reinforcement, open and ongoing communication, parent involvement in school, challenging educational experiences, meaningful participation, structure and discipline, and spiritual training (see Table 1). Their parents were advocates for their children to obtain the appropriate education for a deaf and hard of hearing child.

None of the parents had previous experience in identifying an appropriate education for their deaf and hard of hearing child, but they were assertive and resourceful, and they followed up on recommendations made by specialists in Deaf education in finding educational programs that met their children's needs. Furthermore, they were willing to make sacrifices so that their children could attain the best education possible. In two cases the parents moved the family so their children could attend schools that they deemed best for them, and in another case the parent sent the child away to school in another state.

### *Caring and Supportive Environments*

The participants' parents provided caring and supportive relationships that resulted in their children possessing a strong sense of their places and roles in the family and a positive self-image. Their parents helped them understand, appreciate, and have pride in their racial heritage and culture. In some situations, they also involved them in church and other environments that reinforced positive feelings about themselves, their race, and culture. These settings also stimulated and enhanced their intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

Five of the participants lived with and had close relationships with both parents while attending elementary and high school. Four participants lived with one parent during the time they were in elementary and high school. The participants who lived in single-parent homes stated that they had caring and supportive relationships with their mothers. The participant who lived with his father during the week and visited his mother on the weekend identified his mother as the person with whom he had the caring and supportive relationship. One participant noted that he and his mother were so close that when people saw his mother, they expected to see him someplace nearby. People in his community referred to him as his mother's "sidekick." However, though he was very close to his mother, she did not make him dependent on her. She taught him independent living skills that he took to college with him.

The parents demonstrated care and support in different ways. Some verbally expressed or signed their love for their children, and some did it through their actions. They showed interest in their children's activities, were active participants in their lives, maintained communication with

Table 1. Protective Factors and Processes in the Family (Parents, Siblings, and Extended Family)

| Protective factors | Examples |
|---|---|
| Caring and supportive relationships | Acceptance of African American culture<br>Acceptance of Deaf culture<br>Expressions of love<br>Supportive and encouraging words<br>Provision of basic needs<br>Parent sacrifices |
| Open and ongoing communication | Fluency in ASL<br>Use of communication mode of child<br>Active listening<br>Advice |
| High expectations | Academic expectations<br>Behavioral expectations |
| Challenging educational experiences | Reading<br>Homework monitoring<br>Appropriate class and school placements<br>Organization skills<br>Technological assistive devices<br>Test preparation<br>Computer use |
| Meaningful participation | Camp<br>Chores<br>Work experience |
| Parent-school involvement | IEP meetings<br>Parent/teacher meetings<br>Discussion groups<br>Child's activities |
| Spiritual training | Participation in church activities |
| Discipline and structure | Clear rules, rewards, and consequences |

their schools, provided a learning environment in the home, and made their education a priority over their own needs. They provided structure and discipline in their children's lives.

The parents provided for their children's basic needs and more. They also found different ways to provide extra pleasures for them in addition to providing learning materials and opportunities. They not only took them on trips and provided extra delights for them on holidays, they frequently provided for them in ways that the participants still talk about with pleasure. They recognized that their parents would not overindulge them, and they

appreciated what their parents did for them. Like their parents, they viewed it as their responsibility to succeed in school. This excerpt shows how one participant's parents provided for basic needs and some extra enjoyment:

> My family life was rich in love. My parents focused on family life. They found ways to provide for us. We did not always have what we wanted. However, we always had what we needed. My parents not only focused on making us happy at Christmastime, they made us happy every day. This included having dinner prepared when we arrived home from school, dressing us nicely, and taking us on trips. One time my mother earned extra money for a summer family trip. My father had been injured on the job and was receiving disability checks from his job. My mother wanted each person in the family to have an extra $100.00 to spend at Disney World. She earned the extra money by baking and selling small sweet potato pies on her job every Friday. We had a wonderful trip that involved stopping to visit family friends along the way and finally connecting up with friends from our church at Disney World. We left Disney World and went on a cruise.
>
> My parents were of the opinion that they would not give, give, and give to us. They would provide the things we needed; that made me feel good. I wanted to show them how much I appreciated what they did for me by going to school, being obedient, making good grades, and just being the best I could be.

It was obvious during the interviews that the participants felt that they were valued and cherished by their parents. This participant had two parents in the home; one parent was a high school graduate and the other attended college for two years:

> There was so much love in our house; I have nothing to complain about. My parents expressed their love for me. They told me they loved me and they showed interest in my activities.
>
> My mother was always willing to help me and to motivate me. She told me that I could do better than I thought and to continue studying until I knew for sure I would get an A in the class. Though my father did not say the same things to me, he motivated me.

The participants stated that their parents viewed their education as important and at times sacrificed their own needs to be sure that their children accomplished their educational goals. This participant's parents were both college graduates:

> I treasure the support that my parents gave to me. I had planned to postpone my graduation from college because my mother became very ill during my senior

> year in college. However, my mother encouraged me to continue in school and accomplish my goal of graduating. I continued and graduated as planned.

After the next participant's father died, her mother, who had been a housewife, had to go to work as well as meet the responsibilities of a large family. Despite the added responsibility of taking care of the family alone, she continued to seek out the best education for her daughter: "My mother had the full responsibility for my education. My father died when I was very young. My mother tried to get me the best education possible."

All of the participants related how their parents made statements to them that emphasized that graduation from high school was not an option. They were all expected to graduate from high school, and what they did educationally beyond high school graduation was viewed as a "plus." Thus, their parents put forth concerted efforts to make sure that they graduated. Three of the participants said that their parents saw the possibilities of college for them before they graduated from high school. The other participants became interested in college through school experiences, experiences after high school graduation, peers, or vocational counselors. Once their children expressed desires to attend college, all of the parents, except one, were very supportive of their efforts. The one exception was the participant who had a strained relationship with his father. His father wanted him to attend college; however, his father did not support his efforts to go to college because of his low grades in high school. However, he had the support of his mother during the time he was in school and college.

Parents made their children aware that if they needed help, they were there to help them. The participants knew that they could depend on their parents for that support when needed. Children build trust in adults when they can depend on people in their environment to support them. Their parents did not make them dependent; they supported them in their efforts. They expected their children to learn to perform independently. According to one participant, "My mother was always encouraging me. She said, I am willing to help you, but you have to help yourself."

This next quote is from another participant whose parents did not complete high school but saw the importance of education. While he was in college, he married and started a family. He viewed his entire family as supportive of his efforts in school. He also viewed his school

attendance as a positive example for his son, who had not yet finished elementary school:

> My family, my wife, my kid, my mother and father contributed to my graduation from college. Without them, I don't know how far or how I could continue or if I would be where I am today. I could easily say that I am content where I am today, but I am not.

The participants still feel that their parents are supportive of them. The following excerpt is from a second participant who feels she still has continued support from her mother. In it, she recounts the advice she received from her mother after she left college for a while due to low grades and was working to earn money to go back to college:

> Even now, my mother will do what she can to help us. I remember one time when I had gone back to live in my hometown after leaving college, I got fired from my job. I got mad and got involved in an argument. People were gathering around looking and I got fired. I was living alone in an apartment at the time. I couldn't pay my rent. I had to tell my mother I was not working and got fired. She paid my rent. I was so embarrassed and mad with myself about the reason I got myself fired. My mother is always the wise one. She didn't scold me. She listened as I explained the reason I was fired. She gave me some advice. She told me never to fight over a boy. She said, "You got fired. OK, the next job will be better." Of course, the next job was better, with less stress.

### EXTENDED FAMILY CARE AND SUPPORT

In the African American community, extended family members have traditionally played pivotal roles in providing protective factors in the lives of children whether or not parents are available. In African American families, extended family includes not only blood relatives but also significant non–blood relatives and people who are not legally related who accept responsibility for children as though they were their own. They provide care and support, open and ongoing communication, high expectations, challenging educational experiences, meaningful participation, school involvement, spiritual training, and discipline and structure. Their words and actions give additional affirmation of the child's importance to the family.

Only four of the participants talked about extended family members who provided care and support. The low number of extended family

members who were involved with these participants could be attributed to the inability of family members to communicate with them. In all cases in which extended family members were discussed, the participants were hard of hearing. The following participant did not have a father in the home and his uncle, an in-law, served as a surrogate father:

> My family, my mother, my uncle, and my aunt supported me in completing high school. They were right there encouraging me to finish school, saying, "You can do anything you want to do. You have to do for yourself." It was my family who supported me and helped me get through high school. My mother raised me, but my uncle took the role of my father. Sometimes he would come over to the school, if I did something bad. He was always a support system. I saw my father twice when I was growing up, and now I see him once in a while. My uncle is my mother's sister's husband. That one uncle put 110 percent into raising me. He really put in 110 percent focusing on my brother and me to make sure that we had a male role model.
>
> My uncle took me on trips, and he was always giving me motivational speeches. My uncle is a preacher, and he would tell me about his life and give me other information. He would say, "You can do it, whatever you put your mind to, you can do it, go for it." My mother would do the same thing and encourage me. She would tell me to continue moving forward.

### *Open and Ongoing Communication*

Parents must be able to communicate directly and clearly to their children in a way that facilitates dialogue and maintains a positive relationship. The ability to use the child's mode of communication contributes greatly to understanding and expressing support. Seven of the participants reported they had at least one parent with whom they had open and ongoing communication.

Extended family members rarely show an interest in sign language or take the time to learn it. However, in the few situations in which they do learn to sign, the student has made successful transitions through college. The following excerpt shows how the hearing parents and extended family members learned sign language so that they could all communicate with the participant:

> My parents use their voices a lot to communicate with me. If I don't understand what they are saying, they sign to me. When my hard of hearing and deaf friends visit, my parents sign. My mom took sign language classes long ago when she found out that I was deaf. My father does not sign as well as my mom.

> He uses some "home signs," but he signs. I understand him. My whole family took sign language classes and they can sign. My sisters, aunts, grandparents, and my Godmother can sign.

Direct communication allows parents to express themselves to their children when dialogue is needed. They do not have to wait for someone else to interpret the information for them—when parents can sign, they can share important information with their children. This excerpt is from another deaf participant whose parents and sibling sign:

> My parents explained to me what life is like after high school. They told me that few people are successful. That is true. When I was growing up my parents talked to me about some of their friends who were not successful and didn't have good jobs. I did not want that to happen to me.

The parents' inability to sign was a problem for two of the participants. Of these two participants, one thought it was "sad" that his mother could not communicate directly with him. He knew she supported him in school and was proud of him because she expressed that during school meetings, but he could only communicate indirectly with her through his siblings' finger spelling. The other participant said that because she could not communicate with her mother, she had not understood why her mother placed her in certain schools. Only when she was graduating from college did she understand her mother's positive intentions in placing her in a school out of state. This participant stressed the importance of parents learning to sign.

The mode of communication, whether it is sign language or oral, must be clear enough for the deaf or hard of hearing person to understand. The following quote is from a hard of hearing participant who was able to use and understand oral communication:

> I was able to talk with my parents at the dinner table. They always wanted to know what was different that I had learned that day and if anything had happened. They were interested in what I had to say, so I never felt that they did not care about me.

### *High Expectations*

Parents' expectations, beliefs, and values have a great influence on how children perceive and value education. Parents need to be aware of what

they say about education and its importance and what they say about the educators and staff who provide instruction and related services for their children. More often than not family beliefs and values about education override family demographic variables in influencing achievement and underachievement among African American students (Ford, 1993). Regardless of their socioeconomic status, parents of successful African American students communicate to their children the high value they place on success in school. These high expectations are a protective factor that enhances academic achievement. By communicating positive statements about the school, parents can help their child view the school as a safe and caring environment that provides the best education possible. If parents find fault with the school, they should handle it by contacting school personnel and not by making negative comments about the school to the child.

All of the participants stated that their parents had high expectations of them and viewed education as a priority, necessary and important. Their parents talked to them about the value of education and encouraged them to succeed in school. Their extended families and siblings also encouraged them. The participants described how their parents provided strong support from elementary school through college, and this was the primary reason for their graduation from high school and college. Their parents' high expectations included words of encouragement and praise for their accomplishments. The parents' statements about their confidence in their child's ability to succeed reinforced the participants' confidence in their ability to earn good grades in school.

All of the participants' met their parents' expectations. In addition to parental expectations, one participant noted that she also had role models in her family to emulate in graduating from college:

> My parents expected me to complete high school and college. I had a lot of support from my family. My parents helped me understand that if I wanted to accomplish my career goals, I would need a degree. My mom and dad helped me the most to graduate from college, no question. I wanted to earn my bachelor's degree and I was expected to finish school. Everyone else in the family was completing school and I wanted to do the same thing.

Another participant expressed how her parents provided her with support and set high expectations for her:

> I come from an educated family. My parents set high standards for me. They encouraged me to set goals for myself. I had big visions and goals for myself to go to college and to work hard. My parents encouraged me to set goals; to keep my head up; to never put myself down; and to keep moving forward no matter what happened. They told me I deserved success and would be a future leader if I kept my head up and continued to move forward.

The following quote from another participant shows how some parents used their life experiences and those of other family members to point out the reasons that they held high expectations for their children. They wanted them to graduate from high school and to become productive individuals by working:

> My father verbalized on a daily basis that everyone in the house had to at least graduate from high school. It was more of a threat. He said, "You'll have to go school or get a job. You cannot stay here if you don't have one or the other." He was serious. Some years later, when I was looking for work when I dropped out of college, but I was not working yet, he was very adamant about his expectations. . He looked around at our relatives who were not working. He said, "You can't stay in this house and do nothing." Some of my adult relatives were still at home and he said that he wasn't going to have that happen in his house. He was pretty adamant about that.
>
> My mother did not graduate from high school. She talked more from experience. She would say, "You don't want to be like me. You want to get your high school diploma. Make things easy on yourself."

Another participant whose mother could not sign discussed how his mother made her high academic and behavior expectations of him known. She communicated her expectations and praise of him through her actions (smiles and body language) and through his siblings' finger spelling. She monitored his homework and ensured that he received help when he needed it and that he had the necessary school supplies. She participated in school meetings. Her participation provided her with an understanding of her son's progress and academic needs and also provided access to interpreters so she could communicate her praise and expectations to her son in those meetings:

> My mother encouraged me. She praised me. She was proud of my accomplishments in school. Every time she went to the school, my teachers said many positive things about me. They told her I was smart. She knew I had the potential to succeed in school. She had high expectations of me and wanted me to go to

> college. She also encouraged me to get work experience. She was very positive and wanted me to be a well-rounded and independent individual.

When the participants went to college, they knew their parents' expectations of them. The following excerpt shows how the expectations of one participant's parents were instilled in her when she went to college:

> My parents strongly supported me completing high school. I knew what was expected of me. Though my parents were not with me in college, I remembered what they had taught me while I was growing up and I frequently applied it.

Another participant summed up her mother's words of encouragement in a few powerful words of care and expectations: "My mother would tell me, 'I'm so proud of you.' I could not disappoint her."

Parents need to be able to balance high expectations with other factors that are occurring in the life of the child. This does not necessarily mean they need to lower expectations or that their child does not have the intelligence to pursue postsecondary goals. It does mean actively listening to their child to identify problems, providing support to their child to resolve the problem, and involving other persons and resources, if needed, in this process. In one situation the father's high and rigid expectations of his son not only interfered with his son's academic progress in school but also created a strained father-son relationship:

> A very strict father contributed to me completing high school. He was determined that I would go to college some kind of way. He knew the only way that I could do that was to complete high school. I attended a private school and he was paying for it. There was no doubt in my mind that I was going to finish high school. However, though my father was strict and wanted me to go to college, he did not send me to college or support me in college due to my poor grades.

### *Providing Challenging Educational Experiences*

Parents who have high expectations for their children to do well in school also take steps to initiate learning opportunities that will strengthen their children's educational foundation. All of the participants could discuss educational steps that their parents took to prepare them for elementary and high school and college, including encouraging them to read, purchasing educational aids, exposing them to experiences that provided

educational enrichment, and deciding on school placements to enhance their academic skills.

### READING

Seven of the participants' parents either read to them and or encouraged them to read when they were between 3 and 7 years old. The participants discussed how their early reading habits provided them with opportunities to build their academic skills while they were young. Three of the participants talked about their parents being avid readers. This group of parents regularly took their children to the library, bought them books instead of toys, instilled in them that reading is enjoyable, encouraged them to read the newspaper, required them to read, gave them money to buy books, and presented themselves as models by actively reading in the presence of their children. Siblings and extended family members also gave the participants books and other educational items. The parents themselves encouraged their children to read some of the same books that they read, and the more advanced level of reading found in the parent's books further enhanced the participants' reading levels and critical thinking skills. One participant discussed her mother's support of reading:

> My mother encouraged me to read, and I did a lot of reading when I was growing up. I started reading novels in elementary school. I was required to read during the summer. She bought me sets of books, consisting of 5 or 6 books, children's Biblical books, children story books and fables for me. I was expected to read them. My mother did a lot of reading.

Another discussed the role both his parents played in developing his aptitude for reading:

> My parents encouraged me to read and write. Reading and writing were especially required and emphasized in our home. When we went shopping with my parents, I was encouraged to purchase books instead of toys. My parents had two or three different types of newspapers delivered to the house daily, and I read them on a daily basis. My interest and ability to excel in English is due to my early involvement in reading.

One of the participant's mothers was a voracious reader. She provided books for her son to read, and his siblings also gave him books. By modeling reading herself, this mother demonstrated that reading was enjoyable and useful. High reading skills are very important in academic success.

Since the mother did not sign, she depended on her other children, who could fingerspell, to help her deaf son with reading. As demonstrated in this excerpt, he began developing his reading skills at home prior to going to elementary school. These reading skills enhanced his achievement in elementary school:

> Those books had beautiful pictures. I was fascinated with the pictures and art in the books and enjoyed looking at them. I would flip through the pages and look at the pictures. I also tried to read the books. My older brothers and sisters would help me by finger spelling and gesturing the meaning of the words. When I went to elementary school, I had already developed language from my brothers and sisters. I picked up language from my brothers and sisters who finger spelled and gestured to me. I enjoyed reading Bible stories and children's books. That helped develop my reading skills. My mother was an avid reader. While I was still in elementary school, I began reading her novels, which further developed my reading skills.

Another participant was encouraged to read by two parents who read a lot. He also had an aunt who encouraged him to read. The family's involvement in reading contributed to him developing a wide range of reading interests:

> My mother's contribution to my education was reading. I started reading a lot in second grade. My mother loved to read. She would always give me lots of books to read. The books included comic books, fairy tales, and novels. I started off with fairy tales. My aunt gave me my first fairy tale. Then I became more sophisticated and moved to novels. I read a lot of books that my mother had already read. My mother read books like *Falconhurst* and *Mandingo.* When she finished the books, I read them. It was a sophisticated level of reading and it started developing my critical thinking skills. My father gave me a library card so I could go to the library and select my own books. My father also did a lot of reading. He introduced me to books about nature and to *Reader's Digest.*

This third participant stated that her parents understood the need for her to obtain information visually since she was missing some information in her environment due to her deafness. This excerpt also shows how participants were encouraged to select books themselves and to participate in activities at the library, which would further enhance their educational foundation:

> My parents were always reading to me and involved me in a lot of reading activities. I think it was due to my deafness. They wanted to be sure that I was always ahead. My parents didn't make an issue of it. We would buy books. It

> was a natural thing. We went to children's activities at the library. I checked out books myself. My mother would not do it for me. I initiated it.

### HOMEWORK MONITORING

As a part of their expectations for their children to complete their schoolwork and achieve in school, parents monitored their school homework. All of the participants' parents monitored their homework while they were in elementary school, and all but two monitored their homework in high school. One of the two participants was away from home in a school for the deaf, and she felt that she would have accomplished more academically if she had had more supportive adults in her school environment, especially African American teachers. She described how she struggled to succeed in the school for the deaf. While she was at home and attending elementary school, her mother and siblings would help her with homework. The other participant attended a mainstream school. He stated that his mother expected him to be more independent and do his homework. He related that he did "well enough." However, he felt he would have had much better grades in high school if his mother had monitored his homework more closely. When their parents did not have the skills themselves to help their children with all of their homework, they asked for siblings to help their children:

> My parents used a variety of methods to encourage me to succeed academically. They monitored and helped me with homework. Home entertainment was reduced. TV had to be turned off at a certain time. The children did not ask to see TV because we knew our parents' expectations. Watching a lot of TV was not permitted in the home.

In this case the whole family helped the student with homework. This shows how the parents and other family members in this study supported and monitored the completion of homework:

> Initially I was placed in a mainstream class because my deafness had not been identified. When my teacher gave me homework, I took it home for my family to help me. I have a large family and each of them helped me. They showed me what to do.

Parents had an established homework schedule that they expected their children to follow. They monitored their homework. They expected their children to try to do the homework themselves and ask for help if they needed

it. Learning how to ask for help when needed is another important skill that promotes academic success. This excerpt shows how this participant learned this skill at home through her parent helping her with her homework. Her parents helped her think through the assignment to do it herself:

> When I was in elementary school, I went to school all day and after school I participated in after school activities. I arrived home around 5:00 p.m. I ate dinner. When I was finished, I would show my parents my assignment paper, which listed all of my assignments. I would then do my homework. If I was struggling and having a problem with an assignment, I would show it to my parents. They would explain it to me and help me understand why I was having a problem with it. They routinely helped me.

Though sometimes the parents could not help their children with their homework, they would check with them if they needed help so they could seek others to help them if needed:

> My mother helped me with my homework. She would inquire if I needed to ask her anything about my homework. She stayed on top of me about my homework. She was not an academic person who knew everything about math and English. However, she was supportive and would tell me to do my homework. My mother was there for me. Sometimes I would do my homework when I finished my class assignments. That way I would not have anything to do at night.

By monitoring their children's homework, their parents were aware when they were not doing it and would find out why:

> My mother is good in math. I am not good in math. She was always willing to help and motivate me. My parents also encouraged me to do my homework in college. If I was not studying and doing my homework, they would ask me, "What's the problem?"

### APPROPRIATE CLASS AND SCHOOL PLACEMENTS

Their parents were observant of their school performance and made sure that they were in appropriate class and school placements. They also made sure that they were performing on the correct academic levels. The following excerpts regard school placement:

> My parents moved to another city because they knew I would have a better opportunity for a more challenging academic program. I knew there was a lot more out there in the world. I wanted to challenge myself. My parents did not

> feel that the academic program at the school for the deaf that I attended was challenging enough. Also, they did not feel that it offered enough structure and discipline. For me to attend the school we selected we either had to live in the school district or pay $4,000.00 in tuition. My parents moved to the school district.

### MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

In addition to providing reading materials, monitoring homework, and participating in school meetings, parents and extended family members provided educational opportunities through camp attendance and work experiences. They also provided SAT test preparation classes, bought computers, and helped with organizational skills. The following excerpt shows how an aunt and uncle encouraged and supported a participant's interest in computers:

> My parents, aunt, and uncle knew of my high interest in computers. My aunt and uncle bought me a computer when I was in elementary school. I have always been fascinated with technology, so I was able to put it together myself. My parents sent me to a computer camp when I was about 10 or 11 years old. My aunt and uncle worked for IBM. They got me a computer when I was really young. They encouraged me in computers. My aunt and uncle always told me what was going on there at IBM. When I was growing up, I loved computers. I trained myself. First I had the Commodore 64. Then my aunt and uncle surprised me and bought me the Commodore 128 because I was so fascinated with computers. I used it frequently. I did different things such as playing games and they had some programs on it. For example, if you typed in information, certain colors would show up.

#### *Independent Living Skills*

There are independent living skills that enhance school performance and help young people understand the value of achieving in school. Organizational skills and the ability to manage time helped this participant succeed in school:

> My parents helped me understand how to manage my time by making a schedule. I learned to schedule all of my activities, which include planning time for school, extracurricular activities, family, friends, and me. As a result, I have been able to successfully manage school, have positive relationships with peers and others, participate in and hold leadership roles in a lot of organizations, and have time for my family, friends, and myself.

Parents had chores that they expected their children to complete on a daily basis. Daily routines and chores in the home helped them develop organizational skills and the ability to follow instructions without constant supervision, and these independent living skills helped them take care of themselves away from home. In addition, these skills are useful in academics because students are expected to follow written, signed, and verbal instructions. Students academic performance is higher when they have appropriate organization and independent living skills:

> When we arrived home, one of us would cook because my parents were still at work. We would all do homework after dinner. We would do our chores. My mom always left a list. We expected a list daily from my mother. If it was not done, we would be doing it until it was done. If it was not done right, we would have to do it again.

### *Accepting Deaf Culture*

It is important that parents understand and accept their children's deafness. This includes using sign language, understanding the culture, and providing appropriately for their access to communication through technology and sign language. It is vital that deaf and hard of hearing youth have the necessary technology available to them. Parents need to understand their deaf children's needs and provide resources to facilitate the learning process. The following excerpt illustrates how parents made arrangements for their children to have the necessary equipment, when they became aware of what deafness-related resources they needed: "My mother tried to make sure I had what I needed to get the best education possible. I had a TTY, a captioned television, and anything else that was recommended for a deaf child."

### *Parent Participation in Education*

The parents of the participants expected their children to achieve and involved themselves in their schools. This involvement enabled them to be aware of their children's functioning, to reinforce appropriate behaviors, to help correct problems, and to participate in planning for their children. They attended parent-teacher meetings, IEP meetings, and extracurricular activities. At times, they had to go to the school to address problems their children were experiencing. The participants viewed their parents'

participation as indicative of their interest and support of them obtaining a good education. This excerpt demonstrates the different ways that parents were involved in meetings in the school:

> My parents encouraged me by being very involved in my school. They participated in parent meetings, parent discussion groups, and parent/teacher meetings. In parent discussion groups, they gave their opinions and discussed how to change the school system.
>
> They made sure that I made good grades and that I was on the right track. If there were any problems, my parents would come to the school any time and any day. They did that in elementary and high school too. They were involved in my IEP and discussion groups. They were involved in everything.
>
> During IEP meetings, my teachers, my parents, and I would sit and discuss expectations of me. My parents would discuss what they expected of the teachers and what they expected of me, how to meet my needs, and my academic level. If I was having a problem, my parents would discuss how I could get help after school. This would include individual meetings with the teacher for more review of my homework and tests. For example if I had a bad grade in school, my parents would want to know why and discussed arrangements for me to have additional help. I didn't get bad grades that often.

Parents went to the school to resolve problems and for routinely scheduled school meetings. This was an assertive group of participants who actively involved their parents and other adults in solving problems that exceeded their ability to resolve. In the following excerpt, a participant relates how her parents went to a meeting when she asked for help in resolving a problem:

> They came to all parent meetings. One example of my parents' participation in meetings in my school was when they helped me get out of the hearing resource room because I thought it was a waste of my time. My cousin, who is hearing, came to the school as a freshman when I was a senior. She was in the technology program. My school was a technology and science school. I saw that her schedule had zero periods, which meant that her schedule started before the regular 9:00 a.m. school time. She came in at 8:00 a.m. and took a class. When I showed that to my parents and asked why I had to take the hearing resource class, they understood it was a waste of my time. We had a meeting with the hearing resources director about that and I was finally allowed to become a guidance counselors' assistant instead of going to the hearing resource class. My parents were involved a lot in how I felt. If it was a realistic situation, they helped me address the issue. However, if it were something selfish, then they would tell me so.

In one case, the parent communicated to the school during IEP meetings through telephone conferences. For students who are in residential programs, it is important that their parents maintain contact with them and the school:

> I attended a school for the deaf out of my state. Since my mother was a widow, she could not travel to the school for conferences due to the need to work to provide for our family. She made arrangements to have telephone conferences for my IEP meetings. Those conferences would include my mother, a teacher representative, a school counselor, and me.

Another participant discussed the participation of both of her parents in school meetings. If both parents were in the home, they participated in school meetings and activities:

> Both my parents went to parent teacher meetings and my IEPs. They attended all of my activities. My mother worked in the evenings. My father worked in the mornings and was off to attend meetings in the evenings. My father attended most of the meetings. Later, my father was injured on his job and became disabled. After that, he was off from work and could attend all of my activities.

Parents attended IEP meetings to ensure that their children were on the correct academic level and that they were receiving an appropriate education:

> They participated in my IEP meetings. They made sure that I was not missing out on anything. They were very supportive. They showed up for PTA meetings and met with my teachers to make sure that I was in the appropriate classes.

### *Spiritual Training*

Three participants talked about their religious lives as a foundation for their success in school. They also talked about their parents' expectations that they would go to church. Two participated in activities in the church. One only attended when he was in elementary and high school because his parent expected him to attend; however, he became more active in church activities when he went to college.

The following is an excerpt that illustrates how their parents expected the three participants to attend church:

> In my junior year in high school, we started having football practice on Sunday and my parents were not too happy about that. I was adamant that I was going to football practice. By that time, my father said, "Fine, that's your

> decision." He could not make me go to church. I was pretty much a young man, developing my own decision-making skills, so he left the decision up to me. However, he expected me to attend church. We had practice about 10 in the morning and it lasted until about 12 noon. My father expected me to go to the noonday service. I would hurry home, change clothes, and get to church in time for the pastor to start his sermon. Maybe I would miss out on the prayer, singing, and praise service, but I would get there in time for the sermon. All that mattered to my father was that I got the biggest part of the service, the preaching.
>
> The church and Christian camp I attended gave me a spiritual foundation. My children went to a Christian school for their first three years of school. I really appreciate the spiritual foundation I received in my family. I know that my kids have the spiritual foundation and they know what spiritual life has to offer.

### *Structure and Discipline*

Parents provided structure in the lives of the participants. The participants were clear about their parents' rules, the rewards when they did what their parents expected, and the consequences for breaking rules. Parents had rules and expectations about homework that were clearly communicated to their children as illustrated in this excerpt. These excerpts also show some of the built-in rewards for following those rules and expectations:

> Honestly, when I was growing up my parents were on me about my homework. Homework was first. My parents had rules regarding homework. I was to complete my homework first and then I could watch TV, play games, and do other things. I knew what was expected of me. I feel that all parents should have the same expectations of their children.

If the participants' parents were at work when they arrived home from school, they knew that their parents expected them to do their homework when they arrived home:

> I had to do my homework before I watched TV. I was a latchkey kid. I had to do my homework before I did anything else. I had to do my homework when I arrived home. When I was in elementary school, we had a schedule of the assignments.

Structure and discipline were provided by mothers, fathers, and extended family members. The following excerpt demonstrates that participants' mothers set limits for them as did their fathers:

> My father worked two or three jobs. My mother was home most of the time. She spent more time with us, so she had to maintain some kind of control in the house, especially with three boys. She didn't want the boys "running" her. She maintained discipline. She had the "iron fist" in the house. She made sure the boys did not run the house. She didn't let the boys disrespect her in any way. Normally, it would be easy for boys to override a little woman. She made sure that did not happen. She grew up "street-smart," and she carried that over to her motherhood. She knew how to deal with boys. We couldn't fool her. She knew how to handle boys. She knew you could not simply be soft with boys. We couldn't sweet-talk her. She was not the type of woman that you could get your way with. She was just as tough as a man.

In addition to expectations about their academic achievement, their parents had expectations about their behavior at home, in school, and the community. This same participant talks about his parents' rules regarding what behaviors he modeled for his siblings. They expected him to assume the role of the oldest child and set an example for his younger siblings. Often parents of deaf and hard of hearing youth will place that responsibility on a younger hearing child because of their low expectation for the deaf or hard of hearing child. The following excerpt demonstrates that the parents of this participant did not lower their expectations for him because he was hard of hearing:

> They expected me to make the right decisions in social situations. They wanted me to make sure that I did not do anything to give my brothers and sisters the wrong idea by how I handled my personal life. Drugs, sex, and alcohol were the big issues, and they wanted to make sure I did not send the wrong message to my brothers and sister.
>
> I had lectures about controlling my wants, desires, and self-control. Self-control was expected of me. After I moved out and went back home, I saw things that my siblings were doing and I said, "You can do that now? I couldn't do it, but you can do it now." It is funny how things changed as my parents got older. They were more flexible. I saw how they had adapted, made changes, and were a little more understanding of the changes in society, but they still had rules and guidelines.

The participants expected consequences for inappropriate behaviors whether the behavior occurred in the home, school, or community.

> My uncle would drive for about an hour from where he lived to my school. He would come over and stay in my class all day. When I started to goof off, I

> would forget that he was there. He would loudly call out my name. I thought I couldn't have him doing that because he was going to come every day. I thought, "I can't have him coming to the school." The teacher was quick to call him or tell me, "I'll call your uncle." I would say, "Oh no, no, don't do that." I improved my behavior after that. There was a big difference.

### *Parents Teaching Strategies to Overcome Obstacles*

Many African Americans have experienced racial bias, discrimination, oppressive behaviors, and disregard for African American culture. In order to succeed, they have learned strategies to cope with these obstacles, and they have taught these strategies to their children. These strategies include instilling a sense of pride in their race and culture by exposing them to culturally enriching information and positive role models within their ethnic group, helping them develop a respect of and sensitivity to other cultures, teaching them to perform the best that they can in spite of others low expectations of them, and selecting their racial battles and being aware of when they need additional resources (parents, teachers, administrators, etc.) to handle discriminatory and oppressive situations. Parents must help their children recognize racism, discrimination, and oppression versus an honest mistaken behavior. This is important because mistaken behavior is not intended to hurt or belittle a person of a different racial or ethnic background, and these situations can be brought to an individual's attention to help them understand how these remarks and behaviors could send the wrong message. The challenge confronting African American parents is to help their children understand and accept that, in spite of racism and societal barriers, their success will depend mostly on their own efforts. Parents must teach their children that, although there are factors beyond their control such as racism, discrimination, and low expectations by some in our society, they still can control their own destiny and beat the odds (Hrabowski et al., 1998).

Most participants in my study said their parents discussed with them appropriate ways to handle racial and cultural bias. They emphasized the importance of being proud of themselves as African Americans and reported that their parents exposed them to African American culture and provided them with information to help them know their roots. Their parents also helped them understand that because of discrimination,

they would have to be better prepared than their White peers (Hrabowski et al., 1998).

A caring and supportive environment is a vital factor in the development of resilience. Such an environment is composed of family cohesion, family warmth, and the absence of conflict (Garmezy, 1985). Parents and guardians are the first protective agents in the child's environment, and they provide care, affection, and positive social relationships throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Rutter, 1979, 1990). Although a child needs a protective environment right from the start, later protective factor interventions can make a positive difference in the lives of children. Therefore, there is no need to give up on children because protective factors were not instituted early in their lives. What is important here is that parents and schools not give up on helping children who have encountered early hardships.

Parents and significant adults must demonstrate the following behaviors to help children develop resilience and contribute to their healthy well-being, intellectual growth, and positive interpersonal relationships (Masten, 1994):

1. Model competent and appropriate behaviors.
2. Make children feel worthwhile and valued by consistently nurturing behavior and engendering trust in people as resources.
3. Provide relevant information.
4. Teach competent behavior by providing guidance and constructive feedback.
5. Help children understand how to avoid difficult and unsafe situations.
6. Provide advice.
7. Help children face new challenges.
8. Function as an advocate.
9. Provide opportunities for building skills and confidence.

Responses from the participants suggest that their parents demonstrated these behaviors. Because their parents were not interviewed for this study, I do not have data from their parents that will shed light on how they acquired the skills to raise children who succeeded in postsecondary programs. Again, this points to the need to know more about parents who raise successful postsecondary graduates. This information would be beneficial to other

parents, schools, and postsecondary programs. In addition, it would help dispel some of the myths about African American parents and families.

### Summary of Family Factors

The conclusion that can be drawn from interviews with the participants is that family support, especially parental support, was the most important factor in the participants' successful transition through elementary, middle school, high school and college. However, parents are not trained to become parents. Most parents depend on what they learn from their parents, which may or may not be the best approach, and what they learn from watching others, from books, or from watching television programs on child care. There are no books on how to raise an African American deaf and hard of hearing child to succeed in school, and there are not an abundance of books that focus on raising a successful African American child. Nor do most parents have access to research data about children's cognitive and educational development. So how can African American parents learn how to raise resilient children?

Some schools, community agencies, churches, foster care programs, and homeless shelters have initiated programs to help parents and guardians with parenting skills. The focus of these groups is to provide information on topics relevant to parents, to assist parents and guardians to think through parenting approaches and, in some situations, to retrain their thinking about parenting. Schools are certainly in a prime position to provide these services. It is vital for caregivers to know the information that is found in research to be effective in raising a resilient child and improving a child's opportunities for academic achievement. African American parents will participate in this type of training if it is presented by qualified persons, in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner, at times and places that are convenient, and if other accommodations, such as babysitting services, are made available.

Parents of African American deaf and hard of hearing children need to know the importance of their child's resilience in the school setting, how to help their children develop resilience, and how to encourage their children to persevere to accomplish educational goals. They need open and ongoing communication systems established in the school to enhance the flow of information to them. This could help them train their children

to handle obstacles in a manner productive to themselves, instead of letting problematic situations overwhelm and destroy their opportunities to graduate from postsecondary programs.

Some parents of deaf and hard of hearing children have managed to succeed with their children without parenting information, information on deafness and Deaf culture, or research data on factors that contribute to growth and development of academic, social, and emotional development available to them. They could benefit from settings where they could discuss parenting topics in depth, exchange information with other parents, obtain information about their child's educational system, resources, and parental rights, and practice new skills in a nonthreatening environment.

With the increasing numbers of grandparents and other caregivers who are providing primary caretaking roles, schools need to make a concerted effort to reach out to these caregivers with information about deafness, educational resources, and other supportive services that will increase the children's opportunities for academic success. Though the literature discusses the importance of significant adults in the lives of children, grandparents and other caregivers have not been specifically addressed in the literature. These caregivers need a better understanding of the services needed for the deaf and hard of hearing children in their care. Grandparents as well as non–blood related caregivers often grapple for long periods of time without understanding a child's needs before adequate educational and deaf related services are provided.

At the time children enter school, sometimes negative judgments are made by educators about children's abilities and potentials due to the lack of a parent in the home. These negative judgments contribute to a lack of focus on the child's strengths. Stereotypes and other negative views of children from homes where there are no biological parents available can lead to denial of educational services that would promote positive social, emotional, and intellectual development. Parents' and other caregivers' journeys through the educational system for their deaf and hard of hearing children could be made easier and their children could be better educated if the school collaborated with community agencies to provide this information.

# 4 Individual Characteristics

The participants of this study are resilient. They know and accept who they are without any reservations. They are both African American and deaf or hard of hearing, and they feel at ease in both cultures and have positive interpersonal relationships in each. They do not isolate themselves from hearing environments. They see the need for involvement in both. They have not become bogged down with what is unfair about the educational system and given up or given in to adversities that they have encountered. Instead, they looked for alternatives to handle situations that would not interfere with their academic progress.

They do not place blame on others. They do not look around for negative nails in the educational system on which to hang reasons for their mistakes; they learn from them. They are able to look objectively within themselves, look at the system, and understand whether changes are needed in themselves, the system, or both. They are able to solve problems and make healthy and productive decisions; they recognize the skills they have and what resources they need from their environment in order to tackle and triumph over obstacles. They have the foundation within themselves and within their homes, schools, and communities. Again, this does not make them perfect; as they live, they will be confronted with challenges, but they will have the tools to persist despite adversities and obstacles.

All of these participants possess the individual characteristics that are integral to resilience, including intelligence, cultural and family pride, problem-solving and decision-making skills, motivation, self-confidence, self-determination, leadership skills, a positive work ethic, self-awareness, caring for others, communication skills, faith, a sense of humor, self-discipline, and assertiveness (Benard, 1991; Hrabowski et al., 1998; Werner & Smith, 1982). Initially, most participants stated that their individual characteristics originated from within themselves. After discussing their characteristics more, they attributed them to their parents. They especially

attributed their strong self-confidence, motivation, and self-determination to their parents.

Their parents exposed them to learning situations that provided a strong educational foundation, provided positive reinforcement, and gave them feedback and advice about challenges that confronted them. The participants discussed how they had the belief that they could accomplish academic tasks and goals because their parents had prepared them before they went to school and while they were attending both school and postsecondary programs. They gave them positive feedback about their accomplishments. Their parents were also available when they needed their physical presence to assist them through situations. The participants talked about their own life experiences and the experiences of their parents that helped motivate them to succeed. They learned that, along with their self-determination, hard work was necessary to meet their goals.

## Participants' Characteristics

All of the participants referred to themselves as African American first and as deaf or hard of hearing individuals second. Their pride in their family and African American identities, combined with their self-confidence,

Table 2. Individual Protective Factors

| |
|---|
| Intelligence |
| African American identity |
| Understanding and acceptance of hearing loss |
| Problem-solving skills |
| Decision-making skills |
| Motivation |
| Self-confidence |
| Good communication skills |
| Self-determination |
| Leadership skills |
| Positive work ethic |
| Family and cultural identity |
| Self-awareness |
| Caring for others |
| Faith |
| Sense of humor |
| Self-discipline |
| Assertiveness |

positive interpersonal relationships, leadership skills, determination, motivation, hard work, self-assessment, good communication skills, caring for others, self discipline, problem solving skills, and decision-making skills have all contributed to their resilience (See Table 2).

### *Importance of Cultural Identity*

The participants in this study had no problems with racial and cultural identity. This does not hold true for some African American deaf and hard of hearing children and adolescents. I believe that the way students perceive their African American racial and cultural identity and the reaction to their identity in their school systems have a tremendous impact on their academic achievement.

Cultural identity presents a major challenge to many African American adolescents. This is not because of a lack of positive cultural reinforcement by their families; it is because of the way they are perceived and treated in schools, communities, and society. African American adolescents have different developmental stages of adolescence than their White peers because they must make decisions regarding their culture—where they fit and want to fit and how that decision impacts their academic achievement (Clark, 1991). As members of the dominant culture, White students do not have to contend with the type of discrimination and biases that African American adolescents face. Children who feel positive about their African American identity and are in educational settings that reinforce their identity are more likely to succeed in school. Also, African American children and adolescents who can move easily within other cultures while maintaining their own cultural identity are more likely to achieve in school (Clark, 1991). It is important to emphasize here that how African American children and adolescents perceive themselves culturally and the way their culture is accepted within the classroom, school, and society can have a positive or negative impact on their academic success. There has been extensive research on African American students' achievement, culture, and what steps need to be taken to develop and enhance cultural identity and school success (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Clark, 1991; Hale, 1982; Hrabowski et al., 1998; Valentine, 1971).

African American students not only go through the normal developmental stages of adolescence, they must also face issues related to identity

formation, which includes cultural identity. African American adolescents must develop strategies for handling their racial or class status (Clark, 1991). Some adolescents have maintained strong racial identities and succeeded, whereas others have assumed a bicultural identity (Valentine, 1971). Some adolescents assume a "raceless" identity; in other words, they deny their racial backgrounds, they deny institutional racism, they are not close to other African Americans, and they endorse mainstream values (Fordham, 1988). Some African American students may use a raceless identity as a protective mechanism to facilitate their academic success. Still other African American students avoid academic achievement because it is equated with "acting White" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). These African American adolescents, especially those from low-income homes, often reject education because they believe their involuntary caste-like status in American society precludes upward mobility through education (Ogbu, 1987).

African American children and adolescents must learn how to handle racism, discrimination, and oppression. They must learn how to be assertive and not aggressive in handling these situations so that they do not interfere with their academic progress. For example, they cannot resort to fighting because of racial name-calling or negative cultural statements; this has resulted in too many suspensions and later behavior that has escalated to the point of expulsion from school. The family, school, and African American organizations have a responsibility to teach children and adolescents how to handle these situations effectively and to help them obtain what they went to school to obtain—an outstanding education.

In fact, African American students who accept their culture will not develop negative attitudes and behaviors in school; rather, they will pursue academic goals and achievement (O'Connor, 1997). Resilient students' perspectives on race are the direct opposite of students who blame their race and social class for their failure in school. Resilient students do not reject their culture or dismiss the role race plays in social opportunity and mobility. They are able to identify structural inequalities in our society, understand the impact of social class on upward mobility, and discuss structured inequalities within the schools and the labor market. They do not interpret racism as a function of their individual dispositions, attitudes, or behaviors or the failings of African Americans. Though they recognize that African Americans have progressed in American society, they are aware that this

progress is inconsistent and unpredictable. These students place high value on working hard, on individual effort, on education as a path to success in America. Data on resilient students reveal that these students were exposed to social behavior and communication that reinforced for them the need for struggle and that struggle can bring about change and positive results. They had the support of significant adults, parents, or guardians who were willing to take appropriate steps when they were confronted with racism in school (O'Connor, 1997).

The few studies that have been done on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents indicate that they identify themselves as African American first and Deaf second, even when they attend residential schools for deaf students (Aramburo, 1989; Hall, 1998). Those students who do succeed understand and accept their racial identity and their hearing loss; this seems to have a profound impact on their ability to function in school, postsecondary programs, and the community (Hall, 1998). However, the impact of discrimination based both on disability and race compounds the hardship and increases the barriers to students' success (Aramburo, 1989).

Though some researchers have not viewed race as an important factor in understanding students' progress in school, others have found that race has a profound effect on academic achievement. Kluwin's study (1994) suggests that it is the interaction of race, gender, and social class that affects the educational achievement of deaf students, not race alone. The study views race as a vague concept as it relates to Deaf education, concluding that family income, attitudes toward sign language, and parents' educational level all need to be considered as well. However, other research reveals that race is a significant factor and does impact the education of African American deaf and hard of hearing students (Allen, 1994a; Aramburo, 1989; Moores & Oden, 1977). Allen (1994a) found that three demographic variables—age, sex, and race—exert strong and independent effects on a student's successful transition. The likelihood of successful transition for African Americans and Hispanics is less than for White, non-Hispanic students (Allen, 1994a). The racial biases of some educators toward African American students have been the primary contributors to low expectations, low-level class placement, disproportionate vocational

testing, and discrimination in educational service delivery (Cohen et al., 1990; Moores & Oden, 1977).

### *Family and African American Cultural Identity*

Many participants stated that they wanted to earn the degree for family members who had never been to college. Six of them were the first graduates in their immediate family or among the few college graduates in their families. Two motivating factors were to make their families proud and to positively represent their race and culture:

> Number one, I wanted to be the first in my family to complete college. Number two, I wanted to be one of the few Black deaf students in college who actually made it. I found out the statistics on the number of Black deaf students who continue and graduate. I found out through my experience that it is a predominately White University, and Black students find it hard to continue and graduate. I wanted to become an example, so I started taking leadership roles in organizations. That's when I started to motivate myself to finish school and to motivate others to continue and graduate.

Another participant expressed a similar motivation:

> I wanted to earn my bachelor's degree before some of the family members passed away. On my mother's side of the family, there are lots of aunts and uncles but not many cousins. My mother's aunts and uncles did not have many children, so my mother had few cousins. My mother's cousins are much older than I. They are passing away one by one. On my mother's side of the family, my sister and I are the only two in the family who have a high school diploma and went to college and earned a degree. I want my mother's family to know how far we have come and that they are equally as responsible for my success as I am. My motivation at this point is to get my PhD "before the last of the Mohicans die." That's the way I characterize my family now. I want to let them know as a family that what I have is very, very much theirs because they established the foundation for me to advance to where I am at this point.

## Motivation and Determination

Most of the participants could recall something their parents said or did that instilled in them motivation and determination. What is clear in the following excerpts from four of the participants is that there were factors in their environment that motivated them, enhanced their skills, and instilled the determination they needed to complete college:

> I got my motivation from my mother. I am a go-getter. My mother always labeled me that way, a go-getter. She said I would complete what I started. She was right. I was motivated. My mother works now. She could retire, but she said that she wanted different things and she was willing to work to buy them.

Frequent exposure to higher educational activities can stimulate interest in advanced education and serve as a challenge and motivator to foster determination to enter and graduate from college:

> I grew up near the campus. I had my mind set that I was going to that college, no matter what happened. I knew there were other options than that college, but I had my mind set on that particular school. As I was growing up, I viewed that as a challenge for me.

Challenging classes and opportunities for meaningful participation in activities can build students' self-esteem and academic skills. Students can motivate each other by giving each other positive reinforcement for accomplishments in class and schools, as illustrated by the experience of the following participant:

> While I was in high school many students always said I was very bright. Really, I saw myself as average, but other people saw me as bright. I think they looked at me that way because I am Black. They had never seen a Black boy who was skilled in American Sign Language, advanced academically, and whose participation in school was outstanding. That gave me the idea that I should go to college. I began to want to enter college. Because I wanted to enter college, I was serious in my academic work, writing, reading, and math. Math was my top subject and that became my specialty.

Though their parents talked to them, three participants had to experience those situations themselves to really understand what their parents were trying to convey to them. They had their own life experiences while out of college that motivated them to want to complete their degree requirements. This excerpt describes one of those participants' experiences:

> My college career was kind of nontraditional. When I first went to college, I stayed for two years. I didn't return to school for over five years. During those years away from school I experienced some things in the work force that I would not want to wish on anybody else. I experienced struggles as the provider for my family and not having the opportunity to move up the ladder in different areas in the work force. Those frustrations gave me the motivation to want to

> get my education. My parents had preached that if we don't do this, and that, we [children] would experience what they were experiencing. While I was not in school for those years, I felt what they had been talking about all that time. There were real world experiences. Knowing I was not where I wanted to be, that I didn't have that piece of paper, and not being successful, pushed me. I think in today's world you are measured by the number of degrees that you have, sometimes, and once you have that, then you move to the work force and it is whom you know, not what you know. Once you have that piece of paper, you can say, "I know that person over there and now they are going to help me, since I have the degree."

Participants saw that their parents and others supported them in their education and provided challenging learning experiences. From this, they were able to develop a strong feeling of self-confidence that enabled them to become self-motivated. Though many of them initially said their motivation came from within, they were able to relate back to the external support they received that helped them develop the inner motivation that helped them stay in college and graduate. One of the participants summed up what many of the participants stated frequently during their interviews in response to what factors contributed to their completing college: "My own motivation helped me get through college."

### *Decision-making Skills*

Planning their futures was another asset that the participants demonstrated. Many were determined to earn degrees because they had set their goals for postsecondary graduation. Many talked about their determination to graduate from college. They had problem-solving and decision-making skills and the ability to set priorities for themselves:

> I got my priorities in order. I went to college for an education and I was determined not to go back home without a degree. I decided to move off-campus. My first semester in college, I was involved in some partying. I began to see what was happening to my friends who were not taking education seriously. So I started distancing myself from them. Moving off-campus really helped improve my grades. I was already on the honor roll, but then I knew I had more responsibility. I knew the time for playing games was over. When I moved off-campus, I had to find a job because VR was not paying for an apartment. Moving off campus helped me mature more because the job used up my time. I didn't have time to play around and socialize. The only time I had left was for studying and

> going to school. Knowing my goal and what I wanted to accomplish helped me to graduate from college.

Obtaining a degree was important to their future career plans. This participant saw the value of a degree in obtaining a good job. She also viewed the importance of a Black deaf woman having a degree in our society:

> As a Black deaf person, I wanted to get a degree so I could acquire a better job. I knew that if I went to college, I would be able to obtain a better job. College would facilitate that process.

### *Self-Awareness*

Four of the participants discussed how they made changes in their directions in college and established priorities so they could graduate. This excerpt illustrates some of the steps the participants took:

> What helped me the most to graduate from college was, I didn't like the way my life was going. I was going from one school to another. When I went back home from school, I just wanted to be in college. I liked college life, not just to party. However, I got tired of it and wanted to get it finished. It bothered me to still be in school. I sat down and decided that I needed to focus and to find out how to get out of college. I remember learning how to see what I liked about myself, what I needed to change, to make a list of what I liked and what needed to be changed, and I knew my life would change.

### *Intelligence*

This participant, like most of the others, knew she had the intellectual ability to succeed in college:

> I took 21 and 25 credits. The first semester, they didn't permit that. Of course, I had to get the appropriate signatures of the different teachers. The teachers would ask me, "Are you sure that is not too much? Most students can't do that." When they saw that I was doing fine academically, I was permitted to take the extra courses.

Another participant reported her confidence in her academic ability in this manner:

> I knew I could do it myself. I knew I would regret it later if I didn't graduate from college. I knew I had potential. Why waste it? I knew I would disappoint my family and my friends if I didn't graduate. I just knew I had it in me.

### *Confidence*

Many of the participants had the confidence and were determined to earn degrees because obtaining a degree was important to their future career plans:

> My self-confidence contributed to me going to college. I always wanted to enter college. Very few people in my family had attended and completed college. My dad only completed two years, and my mom never went to college. I looked around and none of my cousins completed college. I can count those who attended college. About one to three on my dad and mom's sides of the family completed college. I didn't want to be in the same boat. To accomplish my career goal, I knew I had to go to college.

### *Caring About Others*

Most of the students talked about how they formed support groups and sustained themselves and encouraged their peers to stay in school. They did not want their peers to drop out of school. They cared about each other:

> I also encouraged students to stay in school. Many wanted to quit. I would say, "What for? If you quit this university, then you will go to some other place and quit. Why not stay and persevere?"

### *Leadership Skills*

Four participants were involved in organizations at different levels of their educational experience, and excerpts from three of the participants are presented here. They felt their participation helped them develop leadership skills, learn how to work with and relate well with a diverse group of people, and manage a successful transition into and through college. They had social skills that contributed to their being selected for organizations and functioning well as members. They joined more than one activity. According to one participant, "I was popular in my elementary and high schools. I was involved in the Student Body Government, sports, and summer camp. I was also involved in the committee for special events."

Participation in organizations helped to develop some of the participants' leadership skills and exposed them to other cultures. A second participant described how participation in organizations developed his social and leadership skills: "I joined a lot of organizations because I like to meet different

kinds of people and to develop my leadership skills. My participation helped me become who I am today." A third participant reported how membership in various organizations expanded her understanding of how to work in teams, how to identify and solve problems, and how to contribute to her school and community:

> The many activities that I was involved in probably helped my transition from high school to college. I was a member of the county youth executive board. The director of special education for the county recommended me. She sent me a letter to see if I was interested. I was not sure about going to meetings for one year, and I also knew I would have to give up my job one time a month. My mother told me to do it, since it would be good for my resume. I filled out the application and mailed it. I was picked. We met with the county executive. It was really a privilege. We saw the inside of government. We attended the school board hearings. We didn't say anything at the school board hearings; we just attended to get that experience. That board consisted of 20 youth from other schools in the county. We met once a month to talk about the services the county needed for young people. We performed a lot of community service projects. That was a wonderful experience.

### *Positive Interpersonal Skills and Good Communication Skills*

Two participants talked about humor as an interpersonal skill that they possessed that was helpful to them in environments where they were in the minority. One of the participants, who was in a public school setting in middle school, discussed his wit as a factor that helped him succeed socially in a hearing environment. This excerpt highlights his self-discipline and his understanding of himself and others:

> Probably my middle school and high school years were the most cherished times of my life. Yet they were my most trying and difficult years. It was a time when students were not very sensitive to individuals who were different. Because I was hard of hearing, students teased me a little bit, but I had a good defense mechanism. I was witty. That was my defense. I learned that from home. My mother is very witty. She had defended herself by using language without being vulgar or using profanity. I picked that up from her and that helped me. I went along with the teasing and the other students viewed me as likable. I didn't cry. I went along with it. And when it was my time to pick on them, I expected them to accept it, too. Sometimes they did not accept it. If someone didn't accept it, the other kids would remind him or her that I had accepted the teasing and they were expected to do the same thing. They respected me because I was easygoing. I was not always getting defensive. I went with the flow. Students respected

> that. Those were difficult times for me in middle school. I had to learn how to adapt and not let the teasing bother or destroy me. In situations like that, some people are too sensitive. If a person thought what they were saying was funny, it was funny. But when I had a chance to get back at them, I turned the tables and I didn't expect them to whine or cry about it. I still have ongoing contacts with the hearing people who were in my class. Sometimes when they need help with writing something for professional use, they ask for my help.

### *Assertiveness*

All of the participants in this study were assertive individuals who developed different strategies to avoid letting obstacles destroy them and their goals. They were assertive enough to compete in classrooms and activities for the deaf as well as in mainstream activities:

> In middle school, I was the math champion. I competed with hearing students, and it was a huge school. It was not a small school! I started within my school, a school-wide math competition. We had to know the math rules to be able to solve problems. I won in my school and then I competed against other schools. I knew the rules. Then, the local middle schools competed. I won third place. That was not bad at all.

Another participant explained that he could handle both humorous as well as serious situations and maintain the respect of his White peers. When faced with prejudice from some of his White peers, he confronted it directly, without humor:

> I am funny and able to interact well with people. I am popular, but I am a pretty strong person, too. Sometimes when I felt that I was discriminated against, I spoke up and spoke back bluntly. That caused people to respect me. I didn't let prejudice keep me from progressing academically and interfere with who I am. I didn't let it keep me from moving ahead. I began focusing on my cultural background. I began reading about Black leaders, inventors, and famous professionals. I read Black history and I was fascinated with my Black history. I made what I learned a part of myself. I still read information related to Black culture.

A third participant handled disparaging remarks and inequitable treatment in college by a faculty member by confronting the person involved and then reporting the person to appropriate school personnel to resolve the situation:

> We have had to fight harder to get the grades that we deserved, but that did not stop me. That's the problem with many Black deaf students. They are too

> passive. They just say this must be the grade I deserve. But if they would stop and say, I know I did better than that, if they would compare themselves with a White student doing the same work and the same answer is marked wrong on their paper and marked right on the other student's paper, then they can take action and confront the instructor with that, and ask about it. When teachers found out that I was not passive and that I paid attention to detail, they stopped playing around with me.

### *A Positive Work Ethic*

Several of the participants worked during the time they were in high school and college. They found that their work experiences helped them earn funds needed for school, develop appropriate job skills and behaviors, enhance their interpersonal skills, and gain knowledge about the world around them. The following excerpts illustrate how two of the participants viewed their work experiences as helpful in their successful transition through college:

> I started working when I was 16. I started working in summer programs with the school. They had an employment program. I worked as a custodian one summer and I didn't stay there long. When I went to college, I started working in my freshman year, and I have worked ever since that time. I worked in various jobs on the campus. Working has provided me with money to go through college. I learned to work as a professional and how to be courteous on telephone calls. I learned how to work with the outside world. That is a good experience, it has made me responsible.

This second excerpt is reflective of the value that participants placed on work experience as a way of enriching their interaction with different people as well as earning their own funds:

> My parents taught me the value of everything. My father made me go to work when I was 16. I didn't want to go to work, but I got a job at a local store. I thank my father because he made me earn my own money. I saw a lot of things and my world opened up. I met different people. I found out where they were from and where they were going. My world opened up. I felt that I could be in the same situation.

## Summary of Individual Protective Factors

The participants had resilience characteristics as children, adolescents, and young adults, and all of the participants established graduation from college as a goal.

Attending schools that had challenging academic programs positively contributed to their ability to succeed in college. Those participants who were in advanced classes felt strongly that they could succeed in college. Participants who were not in advanced classes but in classes that were at the top educational levels also expressed strong confidence in their academic capabilities. Most of the participants' academic work ethic in elementary and high school was above average. Though some of them initially were not serious in their academic performance in college, they soon learned that they had to work hard to achieve their goals and did so. Those students who attended mainstream programs viewed themselves as receiving educations equivalent to hearing students in their age group. They felt strongly that they had been prepared to succeed in college.

The participants were assertive. They did not sit back and wait for things to happen to them while they were in college. They took responsibility for themselves to achieve in school. In three situations where the participants had to leave school because of low grades, they assumed responsibility for going back to college by working and earning money. They didn't give up. They persevered. The other participants who remained in college for the entire time that they were matriculating did not let the obstacles that confronted them overcome them. Instead, they overcame the obstacles and graduated.

# 5 The Role of Schools in Resilience

THE SCHOOL plays a paramount role in the development of children in their intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development. This development is enhanced when the educational setting has in place protective factors that help develop and reinforce resilience in students. Social competency and school achievement have been identified as protective factors that help at-risk populations adjust to their environments (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Throughout the literature that focuses on school improvement for African American students, there is evidence that schools can either provide protective factors that facilitate students' academic achievement or deny these protective factors and become settings that place students at risk. For academic achievement to be used as a protective mechanism to reduce the effects of poverty and racism, the school environment must be designed to facilitate the positive academic achievement of all students, including those who have been placed at risk (Clark, 1991).

The national test scores, high school graduation rates, and college graduation rates show that African American students are lagging a long distance behind White students. Socioeconomic status and family composition have long been touted as reasons for African American students' low level of academic achievement. However, there is evidence that socioeconomic status and family composition are not necessarily the major factors that lead to college entrance and graduation. Instead, the protective factors in the home, school, and community have a greater influence on positive academic achievement (Benard, 1991; Clark, 1983, 1991; Comer, 1980; Hrabowski, Mato, & Greif, 1998).

There is a gap in academic achievement between African American students from both lower- and middle-income levels and their White peers. Shaffer, Ortman, and Denbo (2003), citing Viadero (2000) state the situation succinctly: "what is clear is that the longer African American children stay in school, the farther they fall behind. Even middle-class African

American students with access to additional educational and familial resources fail to keep pace with their middle class White peers" (p. 20). The data on middle-class African American students and the reasons for the academic achievement gaps between them and their White peers are limited. Some of the theories are the ongoing negative institutional practices, which include lack of culturally relevant curriculum, challenging curriculum and activities, lower expectations, and lack of an environment that encourages and reinforces high school performance (Shaffer, Ortman, & Denbo, 2002, p. 20).

Culturally biased curricula, inappropriate school placement and tracking, a lack of understanding of differences in learning styles, an insufficient awareness of cultural differences, and a lack of understanding of diverse family practices and value systems have contributed to inadequate educational practices for minority deaf students (Cohen, Fischgrund, & Redding, 1990, p. 69). If school personnel do not understand minority students' needs and backgrounds and fail to expose them to challenging curriculum, students' opportunities to excel in school will be limited. In addition to considering a student's deafness-related needs, school personnel must pay attention to the child's cultural and socioeconomic background and the associated influences of the home and the community. To help minority deaf students succeed, teachers, administrators, and government officials must reevaluate curricula, make resources accessible, recruit minority staff, analyze intake and placement procedures, review and improve relationships with parents, and focus on the strengths of the students and their families (Cohen, 1991).

Once educators better understand the ethnic and racial heritage of their deaf and hard of hearing students, they will be able to incorporate this understanding into their instructional practices and the curriculum (Christensen & Delgado, 1993). The data on resilience reinforce the need for students to have positive self-images, and cultural identity is a major part of how African American students perceive themselves. Teachers' responses to students have a great impact on how the students feel about themselves, their ability to learn, and their comfort level in the classroom. The following is a quote from the late Ham Ginott, a teacher and child psychologist:

> I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized (Mitchell & Conn, 1985, p. 87).

Though teachers most often are the targets of criticism when students fail, all persons in the school are responsible for promoting a learning environment. The school leadership is responsible primarily for establishing and facilitating a supportive, caring, and nurturing culture in the school. School counselors, residential advisors, social workers, psychologists, and other support personnel are equally responsible for students' academic, social, and emotional development. All school personnel can have a positive or negative influence on the educational achievement of students. Too often, however, staff and teachers make negative judgments and statements about African American students' abilities. Studies have revealed that African American students receive more negative behavioral responses and more negative messages from teachers and staff than do their White peers (Kuykendall, 2001). This negative feedback can contribute to students' low academic performance and self-image.

Even when a student and parent have high academic expectations for the student's academic achievement, the low expectations of school personnel can become a barrier to educational achievement. The following excerpt illustrates how one of the participants and her mother handled such a situation. Soon after this exchange, the participant transferred to a mainstream program where she was challenged; she graduated and was admitted to a postsecondary program.

> I felt the school for the deaf was not supportive of me when I wanted to transfer from there to a public school. The guidance counselor told me I would not make it at the public school. She bluntly said that. I could not believe she said that. My mother told the guidance counselor, "That is not for you to say." I felt that I did not have to prove anything to her. I only had to prove I could make it there to my parents and myself.
>
> At the school for the deaf, I didn't study. I assumed that the public school would be the same way. I had to study. I don't like to study. That was one of the

adjustments I had to make. If you want to succeed, you have to study. I studied and I studied harder.

## Protective Factors for Improving Academic Achievement

To improve the education of African American deaf and hard of hearing students, schools must have educators and staff who are willing and able to provide an environment where students feel good about themselves, have a sense of belonging, and are encouraged to learn.

Academic achievement enhances self-image. Students need to feel that they are a part of the environment. They need to have a positive self-image and believe that they can learn. Studies have shown that African American students' self-image decreases as they transition in school: "eighty percent of Black children entering schools have a positive self-image; twenty percent still do by the fifth grade; yet only five do by their senior year in high school" (Kuykendall, 2001). Students need to be able to say "this is *my* school" with pride rather than "this is the school I attend," with no sense of belonging or commitment to it. African American students whose experiences with school personnel involve low expectations, negative stereotypes, and cultural biases feel less confident about their academic abilities. Students have shown greater academic achievement when schools promote positive self-images, challenging course work, and enhanced cultural strengths.

School leaders can create an atmosphere that develops and promotes resilience or one that further puts children at risk for under-achievement and failure. There are school administrators that manage educational settings that produce large numbers of African American students who underachieve and fail. Evidence has shown that these schools usually have ongoing disciplinary problems, low faculty and staff morale, and constant changes within the system. These schools do not implement any permanent change that produces improved educational outcomes for African American and other minority students. These administrators create an atmosphere of hopelessness related to students of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. If asked about educational policies, programs, and practices that would raise their minority students' achievement levels, their response most likely would be to blame the child or family. These are school leaders and other school personnel who use qualifiers when making statements about African American students' ability to learn

(Williams, 2002, citing Corbett, Wilson, & Williams, 2000). Some of these negative comments include: "if only they did not come from such terrible backgrounds, we could do something with them"; "these children enter school with problems"; "we do the best we can with what we have to work with"; "we need to focus our efforts on where we see the most results, and it is not on these children"; or "this child really doesn't belong here, we need to get him or her tested." These administrators have no solution to how to educate African American and other minority students. Instead of looking within the school for answers, they accept little or no responsibility for educating African American students.

However, there are schools with leaders who have figured out that all children can learn, regardless of their race and socioeconomic backgrounds. They have statistical data to show that they are closing the gap in academic achievement between African American and White students and lowering dropout rates of African American students. They track their progress, analyze their data, and assess what needs to be continued, deleted, and improved. They develop strategies to meet their goals. These leaders are willing to face the challenge. They inspire, train, and provide resources for their staff to develop and enhance an environment with protective factors that facilitate educational growth. What is so wonderful about promoting protective factors in schools is that many teachers and support staff already have the skills to foster resilience. They understand the importance to all children of being accepted, respected, and valued, though from a different culture. They provide students with challenging course work. Two such school programs—the Knowledge Is Power Program and the Fort Wayne Community Schools program (Fort Wayne Community Schools, 2003; KIPP, 2006)—have succeeded in raising the academic test scores of African American students as well as other underserved students.

For those teachers and support staff who do not have the skills, the school leaders provide professional development training to help them develop the skills, and training for the entire education and support staff to enhance skills. After all, most individuals select the field of education because they want to make a positive difference in the lives of children and prepare them to be future leaders, not because they want to damage the education of children. What is needed is school leadership with the vision to provide an educational program in which all children can learn. They

Table 3. Protective Factors and Obstacles

| Protective factors | Obstacles |
|---|---|
| Nourishing, caring, safe, and supportive environments | Unsupportive, unwelcoming, and uncaring environments |
| Expectation that *all* children can learn | Low academic expectations of African American students |
| Active encouragement of African American family involvement | Little or no outreach to African American families |
| Acceptance, respect, and understanding of African American culture | Stereotyped, biased, racially discriminatory, and culturally devaluing actions and behaviors |
| Culturally relevant curriculum | Lack of integration of African American culture into the curriculum |
| Commitment of administrators, teachers, and staff to academic success of all children regardless of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background | Little or no commitment to developing and enhancing skills of African American students |
| Challenging academic coursework for all students | Nonchallenging coursework, basic skills, and vocational training |
| Discipline and structure | Inappropriate behavior ignored or severe punishments given for minor incidents |
| Open and ongoing communication among teachers, staff, students, parents, and community stakeholders | Limited communication within the school; little or no sharing of information with teachers, staff, students, parents, and community stakeholders until the opening and closing of school and in crisis situations. |
| Multicultural administrative, teaching and support staff | Predominantly WHITE staff with carefully placed African Americans |
| Meaningful activities for student and parent participation | Encouragement of African American students to participate in sports, dance, and drama with lack of outreach to their parents |
| Integrated class placements (students with different academic levels) | Segregation of students into ability groupings with most African American students in low-level or special education groups |
| Effective multicultural professional development programs | Lack of professional development programs that focus on culturally relevant practices and curriculum |
| Collaborative community relationships | Little or no collaboration with community agencies |

*Note*. The protective factors listed are found in schools that have effective academic programs in which African American students excel. Also listed are the obstacles in schools that confront African American students and that can impede their progress if there are few if any protective factors in their environments (Borum, 2001; Williams, 2002).

need to work with their teachers and support staff to develop the mission statement and to develop goals and strategies to ensure that the school's goals are accomplished. There are elementary, middle, and high schools that have high-achieving African American students, and many of these students are from low-income families (see Table 3).

Though there are not a large number of schools in which African American students are excelling, there are school administrators, teachers and support staff who believe that all students have the potential to learn. Studies have shown that in those schools, school personnel view themselves as members of a collaborative team working with families and the community to help students succeed in school. In those schools, teachers are conscientious and creative in their instruction of all students and provide the type of environment in which students feel accepted and valued. They provide challenging opportunities, build on students strengths and celebrate their school achievements with them.

One example of a school system that has accepted the challenge to close the academic achievement gap between African American and White students is the Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS). This school system has reduced the number of African American students who drop out of school from over 10 percent in the 1990s to 3.2 percent in 2003. In my review of this school system's vision, mission statements, goals, and strategies, it is obvious that it has implemented programs that incorporate many protective factors into the school setting that foster the resilience and academic achievement of African American students and other minority children.

To meet their mission goal of reducing the achievement gap, the school system initiated a plan to ensure that they had high-quality staff to implement the plan. They did this by reorganizing the Human Resources Department to further its commitment to recruiting, supporting, and retaining teachers, administrators, and support staff. Their professional development activities include diversity training, leadership training, and promoting minority student input for developing student achievement initiatives. They instituted rigorous courses for all students. An example is a math program that "integrates algebra, geometry, computation, statistics, data analysis and probability and incorporates real-live scenarios and problem solving using a variety of instructional strategies" (Fort Wayne

Community Schools, 2003, p. 6). The lower-level math courses have been eliminated.

The district also has Intervention Assistance Teams (IATs) that involve parents and teachers together to help students to succeed in school. IATs are used in more than 85 percent of testing referral and are used in determining eligibility for other intervention programs. They have case managers and certified conflict mediators in each middle and high school to assist students in resolving disagreements, the death of a student, staff or family member, and other emotional situations. They have the homeless assistance program to ensure that the child's education is "seamless" during this time and a program for students on probation (Fort Wayne Community Schools, 2003, pp. 11–14). They collaborate with community agencies, including the Fort Wayne Ministerial Alliance (comprised of African American ministers), the Fort Wayne Alliance of Black School Educators, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Though the deficit model of student achievement focuses on students and their families as being mostly responsible for academic underachievement of African American adolescents, the lack of academic achievement of students depends also on the social environment of the school and the support system within it (Clark, 1983, 1991; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994a). African American deaf and hard of hearing students, as well as professionals sensitive to the needs of this group of students, are very much aware of the cultural climate in the educational setting in which large groups of African Americans are performing at low levels and failing to acquire the academic skills needed to become independently functioning individuals with secure incomes.

### Protective Factors in the Participants' Schools

In both elementary and high schools, the participants reported that their teachers were the primary individuals who provided protective factors that helped them achieve in school. They had caring and supportive relationships with both African American and White teachers, who had high expectations for them and provided challenging course work. Their teachers established disciplined and structured classroom environments and had open and ongoing communication with the participants, encouring them

and praising their achievements. These teachers had a positive impact on students' social, emotional, and academic performance.

These educators did not permit the participants to use their hearing loss as a reason to fail; they encouraged the participants to enhance their strengths to succeed. These teachers did not view their students as academically inadequate when they were in predominately White groups or in predominately hearing environments. Instead, they were viewed as students who were expected to succeed and who could succeed. The high expectations had a positive impact on their confidence in their ability to perform academically and on their academic achievement. Challenging and meaningful classroom and other experiences were important in developing both the academic and independent living skills of the participants. These experiences at the elementary and high school levels helped prepare them for college-level work and functioning independently in the college environment.

At the high school level, guidance counselors, a coach, interpreters, and mentors were identified as persons who also had positive influences on the participants' successful transitions in school. However, they were mentioned less frequently than teachers. It is significant and surprising that only three participants discussed the help of guidance counselors—high school is a time of planning for college and making other plans for after high school graduation. A part of the role of high school guidance counselors is to assist students with these efforts. Two of these participants had parents or siblings who were already encouraging them to go to college. The other participants had peers, teachers, coaches, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and mentors in their environments who encouraged them to go to college.

In the few cases in which there were negative encounters with teachers, guidance counselors, or administrators, the participants stated that these encounters were related to low expectations for them. There were three cases in which the participants had to be moved to other school programs because of a lack of diagnosis of their deafness or low academic expectations.

### *Caring and Supportive Relationships*

Participants viewed teachers' positive impact on their social, emotional, and intellectual development as very critical to their successful transitions

through school and postsecondary programs. They discussed both African American and White teachers who cared about them and provided support for their academic achievement. From the participants' discussion, the most important attributes of their teachers were that they showed the participants that they cared about them and their success through their words and actions. There is no empirical evidence that students learn better when taught by teachers of the same race (Ladson-Billings, 1994b). The protective factors and processes that facilitate resilience and academic performance in schools are found in Table 4.

Indeed, no relationship has been found between teacher race and ethnicity and student academic achievement (King, 1993). Therefore, all teachers can be held accountable for having the skills to teach a diverse group of students. If the current demographic trends continue, our teaching population will

Table 4. Protective Factors and Processes from Elementary to High School (from Teachers, Mentors, Guidance Counselors, Interpreters, Peers, and Administrators)

| Protective factors | Examples |
|---|---|
| Caring and supportive relationships | Acceptance of African American culture<br>Acceptance of Deaf culture<br>Technological assistive devices<br>Information<br>Encouragement<br>High quality services<br>Recognition |
| Open and ongoing communication | Fluency in ASL<br>Use of communication mode of child<br>Active listening<br>Meaningful feedback |
| High expectations | High goals and standards<br>Praise<br>Rewards and recognition<br>Postsecondary planning |
| Challenging educational experiences | Rigorous coursework<br>Development of critical thinking skills<br>Classes with diverse groups of students<br>Coursework applicable to life experiences<br>Culturally relevant coursework |
| Discipline and structure | Clear and consistent expectations<br>Structure<br>Equitable rules and consequences |

remain predominately White and the student population will become more diverse. White teachers will need to be trained to teach children who are not White and who come from families of a lower socioeconomic status.

Although all teachers must be able to instruct and academically prepare all students, the profession as a whole would benefit from the inclusion of more African American teachers. African American teachers have demonstrated effective teaching methods that have resulted in African American student achievement, and African American students need African American role models (King, 1993). Studies focusing on effective African American teachers indicate that some of their beliefs and teaching strategies were instrumental in the academic achievement of African American students. These include promoting high expectations; believing that students can succeed regardless of ethnic backgrounds, family income, or status; cultivating positive relationships with students; providing empowerment and social mobilization instruction; integrating culturally relevant materials into the curriculum; creating task-oriented environments; and providing positive role models (King, 1993; Lynn, Johnson, & Hassan, 1999).

These strategies point to the need for all teachers to develop these beliefs and strategies and for schools to recruit teachers from African American backgrounds as role models for students. However, the recruitment process should not focus on race and ethnicity alone, since there are some African American teachers and staff who are unable to relate to students from different socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Instead, the process should focus on individuals who are able and willing work with students from diverse backgrounds. The fact that a teacher or support personnel is African American does not necessarily mean that they will identify with African American culture. As discussed earlier, African Americans are not homogeneous with the same interests, backgrounds, or ethnic, racial, class, and social identities. Each individual, as with other racial groups, is unique. Taking this into consideration, along with the fact that more than 90 percent of school personnel are White, human resources departments and selection committees will need to be sure that all teachers receive the professional development needed to work effectively with all students (Thandiwe, 2002, p. 228).

The majority of the participants in this study had both African American and White teachers in elementary and high school and felt that both groups helped them succeed. Only one participant had all African American teachers, and he discussed the positive influence they had on his educational development. Teachers have a tremendous impact on students' educational, social, and emotional outcomes. They interact with students for a large portion of a student's day. Therefore, teachers must be aware of their own characteristics and what positive and negative influences they have on students' development. The participants described the characteristics of their teachers that they felt positively influenced their development. These were high expectations, open and ongoing communication, challenging educational experiences, inclusion of relevant experiences in coursework, and inclusion of African American mentors and role models. For those participants who attended schools for the deaf, they found it very helpful that those teachers were fluent in sign language and understood Deaf culture.

### *High Expectations*

All but two of the participants stated that their teachers—both African American and White—had high expectations of them. Participants viewed challenging work as an indicator of high expectations. They stated that the high expectations enhanced their academic performance: "In both elementary and high school, there were more challenges, and more expectations of me. That helped me improve my reading and writing skills."

Race did not make a difference for participants if the teachers demonstrated that they had the same expectations of them as the White students. Teachers who had high expectations were able to demonstrate to the participants that they viewed them as competent and able to function at high academic levels whether they were in mainstream schools or schools for the deaf. One participant cited the encouragement received from African American teachers:

> I grew up in a city in the Northeast. From elementary to high school, I had only African American teachers. They played a big role in my education. They were very helpful to me. Without my African American teachers, I don't think I would be as far as I am today. A lot of them told me, "You know you have a hearing loss, but don't let that prevent you from doing something. Don't use

it as an excuse not to succeed." They saw to it that I didn't use it as an excuse. When I didn't succeed at something, they didn't allow me to use my hearing loss as an excuse. It was the concept of "You fall off a pony, get back on and keep riding." That's the idea I was given, that kind of encouragement in school.

Another added that discipline accompanied that encouragement:

I was fortunate. Black teachers spoiled me when I was growing up. Black teachers don't take "No" for an answer. They didn't play. I was in school at the time that they permitted spanking and I had Black teachers who would always say, "Come here and sit on my lap." They made sure that we made it, that we did our work even though we didn't want to do it. They would say, "In my class, you are going to do it!" They took a motherly role. I went all the way through elementary, middle, and high school without failing one grade.

I think Black teachers are tougher, stricter on how you do your work in class. They expect more from you than White teachers. The few times that I have gotten C on an assignment, the Black teacher would say, "I know you can do better than that. You are lazy and did not read all the way through the assignment. I know you are capable of doing much better than C work. You can do A work." I always felt I had to give a reason for receiving C rather than A or B. They stay on top of you about your work. I liked that.

I had a few White teachers, and they were positive about our academic performance as well. However, having Black teachers made a difference for me.

A third participant noted that teachers treated her like the other students in her mainstream school and expected her to advance to college:

In my mainstream high school classes, the teachers never looked at me differently. I enjoyed that. I am hard of hearing and I feel that I can function in both worlds.

Teachers demonstrated their expectations through what they said and what they did to prepare the participants to go college. This positive experience with unbiased and high expectations was echoed by another participant:

During my junior and senior years in high school, the teachers prepared everyone to go to college. They assumed that everyone was going to college, so they prepared us to go to college. They not only expected us to go to college, but they encouraged us to go. They offered an SAT class because some students might not do well on the test. To motivate that group of students, they encouraged them to take the SAT class. They had someone come from a university to give a presentation. That was really helpful.

Some teachers even play a role in high school placement choices, encouraging students to go where they could find the best education:

> One of my favorite teachers said that I should go to a high school where I would have more exposure to deaf students and because the education for me in the South was not good. The teachers could not explain information to me. My teacher never mentioned anything about the school for the deaf within my state. She did not want me to go there. She wanted me to go to the school out of state for a better education. I did not find out about the state school for the deaf until I was in the school for the deaf out of state for a better education. I attended the high school for the deaf out of state and graduated from it.

One participant specifically expressed satisfaction with the encouragement and variety she found in her mainstream school experience:

> I can name on one hand the number of Black teachers I had. In elementary, I don't think I had any. In middle school, I had none. In high school, I had two African American teachers. One taught English and the other was a typing teacher. My other teachers were White. My teachers really were wonderful, for the most part. Many of my teachers praised me a lot and gave me recognition. My teachers were always doing things for me. I went to a mainstream school. When I visited my deaf peers in classes for the deaf, they were just chatting and doing the same thing. They were with the same teacher all day. They were around each other all the time. I went to different classes, and my teachers made sure I received needed information in high school.

Another participant noted one African American teacher in particular who went the extra mile for her and her classmates:

> One of my African American teachers talked to me about college. She talked to all of us about furthering our education. I can only remember that one teacher talking to me. All of us were applying to get into college. She talked to us about it and kept track of us.

### SCHOOL-WIDE PRAISE, RECOGNITION, AND POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Positive reinforcement in the form of praise, smiles, and awards are important to students. They empower students in their educational endeavors, behaviors, and interactions with their peers and adults. One participant discussed her high school environment as a caring and supportive school climate that positively reinforced high academic achievement. As can be seen in this excerpt, the principal set the tone for an educational supportive

environment for the school. The participant spoke very positively about him and remembered his name. Students remember those who make the most positive impact on their lives as well as those who do the most damage:

> If you made the honor roll, they made a big deal of it. Your name was published everywhere. They also placed your picture and your name in the hall. They would place the names and pictures in the hall near the principal's office. That really inspired students. Honor roll students' names also were put in the parent newsletter. They had student of the month. They did a lot for the students. We had a great principal.

The principal can set the cultural climate in the school. There are exceptions, but in most situations, their attitudes about the abilities of diverse groups of students are reflected throughout the school—in the policies, programs, practices, and communication used. One participant did not feel that the administrators in his school felt that he could succeed, and they demonstrated that by making negative comments about him not succeeding. It is important that the school administrators establish a climate in which students feel that they are supported in their efforts to learn. It was important to the participant that he had the support of the teachers. Studies of African American students and their interactions with teachers, guidance counselors, and other school officials discuss actions of school staff that reflect racially biased beliefs (Thandiwe, 2002). The racial stereotypes most often reported about school staff are the beliefs that African American students have limited intellectual ability, low potential for college and university education, and a natural preference or aptitude for dance or athletics (Thandiwe, 2002, citing Tatum, 1997, p. 226).

When African American deaf and hard of hearing students are confronted with these beliefs and behaviors, they need designated individuals in the school with whom they can discuss their concerns. African American deaf and hard of hearing students need teachers and staff who believe in their intellectual abilities and can help them confront challenges. When young people have significant adults in their lives who believe in them and support them (their parents, teachers, and other significant adults), they are better able to handle these obstacles and succeed. They do not accept negative thinking about themselves and do not view themselves as persons who can only handle concrete and basic information. Like any other ethnic

group, African American deaf and hard of hearing students can develop the ability to think abstractly and analytically:

> The administrators really did not think I would make it. Most of the administrators were White. But, my Black teachers said, "You are going somewhere." That had a good impact on me because I had mostly Black teachers. I had a few White teachers who were positive also. However, having a Black teacher made a difference for me.

#### SUPPORT FROM A COACH

Three participants discussed school personnel other than their teachers who showed that they cared about them and had high expectations for their social, academic, and emotional development. The football coach of one participant encouraged the players to demonstrate responsible behaviors while in high school by being on time and dependable. He was a scholar as well as a coach: he taught chemistry at the high school and college level. As a football player, this participant described himself as a scholar-athlete. In this excerpt, he states that his coach cared enough about him to encourage him to go to a college, where he would learn about his culture and obtain an education:

> My high school coach was the first person to tell me about a college for the Deaf. He told me that a coach at a college for the Deaf had an interest in me. He was very encouraging to me about going to that college, especially with my hearing loss. He was not sure if I would ever be aware of Deaf culture if I didn't attend that college, so he strongly encouraged me to apply.

### *Appropriate Resources and Technical Assistive Devices*

It is important for students to have available to them the very best resources to facilitate communication. Such resources will enable them to obtain the same information as hearing students. Deaf and hard of hearing students need to be able to participate in classes and other educational activities without concern about whether or not what they are saying is being communicated in the manner in which they want to communicate it. Two participants discussed skilled interpreters in the mainstream program that they felt cared about them and were their advocates. This excerpt illustrates

the importance of skilled interpreters who also are supportive and have a good relationship with students:

> It helped in the mainstream program to have the best interpreters. If I raised my hand, they would interpret the questions smoothly. They were not awkward; they never made us feel embarrassed. They were really involved with us and they were advocates for us.

### *Open and Ongoing Communication*

A participant in a school for the deaf whose teachers had high expectations for him stated that he did not listen to them about the academic level of functioning expected in college. As a result, he had difficulty adjusting to the rigorous expectations at the college level:

> Several teachers told me that college would be a lot of work. I admit that I did not listen to them. However, I went ahead and completed my requirements to graduate from high school, but I didn't put forth a strong effort in my work. When I transitioned to college, I experienced very difficult times with academics. I found that there was a lot of work and high expectations. Teachers would not let you go beyond the deadline for work, and they were very strict. I had to change my habits. Gradually, I was able to adjust. I think a lot of it was my fault because I did not listen to my high school teachers.

### *Challenging Educational Experiences*

Though some of the participants had elementary school placements that lacked challenging course work, eight of them viewed their course work in high school as challenging. They stated that course work was a very important factor in facilitating their transition into college. Their challenging course work prepared them to enter college. Only one participant questioned whether he had the academic skills to function at the college level. He had attended the parochial school and received low grades. He later realized that, although he had earned low grades in high school, he had been exposed to and had learned information that was helpful to him in college. He became an honor student in college in his freshman year.

The other participants felt that their high schools had prepared them well enough to succeed in school. From the data received from the participants, all of them were prepared academically. Other factors, such as immaturity, socializing too much, sensing that the environment was

not socially and academically accepting of them, and feeling unsure of themselves in a different environment, contributed to some difficulty in adjusting to college for some of the participants.

### ACCESS TO EQUITABLE AND RIGOROUS COURSEWORK

The following excerpt concerning coursework is from a participant who attended a mainstream program that stressed the importance of keeping education for the deaf on the same level as education for the hearing:

> I think what helped me move to the level next to the advanced academic level was receiving the same quality of education as everyone else in the mainstream program. I was really challenged in high school. We had to write a lot of papers, make presentations, and submit essays. The teacher required us to make presentations. We also had African American history. At the beginning what I learned in college was more of what I had already learned in high school. Later, I learned more in-depth information.

### ADVANCED PLACEMENTS

The participants who were in advanced classes did not have a problem being one of a few African Americans in the class. They viewed participation in the class as an opportunity to succeed, and they reported that the challenging coursework in these classes had prepared them for the academic work they had in college. However, they saw the need for more African American students to benefit from exposure to advanced educational training. One participant discussed how his class helped him adjust to college-level writing requirements:

> When I was in high school, they had an advanced program that combined English and social studies. That was a two-hour course. We also had to write research papers based on different themes that were related to social studies. That was very beneficial to me because when I went to college, I was required to write research papers. I was able to do that because I already had experiences writing research papers. I had social studies, plus English and research, and I was able to transfer that to college.

Another recounts how the challenges in an advanced class helped her relate to people from different backgrounds and become accustomed to a college workload and college-level tasks:

> In my advanced classes, the teacher did different things to motivate us. Suppose the teacher was teaching about a poem, she would first teach us the poem. She would then have us sit in a circle and have each of us expand on what we learned from the poem. The teacher walked around the circle and monitored us as we discussed it, asked us questions, gave us feedback, and helped us expand on what we had learned. If we finished early, the teacher would give us more work to keep us doing work instead of sitting doing nothing. Also, if we had a paper to do, the teacher would sit with us individually and give us feedback so we could make revisions and expand on the paper. That is how the teachers encouraged me and helped me develop my thinking skills. Being in an advanced class helped me because I had more reading, more writing, more work. It was challenging. I challenged myself too. I analyzed myself. I learned that I could do many things.
>
> The majority of the students in my advanced class were White. It didn't matter if there were a few African American students in the class. It helped me to understand students' perspective. It helped me to relate to people of different races. I can apply that information to my job today. I will know how to face challenges. It would have been nice to have more African Americans in the advanced classes to help them improve their reading and writing skills and their understanding.

The participants' comments about few African Americans in their advanced classes illustrate the need for schools to begin assessing the strengths of more African American deaf and hard of hearing students and reviewing their methods for identifying and placing students in AP classes. Research data have shown repeatedly that there are few African American students in the advanced classes, whereas the low level academic placements have many of these students. Negative beliefs and myths about race, ethnicity, and intelligence have limited the access of African American students into advanced academic placements (Ford, 2003). Testing has been used in the past and continues today to resegregate African American students into low-level ability groups (Ford, 2003; Moores et al., 1977; Oakes, 1985). To increase the number of students in gifted and talented classes, educators must (a) eliminate the deficit thinking about African American students, (b) view talented and gifted students from a multidimensional perspective, using various assessment instruments to determine academic strengths, (c) understand the limitation of test scores with culturally diverse students, (d) identify and provide support to underachieving gifted students, (e) provide multicultural education, (f) provide

multicultural professional development for school staff, and (g) create strong home and school partnerships (Ford, 2003, p. 36).

### LACK OF CHALLENGING CLASSES AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Three of the participants, who were not academically challenged in their schools, were moved by their parents to more challenging programs. Two were in elementary school at the time of their moves and the third was in her freshman year in high school. In two situations, the participants themselves informed their parents that they were not being challenged academically; one was ready to leave middle school and go to high school, and the other was in her first year of high school. The following is an excerpt from one of those participants who was of high school age and participated in the decision to move to a more challenging program:

> While I was in an elementary school for the deaf, I found that the education that I was getting there was not challenging. I already knew that information from my previous elementary school. When it was time for me to go to high school, my parents asked if I was interested in going to a mainstream school. Naturally I rebelled; I did not want to leave my friends. When I went to visit the public school, I was in awe with the interpreter and the education was wonderful. I made an agreement with my parents that if I did not like it I could go back to the high school for the deaf. However, I liked it and I stayed for four years.

#### *Integrating Relevant Experiences into Coursework*

This participant discussed the important life skills that she learned in the challenging courses she took while in a mainstream high school. A high percentage of minority students have been identified as field-dependent learners. These learners understand information better when it has social and personal relevance. It is important to them that educational materials and concepts can be linked to their own experiences. This type of learner perfoms better in small groups where they have the opportunity to exchange information with their classmates. This does not mean that they are not intelligent; this is simply another style of learning. Studies on best practices in education for this group of students suggest that involving the class in lively group discussions, group projects, storytelling, and personal experiences is more effective than passive, nonsocial drill and practice activities (Kuykendall, 2001, p. 4). Although some African American students are field-dependent learners, others prefer a more independent, teacher-centered,

impersonal style of instruction. Teachers need to recognize that each child is unique, be aware that each student's culture is vital in providing educational opportunities, and understand differences in learning styles. This will help teachers "facilitate, structure, and validate successful learning for every student" (Guild, 2002, p. 106) One participant discussed how this teaching style helped her:

> Our teachers talked about real life issues. They told us what to do and not to do on a job. For example, one student was giving a presentation in class and used slang. The teacher was very upset and told him that he would never use that language in making a presentation in the real world. The teachers not only corrected us but also told us why something was incorrect. They would tell us to stop fidgeting during a presentation, to stand up straight, and to be clear in our presentation.

In another case, the participant's teacher provided her with the experience of seeing what an actual college classroom would entail. This exposure gave her a general idea of what to expect:

> When I was in high school our teacher took a group of us to a state college to get a bigger picture of what college would be like and to give us an idea of which college we might want to attend. Then we went to another state college so we could compare the schools. That was helpful. We went into a real classroom. We saw how the teacher taught the class. That was helpful.

### *African American Mentors and Role Models*

Mentors can play a major role in the successful transition of students by providing caring and supportive relationships. Some schools have established mentor programs that provide various activities to enhance the social, emotional, and academic development of students. This participant had been in a mentor program. As demonstrated in this excerpt, she had a supportive and caring relationship with her mentor who listened to her concerns, gave her advice, and helped her when she needed help:

> My school had an African American organization. The advisor for that organization assigned African American mentors to all of the African American students. She had a reception and all of the students and mentors met each other. If the student liked that mentor, he or she stayed with that mentor. The characteristics of the mentor that helped me the most were that she was friendly, understanding, listened, and willing to help, no matter what I needed. There

> was open communication. Also, the mentors were able to relate to students even if they were from different backgrounds than the students. They were able to understand where the students were coming from. Most important was that they listened and gave advice.

Some schools have no formal mentor programs. In some cases, students themselves find people in their environment who will provide them with a supportive relationship. Those persons can encourage and help them to perform well in school. That happened in this participant's case. Though he benefited from his relationships with two male adults, he does not advocate students establishing relationships with adults without their parents' knowledge, as he did. He recommends that schools set up mentor programs because he saw the benefit of having caring and supportive male figures in his life who contributed to his successful transition through college:

> While I was in elementary school, at three o'clock I would go to the college and interact with the college students. I met a special Black man there from Africa. I looked up to him. He was a teacher and he became a role model for me. There was another Black teacher who was an African American. I was truly inspired by him. I thought and felt that if he could succeed, I could do it too. I heard the name of another Black man who was not around the college when I was in high school, but I heard his name. When I met him, I was impressed. I met several successful Black men and they motivated me to graduate from college. The African American teacher was like a father figure for me since I did not have a father in the home. He would sit and talk to me, but he would watch the time and say, "Go home, it is getting late. You need to go home and eat dinner."

The participants succeeded in school because they had their parents' support of their education and, in most cases, they had teachers who provided them with protective factors that developed and enhanced their educational resilience. Students can succeed in school in spite of factors that place them at risk. There are two points that need to be made here about students who do not have the same home environments as the participants:

1. African American students who come from dysfunctional families need to be given the same understanding, high expectations, and encouragement to succeed as other students. The deficit thinking and behaviors of school administrators, teachers, and staff, which are

discussed in the literature, should be eliminated from the classroom and school as they were for these students.

2. School personnel should not judge African American students who come from dysfunctional families as possible failures. There are countless examples of these students who have succeeded in America. School personnel should be in the business of educating all students and not determining which children should and should not be educated.

These students should not be stereotyped or denied educational services and high expectations because of their family situations and lack of family involvement in the educational process. I believe that providing this group of students with protective factors in the school and coordinating this help with their caretakers can benefit them, regardless of their demographic backgrounds. If this is done, we should see a definite increase in the academic performance of African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

The literature and responses from the participants show us that there are some administrators, teachers, and staff who are making a positive difference in the lives of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. However, there are still some who need to eliminate the deficit thinking and behaviors that impede African American students' achievement. There are a lot of published studies and strategies that discuss how to improve African American student school performance and to close the achievement gap between them and their White counterparts. In reviewing the studies and strategies that have been successfully implemented and have increased African American academic achievement, I found that all include the protective factors discussed in this book. However, I understand that it will take strong and committed leadership in schools to facilitate a program that builds students' resilience. I suggest that protective factors can become an integral part of school systems' programs by implementing training programs for educators.

Some of the barriers to providing quality education for African American students are ethnocentric attitudes of racial superiority; low expectations; negative attitudes toward African-American students with disabilities, their families, and their communities; inappropriate testing; misclassification and tracking; monocultural textbooks and curricula; narrow and

limited instructional techniques; differential disciplinary and reward systems; and deficit definitions of African American youths' academic and socioemotional behavior (Ford, 1992). If special education teachers do not receive specific training, they will not have the preparation needed to teach students from diverse backgrounds. In addition to multicultural training, I believe teachers must learn how to develop, implement, and enhance protective factors in the school.

Schools need to make a concerted effort to involve African American families in the school process. Although family support and involvement programs are currently more a part of the school programs for deaf and hard of hearing children, professionals are still trying to find the most effective support and involvement models (Meadow-Orlans & Sass-Lehrer, 1995). Professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing students may receive more training in their college programs to work with parents than their predecessors; however, they come from many disciplines, some of which have traditionally excluded parents from the decision-making process. Professionals need to evaluate their views and practices when planning, developing, and implementing family support services, and they must plan these services with parents (Meadow-Orlans & Sass-Lehrer, 1995).

The school, family, and community are interdependent and work together best when cultural values are respected and incorporated into the school program. Transition programs for deaf and hard of hearing students will need to focus on understanding and accepting the various cultures of the families, their values, and the richness of resources that the families bring to the schools (Danek & Busby, 1999).

## Parents and Protective Factors

Sharing information with parents of deaf and hard of hearing students requires cultural sensitivity and respect for each family's unique perspective and priorities for their child and family. To achieve this, schools will have to redefine the role of school professionals; change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of professionals; target parents' strengths; make resiliency-building information and resources more available to parents; and design programs that enable parents to make decisions, solve problems, and advocate for their own children (Bodner-Johnson & Sass-Lehrer, 1999).

## Cultural Acceptance, Resilience, and Transition in the School Setting

African American students' culture is often disregarded or degraded in the classroom setting. This can contribute to students' lack of participation in the educational process (Irvine, 1990). Stereotyped statements about African American families that belittle, ignore, or trivialize contributions of African Americans' culture and history can promote cultural conflicts in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). An example is portraying Africa as an uncivilized continent and not focusing on its contributions to science and mathematics as well as other contributions made by African Americans.

Understanding and respecting the culture of African American students in the school setting fosters self-esteem and enhances academic performance (Hale, 1982; King & Karison, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Culturally relevant teaching is an instructional strategy that Ladson-Billings (1994a) postulates can contribute to high academic performance of African American students. This strategy incorporates the cultural strengths of the African American family and involves building on the language the student brings to the classroom; recognizing the contributions of their ethnic group to history; building on the family's strengths and values for working cooperatively in meeting goals; and recognizing and discussing the society's impact on the functioning of the group (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994a).

Though there are cultural norms, rituals, family practices, religious practices, beliefs, and values that are held by African Americans, it should be recognized that these vary from community to community and among socioeconomic groups. African Americans, like other ethnic groups, are not homogeneous (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994a), and it is important that teachers recognize this and understand the specific culture of the students in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Research has found that there are some cultural practices in classrooms that are in direct conflict with some of the values, beliefs, and practices of African American families (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994a). For low-income families, in some situations, language differences have presented a problem. Students who enter the classroom using Ebonics have not been taught to use one language for the dominant culture and another for communicating within their community. The school can teach children to code-switch, which

means they can move with ease from one language to the other. As Irvine (1990) and other researchers point out, not all African Americans speak Ebonics; however, there are some students from low-income African American families who do. There is a need to understand the structural patterns of Ebonics to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between Ebonics and Standard English to improve communication within the school and to prepare the student to function in the larger society (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Another area that has been a source of cultural conflict is the failure to recognize the strengths of teamwork that African American students bring from their family settings. In their families, they are taught a supportive approach in learning new tasks instead of a "survival of the fittest," individualist, highly competitive ideology like that promoted by the dominant culture (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994a).

Irvine (1990) cites Kochman's (1981) work on how differences in African American and other cultural styles can interfere in the communication and learning processes. One example is that African American students find it offensive to be asked to share personal information such as a parent's occupation, where they live, and the number of children in the family. Often White individuals will begin asking these questions soon after meeting the person. When teachers or administrators do this, it can cause resentment, and the student can become noncompliant because this type of questioning is sometimes viewed as invasive and inappropriate (p. 30).

Irvine (1990) extensively reviewed both quantitative and qualitative research—including her own studies—on cultural synchronization and teacher expectations. Her review points out that the culture of African American students is different from the dominant culture, and this difference is often misunderstood, ignored, or trivialized. When this happens, African American students' response can be one of cultural disconnection from the school setting, which can lead to lack of academic achievement, distrust, and conflict. The review further states that the lack of cultural synchronization in instructional situations "in which teachers misinterpret, denigrate, and dismiss African American students' language, nonverbal cues, physical movements, learning styles, cognitive approaches, and worldview" can result in students' lack of respect and communication (p. xix). A breakdown in respect and communication could occur and result in difficulties "both consciously and unconsciously, related to interpersonal distance;

[and] behaviors accompanying speech, such as voice tone and pitch and speech rate and length, gesture, facial expression, [and] eye gaze" (p. xix). This breakdown would interfere in the academic process and achievement of the African American student. However, Irvine's (1990) findings indicate that this situation can be prevented or remedied: "when teachers and African American students are synchronized culturally, it can be expected that communication is enhanced, instruction is effective, and positive teacher affect is maximized" (p. xx).

Clark (1991) cites Taylor (1991) in concluding that African American children who enter school with some orientation to mainstream culture are more likely to have the skills that will enable them to progress academically and socially in the school setting. If the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the family and the school are different or in conflict, there could be problems for the child. In some cases, children may enter school without enough awareness of mainstream culture and may be at risk for academic failure. In addition to acquiring academic information, Clark (1991) and Taylor (1991) suggest that these students may be required to learn new social behaviors before they can achieve in school. If there are major differences between school and home behavioral patterns, Taylor (1991) and Boykin (1983) suggest they may cause considerable problems for African American adolescents if the schools try to eliminate their cultural differences and acculturate them into mainstream culture. Clark (1991) indicates that schools require a high degree of mainstream socialization from students, yet they do not always provide an environment in which African American adolescents can acquire mainstream skills and still maintain their own culture. Schools should support cultural diversity, and encourage students to accept their own culture as well as learn about and accept mainstream culture (Clark, 1991, p. 50)

Schools should help students learn appropriate social behaviors that are accepted in American culture. However, they are not expected to replace families' cultural values and behaviors. Taylor (1994) points out that the disconnection between the schooling experience and family life for students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds can create risk factors for them. If there are teachers and staff who are sensitive to student diversity and have the ability to provide a variety of learning experiences, they can reduce stress and vulnerability by using various strategies to promote children's personal and academic competence (p. 61).

# 6

# Protective Factors in Postsecondary Programs

Postsecondary programs across the nation are seeking ways to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of minorities. Predominately White colleges and universities have initiated programs specifically to increase the graduation rates of African American students because they do not accept the premise that all students need the same services; therefore, they will provide services designated to meet the needs of minority students.

A review of universities and colleges that have high numbers of African American graduates suggests that African American students who earned bachelor's degrees possessed protective factors within themselves and protective factors within their homes, schools, and communities. Once they entered colleges or universities, there were protective factors in place that further enhanced their resilience, allowing them to persevere and earn their degree. In postsecondary colleges and universities without formalized programs, sometimes students have established their own peer groups for support and have relied on support from their immediate and extended families. Some African American students have found it too difficult to integrate into the social and academic environments and have transferred to predominately African American colleges and universities to complete the requirements of their degree.

Data on African American student achievement in predominately White postsecondary programs are presented in this review of postsecondary programs with high retention and graduation rates for African American students because both of the major higher education institutions that serve a majority of African American deaf and hard of hearing students are predominantly White. Research demonstrated that some of the top predominately White universities in the nation have higher African American graduation rates than the leading African American postsecondary programs. There were two reasons suggested for this: (a) many of the

students enrolled in Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) are first-generation college students and come from low-income homes where there are few books, (b) the colleges and universities lack funds to provide the financial aid students need to remain in school. Lack of financial aid is listed as a major reason for students not continuing in school (Slater, Clarke, & Gelb, 2003).

There are over 50 predominately White colleges and universities that have an African American graduation rate of 60 percent and above and 19 colleges and universities that have an African American graduation rate of 85 percent to 95 percent. These postsecondary programs are considered as some of the top ranked, academically selective colleges in the United States. The list includes the following, to name a few: Amherst College (95 percent), Colgate University (92 percent), Harvard University (92 percent), Princeton University (92 percent), Wellesley College (88 percent), and Williams College (88 percent). The University of Virginia, considered one of the top state universities, has an African American graduation rate of 85 percent (Slater, Clarke, & Gelb, 2003, pp. 110–112). There are a few postsecondary programs that have reported a higher rate of graduation for African American students than White students, including Colgate University, Mount Holyoke College, and Macalester College (Slater, Clarke, & Gelb, 2003).

Three points are illustrated and noteworthy in these statistics. First, African American students have the intellectual capability to acquire outstanding academic skills to enter postsecondary programs and not only succeed but succeed at some of the top ranked White postsecondary programs in the United States. For those who doubt that African Americans have the innate intelligence to succeed in school and postsecondary programs, here is the evidence. All of the students who entered these programs had the intellectual skills to earn a high grade point average, ranked high in their graduating high school classes, and earned high SAT test scores. Second, the students in these postsecondary programs are from various income levels, family situations, and various high school programs. Third, there are parents and guardians and elementary and high schools that prepare and expect African American students to complete postsecondary programs.

We need to know how students at these top ranking postsecondary programs attained these excellent academic skills. What were the protective

factors in their homes and school environments? Future research needs to focus on what factors contribute to this type of academic outcome, how is it done, when it occurs, and which educational settings are best for facilitating this type of high performance in the classroom and on national examinations.

It has been well documented that social and academic integration contribute to high retention and graduation rates of African American students postsecondary program students (Tinto, 1975, 1983, 1993; Morley, 2003). As you review the findings, I ask that you keep in mind that these social and academic integration initiatives involve protective factors that foster resilience and academic achievement. Slater, Clarke, and Gelb (2003) and S. D. Sneed, the Associate Dean of Williams College (personal communication, November 29, 2004 and January 23, 2007) suggest that the following list of factors help African American students experience the social and academic integration they need to succeed in a postsecondary program:

1. *A supportive and caring environment.* Campus climate plays an important part in the success of African American students. Colleges that promote cultural diversity ensure African American and other students of color that their college community appreciates the diversity that African Americans bring to the college. College environments that encourage diversity have students who are better prepared for leadership in the twenty-first century than colleges that do not promote diversity.
2. *Academically prepared students.* African American students who are admitted to these prestigious postsecondary programs are well prepared academically to succeed in college. They have impressive SAT scores, high grade point averages, and graduate in the top levels of their classes. These African American students with impressive academic credentials represent all income and class levels. They also represent a variety of secondary schools from around the nation (urban, rural, public, magnet, private day and boarding, and parochial schools). High-achieving low-income and first-generation college students are especially sought after by many colleges because of the barriers and challenges that they have had to overcome (S. D. Sneed, personal communication, November 29, 2004 and January 23, 2007). The question becomes,

what did their families and schools do to prepare them to enter and graduate from prestigious colleges and universities? The preparation of African American and other students of color should begin at the very beginning of their primary schooling.

3. *Strong support from the top administrators.* Support for a diverse program must begin in the office of the college/university's president. This sends a clear message throughout the postsecondary program that diversity is strongly supported on the campus and that the commitment goes beyond written documents. This promotes a caring and nurturing environment that has a positive impact on African American students' retention and graduation rates.
4. *High expectations to succeed.* In these programs, students feel that most faculty view them as capable of doing the course work and do not hold biases that could contribute to them basing students' grades on stereotypical ideas rather than the student's ability. However, it needs to be recognized that some faculty members still need to change their stereotyped ideas and approaches to instructing African Americans. Slater, Clarke, and Gelb (2003) point out that in some of the prestigious postsecondary programs, African American students are made to feel uncomfortable in the sciences since some White faculty and administrators continue to believe that African American students do not have the intellectual capacity to succeed in these disciplines.
5. *Strong support and resources.* Many colleges committed to diversity have well-qualified staff to provide services that focus on academic success, retention, and graduation for all students. African American students are more likely to graduate from postsecondary programs that have faculty and staff of color, mentoring programs, strong advising, and academic support services.
6. *Acceptance of ethnic and racial cultures and meaningful participation.* The need for an accepting, welcoming, and sensitive climate cannot be understated. These programs provide activities and organizations—orientation programs, mentors (adult and peer), active African American organizations, and retention programs—that actively involve new students.
7. *Financial resources.* The top ranking academic postsecondary programs can provide financial help for students from low-income families. Financial

support for postsecondary training is a major concern for these families, and these programs have large endowments.

The University of Virginia has a program that specifically focuses on building on strengths of African American students enrolled at the university. This university has proven that the retention and graduation rates for African American students can be raised in predominately White universities. The Office of African American Affairs, which has a staff of four, plays a primary role in the high retention and graduation rates by fostering African American students' social and academic integration into the school while reinforcing and enhancing African American students' racial and cultural pride. The office's mission is to assist the University of Virginia "with developing a welcoming, supportive environment for African American students" (University of Virginia, 2004). The following are some of their services and programs:

1. *Peer Advisor Program.* This program helps first year and entering transfer students to transition into the university's social and academic experience. Among the services are counseling, orientation workshops, seminars, and "Big Brother" or "Big Sister" programs for students throughout the school year. This program includes academic recognitions.
2. *Faculty-Student Mentoring Program.* The program was established to foster and facilitate interaction between faculty and upper class students to stimulate academic support and growth, career development, and positive relationships.
3. *The Luther P. Jackson Black Cultural Center.* The center makes available and disseminates information about African American and African heritage and culture.
4. *Tutorial Services.* This service provides tutoring help and resources.
5. *Parent Advisory Association.* This group organizes fund-raising activities to supplement the OAAA's budget and to sponsor activities that enhance the intellectual growth and social well being of African American students (University of Virginia Office of African American Affairs, 2004).

Data show that African American students can succeed in postsecondary programs, and even in highly selective postsecondary programs, if they

have the necessary protective factors available to them. The findings from the participants revealed that they were resilient enough to form their own support groups to achieve in postsecondary programs. Though they were successful in earning their degrees with little support from their postsecondary programs, it is recommended that postsecondary programs initiate steps to incorporate protective factors into their programs that promote resilience and facilitate African American deaf and hard of hearing students' postsecondary graduation. If some African American students can be integrated into and succeed in highly ranked White postsecondary programs, surely African American deaf and hard of hearing students can be integrated into the Deaf White community and graduate from postsecondary programs designed for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology have initiatives set in place to improve in these areas. Both postsecondary programs are predominately White. The enrollment data from both of these postsecondary programs indicate they that serve the largest number of deaf and hard of hearing students in the nation, and that African American students represent their highest number of minorities. As discussed earlier, the graduation rates for African American deaf and hard of hearing students from these two programs are low. It is extremely important to eliminate the social and academic integration obstacles to postsecondary graduation from these two postsecondary programs and increase the factors that improve African American admissions and graduation rates.

Lang (2002) focuses on the reasons for deaf and hard of hearing students' failure to complete their baccalaureate degree programs. His primary finding is lack of academic preparation. Other factors are "challenges of learning through support services…[,] leaves of absence, program lengths, and difficulty in carrying full course loads, dissatisfaction with social life, and changes in career interests" (Lang, 2002, citing Lang & Stinson, 1982; Stinson & Walter, 1992). Lang (2002) stated, "The emphasis on characteristics and obstacles has been predominant in the research conducted over the past 30 years; in fact, we know much less about potential *solutions"* (p. 275). He further states that the research on obstacles has limited practical use. What was not discussed in his findings is that very little of the over 30 years of research on deaf and hard of hearing students and

postsecondary achievement has focused on improving the achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students in postsecondary programs. It is critical to focus more research on the factors that contribute to academic achievement of African American students. I believe resilience research would be very beneficial to understanding what needs to be done to improve education of African American deaf and hard of hearing postsecondary students. I recommend that research studies become more inclusive and focus on successful African deaf and hard of hearing students and other minority students. I also recommend that research be done simultaneously on factors in the elementary through high school levels and the postsecondary level. We need to know what contributes to academic achievement on all academic levels. We need to find ways to disseminate this information to schools so it can be utilized in educational policies, programs, and practices for all students.

In a call for research that assists educational practitioners with developing strategies and programs to improve deaf and hard of hearing students' college and university retention and graduation rates, Lang (2002) suggests a shift in research focus to one that identifies what is successful in improving postsecondary program completion. He focused on deaf and hard of hearing students in general, not African Americans specifically; it is evident that this statement applies to the scant research on African Americans. Researchers at the postsecondary program level could provide an enormous service to elementary and high schools in helping them collect and disseminate research on improving educational methods for African American and other minority students.

Though participants in my study had the academic preparation to succeed in postsecondary programs, we know from the data that a high percentage of African American deaf and hard of hearing students do not have the preparation to enter postsecondary programs. This is where the major problem exists. Mainstream schools and residential schools for the deaf need to focus on increasing the pool of African American deaf and hard of hearing students who are able to enter, continue, and graduate from postsecondary programs. Schools need to address and not continually ignore the factors that contribute to this of lack of preparation of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. African American deaf and hard of hearing students must receive an equitable and top quality education to be able to succeed in postsecondary programs.

The participants in this study had the characteristics that have been suggested in research as personal traits that facilitate retention and graduation for African American students. James (2001) cites Sedlacek (1983) in identifying noncognitive variables that are outstanding in predicting academic achievement of African American postsecondary students: "(1) a positive self-concept; (2) understanding and dealing with racism; (3) a realistic self-appraisal; (4) the preference of long-range goals to immediate needs; (5) the availability of a strong support person; (6) successful leadership experiences; (7) demonstrated community service; and (8) nontraditional knowledge" (p. 81). Evidence shows that these are all characteristics of resilient individuals, and all of the participants possessed them.

When we look at the characteristics that help students gain admissions to postsecondary programs, they are the characteristics of resilient individuals: intellectual skills, positive self-image, self-efficacy, cultural pride, self-confidence, motivation, perseverance, good communication skills, concern for others, and discipline (Hrabowski et al, 1998, 2002). These characteristics have been shown to increase students' opportunities to integrate into the social and academic climate of the school. They increase their endurance and ability to persist in postsecondary programs. All of the evidence points to the need for students to be resilient in order to succeed academically, which is why it is so important that college administrators, professors, and support staff recognize this and learn how to incorporate protective factors into the classroom, residential programs, and athletic programs and throughout the campus.

The majority of the participants in this study were first-generation postsecondary graduates in their families. Students in their first year in college are confronted with a number of problems in adjusting to postsecondary life. Adjusting in college is further complicated for first-generation college students because they do not have their parents or others in their environment to advise them about college experiences.

Evidence has suggested that social and academic integration into the postsecondary program can facilitate postsecondary adjustment, feelings of belonging in the educational setting, academic achievement, retention, and graduation (Hrabowski et al., 1998; Nettle, 1991; Tinto, 1987). In their study of African American students' academic performance in higher

education, Allen and Haniff (1991) found that neither the family's income nor the mother's educational level was a significant predictor of how much the student would achieve in school. Instead, their grade point averages were found to be higher when the students were satisfied and involved in campus life, and had favorable relationships with faculty and staff.

The obstacles in postsecondary programs that the participants said interfered with their social and academic integration during their first year in their postsecondary programs were (a) a lack of a feeling of belonging to the social and academic environment, (b) a lack of help in understanding how to access support services, (c) inequitable treatment and academic support by faculty, (d) faculty and staff misunderstandings and insensitivity to the needs of deaf individuals, and (e) the participants' own lack of knowledge about Deaf culture and ASL.

The participants were very assertive and resourceful individuals who found their own ways of integrating socially and academically on campus by developing support groups and close individual relationships. The academic integration problems for the participants were centered on professors' and staff's lack of support and interaction with them and the absence of African American faculty and staff role models. They wanted intellectual interaction with African American faculty and staff because they felt this would have been especially helpful to them as first-generation postsecondary students.

In postsecondary programs, the participants had a different experience related to caring and supportive adults than they had while in elementary through high school. Though they still referred to their parents as their supporters, they referred to peers as their primary supports on campus during their postsecondary years. Parent attachment has been found to contribute to African American student academic and personal adjustment in postsecondary programs (Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002). This is another factor that administrators and others planning on increasing the retention and graduation rates of African American students need to consider in program planning. Hinderlie and Kenny (2002) recommend that postsecondary programs maintain ongoing communication with parents, make them feel welcome on the campus, and help them become knowledgeable about their child's educational experiences. The participants in my study had strong attachments to their parents, stayed in communication

with them, and felt their graduation was important to their families and themselves. However, other than the beginning of school orientation programs, they discussed no other outreach programs designed for their parents.

Eight of the nine participants discussed peers as primary contributors to their successful transition through college. Five of this group of participants discussed peer groups that they established, in addition to individual peers, who were supportive of them when they entered college. Their individual peers and peer groups helped them remain in college and graduate.

Only three of the participants discussed adults within the college setting who showed that they cared about their progress and were supportive of them. The caring and supportive adults who were identified were a football coach, an academic advisor, and African American professors. Only one of the participants stated that professors had supported his success through college. Another participant discussed her academic advisor's high expectations and encouragement. A third participant discussed how his football coach made efforts to help him in college.

Some of the participants were already familiar with the campus before attending the university. It is significant that none of the participants in the study discussed the climate of the campus as one in which he or she felt socially and academically integrated into as African Americans. The participants who were familiar with Deaf culture and sign language stated that they had no problem integrating into the Deaf culture as deaf individuals.

Throughout the research on college retention and completion, the importance of academic and social integration is viewed as a contributing factor to college success (Hrabowski et al., 1998). Academic integration has been defined as a feeling of academic belonging, which includes intellectual development, contact with faculty members, and a commitment to the college. The opportunity to interact with faculty members provides an important source of support and feedback for students; it provides intellectual stimulation, reinforcement in their academic work, and feedback on their performance (Hrabowski et al., 1998, 2002; Nettle, 1991). Social integration has been defined as a feeling of connection to college social life, which includes social contact with both faculty and staff. It is a feeling of "belonging in the university setting," and it includes positive personal interaction. Academic and social integration into predominately

White universities has been a challenge for African Americans and other minorities (Hrabowski et al., 1998, 2002; Nettle, 1991). Those programs that promote social and academic integration of African American students by encouraging interaction with staff and faculty who are unbiased and providing academic assistance and intellectual stimulation for students have higher graduation rates (Britt-Fries & Turner, 2002; Slater, Clarke, & Gelb, 2003).

The participants expressed a need for professors and the institutional climate in their postsecondary programs to be more caring and supportive. It would have been helpful to have had interaction with their professors and other staff that involved open and ongoing communication, high expectations, positive reinforcement, challenging educational experiences, and meaningful activities. The presence of these protective factors would have made their adjustment to postsecondary programs easier. One participant specifically pointed out that it would have been helpful to have had the support of her professors:

> I received no support from White teachers. I felt I had to depend on my peer support group, but the support from other students was not the same as support from teachers. I saw White students and they had support from teachers as well as their friends and their families. I wanted to have that same opportunity to have full support, which would have included support from my teachers.

The academic integration problems for the participants were centered on lack of professors' and staff's support and interaction with them. Postsecondary programs need to establish formalized programs to promote student/student and student/faculty interaction. Students supported each other through sharing relevant academic information, positive support, information about available campus resources, open and ongoing communication, and a caring environment in which students could feel safe to share their achievements and seek information about how to overcome obstacles.

### Caring and Supportive Relationships

Over half of the participants were familiar with college before entering. They had either attended an elementary or high school or both that was nearby a college campus. They did not have a difficult time transitioning

into the Deaf culture at college because they had been exposed to the culture and were familiar with the campus. However, peer support was identified as a major factor in the successful transition of the participants in college. More than half of the participants had peer support groups that were not formalized groups sponsored by the college. The group members depended on each other for help in finding peer groups and for support from the group. These groups provided academic and social support, positive reinforcement, and moral support. They were a source of information about specific classes, intellectual stimulation, and college life in general and provided an exchange of local and nationwide current events. They studied and did research together as well as socialized with each other.

Three of the groups were African American. One group was predominately African American with a couple of White members who had grown up in African American communities. Another group was predominately White with one African American member—one of the participants in this study. The participant related that he had participated in this group because the members, like him, were deaf, were familiar with Deaf culture, and used ASL. The African Americans who were in school with him during that time were mostly hard of hearing students who were not familiar with Deaf culture and could not communicate in ASL. This was a study group; however, he also socialized with the members of the group.

All of the hard of hearing students who selected a college for the deaf selected it because the school was viewed by them or an advocate for them as the top university for academic and social integration. Yet each of them found that they had to forge this integration for themselves without university faculty or staff support. The result was a mostly African American support system.

Four of the participants experienced cultural shock. Their support groups helped them learn and accept Deaf culture and acquire sign language skills:

> My big adjustment was for me to learn sign language. I am from an English-speaking family, and we used verbal communication for everything. I could not sign my name. I could not introduce myself. I had to learn sign language. That was a big adjustment, a cultural shock. How did I get adjusted? I met a few hard of hearing people who were willing to teach me sign language, and we talked

> and we signed. They would teach me and I would teach them. There were some deaf people who wanted me to tutor them in English. In exchange, I asked them to teach me sign language. I went to sign language classes, and all of those were factors that helped my adjustment in college.

There were three participants who discussed adjustments they make relating to their enrollment in a predominately White university. One of the four participants was from a predominately African American environment, and he experienced his first exposure to a predominately White environment when he arrived in college. His peers helped him adjust. This excerpt is illustrative of the cultural shock and first-time ethnic exposure that this participant felt:

> My college experience was a unique one for me. I was new to Deaf culture and new to different ethnic groups. Things were not the same as I had experienced and that had another impact on me. As a result, my adjustment period took a while. My first semester was getting used to the culture, language, environment, and the people. My adjustment took a lot of friends from similar backgrounds, hard of hearing students like me, to help me understand what I was experiencing. My peers from similar backgrounds helped me. Also, my college was a predominantly White environment. I come from a Northeastern city school system. I didn't make my first White friend until I went to college. That was a big transition for me. Growing up, I had all Black friends. I went to an all Black school. I knew nothing outside of the Black community. So going to my college was totally different. I had hard of hearing peers who had already been exposed to different cultures and different races. They helped me through that. They showed me what to expect, what not to expect, and how to deal with different situations. I am a pretty easy person to get along with. I didn't have too much of a problem transitioning in that area.

The participants who had not been exposed to other deaf and hard of hearing students found that they had a group of students like themselves with whom they could share information and obtain support. However, they recognized that too much socialization could result in academic problems. This illustrates the need for students to have self-awareness and decision-making skills when they arrive in postsecondary programs. Although postsecondary programs can further enhance those skills, students should not be in the position of having to start to develop those skills after high school graduation. Developing these skills, which are a part of helping students become resilient, should begin in the home and continue

throughout students' elementary and high school years. This participant, similar to some of the other participants, began to see that although it was great to have a support group, to graduate he had to focus on the purpose for going to college:

> It was the social system that contributed the most to my transition into college. There were deaf students there just like me. It was the first time I had been in a room full of people just like me. I felt lonely growing up. Honestly I did. When I was in an all hearing school with no deaf program, I didn't think there were too many like me; smart, Black, and deaf.
>
> When I went to college and I saw all of those Black deaf students, the social system became our primary reason for staying in school. It was great. It was a place to socialize. We could socialize with our friends, so we didn't focus too much on school. It was all about seeing your friends. The focus became socializing with your friends and schoolwork came last. The first two or three years, I played around with my friends. Then I finally decided I wanted to do something for myself. I declared my major and finally became serious in school. A lot of students started disappearing, dropping out, and getting kicked out. I thought I couldn't end up like that. Suppose I got kicked out of school? Where would I end up? Go back home? Where would I work? I started thinking about the future.

The participants had peer groups that were a support and resource to them. They encouraged each other to succeed, studied together, shared general and school-related information, and socialized together. They have continued their friendships, as shown in this excerpt:

> We hung out with each other. We competed for the best grades. We studied and did research together. We talked about what we learned, had political discussions, shared educational and current news information with each other. If we went out to dinner, we still talked about what we had learned. We talked about exciting events. We all took advantage of everything on the campus. You would be surprised to know how many people leave college and don't know about the career center. They help students find jobs and internships. It is important to know about everything and take advantage of everything in college. What better place to do that than college? Everyone can communicate with you. We went to parties and functions together. That's how we supported each other. Most of us grew up together and went to elementary school together. We had four people from our elementary school for the deaf, and then we had other people that we met along the way. We had about 10 people in the group. We are still friends.

There were two participants who discussed having older friends who supported them. The older students were from their hometowns, and they provided information about classes they had already taken and demonstrated through their actions that African American students could succeed:

> The friends that I grew up with were older than me, probably two or three years older. They were already in college when I arrived there and that really helped me. My friends and I hung around together at the student union and talked about what happened during the day in school. If one of the members of the group had already taken the class, they told me what to expect in the class. We also studied together.

Adjustment in college at times was particularly difficult for this participant during her first year. She discusses how her peer support group's words of encouragement helped her persevere and graduate:

> My friends who were in school with me and friends from my hometown who had already graduated helped me to adjust in college. My friends who had already graduated told me what to expect in college. My sweetheart's relatives, who had graduated from college, also helped me. When I entered college, I wanted to stay and go through all four years and graduate. Sometimes I didn't feel motivated, and I felt I had no support. Sometimes I wasn't happy. Sometimes I felt I wanted to stay and sometimes I felt I didn't want to stay. I had no mentor.
>
> I had a group of friends who helped me stay. We got together. It was a big group of us. They would say to me, "Stay, you will be fine." We talked about our feelings and experiences in college. We established a support group of mostly friends. We supported and encouraged each other. We were like a family. We would get together in the dorm and support each other. They were mostly Black students. We had about two White students in the group who had grown up in Black communities. We all supported each other.

Though the following participant had a support group, he became too involved in the college social life and left school in his junior year. He returned later and graduated. He has the position he aspired to obtain and is succeeding in his profession:

> I think what helped me the most when I entered college were the student study groups. We would get together and work so we would understand the homework and research. We supported each other. That helped me the most and helped me continue in college. I had friends who supported me all the way through my junior year in college.

There were just four situations in which the participants mentioned professors or staff members affiliated with the college as individuals who supported them by providing them with words of encouragement as well as information that would be helpful in their transition. These participants identified peers as a major supportive influence in their successful transition into and through college. Only one participant discussed professors as a source of support and encouragement. Research has documented that retention and graduation rates of African American students in predominantly White colleges and universities have been higher in those colleges and universities where the faculty and staff have provided supportive relationships with African American students (Jones, 2001; Slater, Clarke, & Gelb, 2003). It is vital to the academic and social transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing students that the necessary protective factors are promoted in postsecondary programs.

### Supportive Mentors

It was important to one participant to have mentors who were his role models in his college environment. This participant had the same mentors that he had selected while in elementary and high schools. Several of the participants recommended that colleges should have formal peer and faculty mentor programs to help students adjust to and graduate from college.

### Supportive Professors

One participant received support from his professors. He especially emphasized the support that African American faculty members provided in the form of words of encouragement to him:

> I have always had a lot of support from the faculty at the college. When they started hiring Black faculty at the college, I had three or four Black professors to teach me. They would say, "You are Black and deaf, you can do it. Prove them wrong." That motivated me and I graduated.

Students need positive reinforcement in postsecondary programs as well as in their earlier years in school. Professors can provide this through their actions, such as remembering their students' names, commenting on their strengths, recognizing students on campus when they pass them, making themselves available for intellectual exchanges with students outside of the

classroom, avoiding comments that could deflate students' self-image, and being aware of and sensitive to curricula that could devalue the culture of different ethnic groups. In other words, professors, regardless of race and ethnic group, have a real responsibility to make students feel worthwhile and valued in their classes.

### A Supportive Coach

Financial support was a problem for one participant. The only person he knew to go to for help at the college was his coach.

> My football coach talked to the accounting office and made arrangements for me when I was having financial problems in school. At the same time, I was looking for methods to pay for school. My father paid about $1,000.00 for that semester.

Orientation programs, as well as ongoing support services to help students become acclimated to the campus, are important. Students are usually so overwhelmed with information during their first few weeks on campus that they forget some of the information presented to them. Postsecondary programs need to make ongoing resources available to guide and support students during their first year.

### An Academic Advisor

An academic advisor provided support and guidance to this participant while she was in college and continues to encourage her to excel:

> My academic advisor was very helpful to me. I could relate to her. She was really the key to my adjustment in college. She helped me a lot and expected a lot from me. She would say, "You know you can do this. You are not going to take this [course]. You should take that. You are just trying to find the easy way out." When she sees me now she says, "I will stay on you to make sure you earn your master's degree." She is always on "a roll" [moving ahead in life].

The participants in this study developed their own network for developing academic and social skills. Though they were not fully integrated into the campus community, they managed to graduate. The participants speak volumes in terms of what is needed to increase the number of African American graduates from postsecondary programs for deaf and hard of

hearing students as well as mainstream postsecondary programs. There is a need for the following factors:

1. Caring and supportive environments that accept and respect African American culture
2. Awareness, acceptance, and respect of African American students' culture
3. A belief that African American students, like other students, can achieve at the postsecondary level
4. Programs and resources that foster social and academic integration into the postsecondary community
5. Training of faculty and staff that develops understanding of and sensitivity to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students
6. Resources such as assistive devices, note-taking, and tutoring to facilitate student learning
7. Formalized peer and faculty mentoring programs
8. Organized services that address students' concerns about biases and other related cultural and racial concerns

# Community Protective Factors 7

The African American community and cultural organizations were credited with giving care and support, setting high expectations, and providing positive reinforcement and resources. VR and the church also provided the participants with care and support, positive reinforcement, and resources and set high expectations (see Table 5 in Chapter 9).

## The African American Community

African American culture was a factor that seven of the nine participants considered an important part of their development. They stated that they received support from African American community and organizations, which further fostered pride in themselves and a sense of affiliation with the African American culture. Cultural factors promoted their academic achievement, leadership skills, understanding of themselves, and self-pride. They felt that African American culture was a positive influence on their successful transition into and through college. They discussed the leadership skills, motivation, and cultural information they acquired through the African American community.

### *Caring and Supportive Relationships within the Community*

One participant viewed the support and encouragement of the African American community as a motivating factor in his school achievement. He made the following comments about the people in the African American community.

> It was cultural, people in the community supporting me. In the African American community, we still support each other today. People in the community were pushing me when I was trying to sit down and do nothing. They said, "Go on and make the best of yourself. We understand that there are not too many of us going to college and making it, but we want you to succeed. As

a Black man, you show them you can make it." They said, "You better go ahead because number one, you are Black, number two, you are a man, and number three, you are deaf. You have to prove to them that you can make it. You have to prove to the world that you can do it." Those statements were positive for me.

### *Meaningful Participation*

Educational and political involvement plus cultural enrichment activities were a part of this participant's community that facilitated her cultural understanding and pride in herself as an African American.

My African American community itself is very, very supportive. I am from a very White and discriminatory town. There is still discrimination today. If a Black and White couple goes into a restaurant, White people will stare at them still today.

In my community, we had Black festivals, talent shows, and something to support kids who were in high school. I remember when Jessie Jackson and Ronald Brown established "Rainbow Push." They were always having something educational or political. Every year we had something cultural to instill positives about Black people. Every year, in the summer, we would have something educational related to school. Kids would come from all over. They would come from the east, west, north, and south sides of town. It was big. We would have parades, talent shows, and dances. It was always something cultural.

Participants discussed various organizations that were helpful to them in developing leadership skills. Among them were organizations that were focused on African American culture. Participation in African American organizations was helpful to this participant in developing her leadership skills.

I had wonderful organizations. At my high school, I was involved in an African American organization. My participation helped me develop leadership skills. I was an officer in that organization and I learned about my culture. In college, they had a Black Deaf organization and I was an officer. We had events in which we got together to help each other. I was a leader. I was also involved in the student body government, the Hispanic student organization, and various other organizations to develop my leadership skills and my interaction with different people.

### *High Expectations*

Several participants mentioned that the low number of graduates from college became a culturally motivating factor for them. It made them want

to prove that African Americans could succeed in college. They viewed graduation from college as success for themselves, their families, and the African American community. They also saw the need to benefit as much as possible from the opportunities that college offered.

> The impact that my African American culture had on my transition was not seeing enough Black students graduate from college. I noticed that when I came to college, few Black students graduated. That was awful. That was sad. I said I was not going to be a part of that group. Sure enough, I graduated along with all of my friends. That had the greatest impact on me. We made sure that people were wrong about us. I think that Whites, Asians, and all other groups have the same problems, but Blacks are more visible.

Another participant, a woman, agreed:

> I understood that as a Black deaf woman it was important for me to graduate. I knew that no one in my family had graduated. I persevered so I could graduate. I became one of the few Black deaf women to graduate from college.

One participant stated that African American culture had no impact on his successful transition into and through college. However, he stated, "I am a very proud African American." This shows that he had a positive self-image, which is very important in academic achievement. He also stated that younger African American males now view him as a role model, which indicates that he has demonstrated behaviors as an African American hard of hearing male that others want to emulate.

Another participant said that his identity as an African American had a negative impact. He felt that placement in a remedial academic program when he first entered college was related to his racial and cultural identity rather than his academic ability. He proved that he could do the academic work by being able to perform more advanced work while in the program. In addition, he was an honor student in his freshman year in college.

> I'm not inclined to feel that the African American culture had an impact on my transition. The impact on my transition has come from the White culture. For example, when I was placed into a remedial program, I felt that I was placed there based on a tracking system designed to separate Black and White students. I think I was placed there because of my African American heritage. The majority of the students there were African Americans.

## Vocational Rehabilitation

Agencies and organizations positively facilitated the participants' successful transition by providing supportive services, financial support, encouragement, and leadership skills. VR counselors were quite helpful to some of the participants in this study.

The VR program is the primary federal program to help individuals with disabilities find employment and is overseen by the Department of Education under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. States receive federal grants to operate a comprehensive VR program. The state program is to assess, plan, and provide VR services to eligible disabled individuals: a person with a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment who can benefit from VR services to achieve an employment outcome. To apply for services, an individual needs to submit a written application and supply sufficient information to determine their eligibility (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2006).

Some of the VR services are eligibility determination assessments; vocational counseling, guidance, and referral services; vocational and other training; interpreter services; services to assist students with transition from school to work; rehabilitation technology services and devices; and job placement services. The policies for providing financial educational assistance vary among state VR agencies and depend on the resources available to the agency. In many cases, VR financial assistance will not cover all of a student's expected expenses (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2006).

Parents and students should be made aware of these services and when students should apply for them through school counselors or other designated persons in the school.

### *Caring and Supportive Relationships*

Schools need to help students and their parents understand and proceed through the VR process, make better arrangements for these services to be available to students, and institute methods for monitoring the progress of students with these services. This agency provides valuable and much-needed services for deaf and hard of hearing students. There is no reason that African American students and their parents should not learn

about this service prior to graduation from high school. Schools should make these services more available to parents and students by collaborating with the local VR office, arranging space in the school for VR counselors to meet with students in the school, and creating workshops at the school for parents and students to learn about VR services.

All of the participants, with the exception of one, benefited from VR services. The one participant's family's income was above the income level required for VR financial services. Three of the participants discussed their contacts with VR counselors after their graduation from high school. One participant went to college following graduation; however, he did not access VR services until he had left school mostly due to financial reasons. His wife informed him how to access the service. The participant in the following excerpt did not go to college directly from high school but found out about the opportunity to go to college from a vocational counselor. The high school guidance counselor did not provide information about college.

> I met with a VR counselor. Initially, I was only interested in employment. But the VR counselor felt I had the potential to attend college and succeed. He told me he would give me a job but after I finished college. That counselor arranged for me to go to college to get my education. He is the one who contributed to my going to college.

Another participant who didn't go directly to college after high school also found out about college this way:

> My VR counselor planned to send me to training for 30 days and help me get an apartment. She sent me to a psychologist for IQ testing when she raised the subject of me attending college. She explained to me that there were people there just like me.

### *High Expectations and Resources*

VR counselors involved with the participants expected them to succeed, and they provided the resources to help them meet their academic goals. VR provided more than financial help for the participants. They sent them for evaluations to determine their strengths and what services they needed to enable them to become productive individuals. They provided them with career counseling. Vocational counselors also provided supportive

services such as information about available services at the universities, as reflected in this excerpt:

> When I went to the second university, they had something there called special services for students with disabilities. My VR counselor told me about that. I went there and they asked what I needed: an interpreter or a notetaker. I didn't think I needed an interpreter.

One participant did not understand the VR process, and money became one of the problems that interfered with his academic progress. In this instance, the participant and his mother were not aware of how to obtain this service:

> I didn't know how to finance my education at that time. I didn't pay attention to the details of applying for financial aid. My parents could not afford to send me anywhere. It was difficult for them to support me at all. Financially, they were already struggling. They had three kids they had to be concerned about. Basically, I was on my own. The only way to obtain financial support was to find a job. I learned about VR later. In my freshman year in school, I visited the office a couple of times. I felt they were giving me the runaround. It was too much of a hassle at that point. As a young person, I expected it to be an "in and out" process and that it would be done fairly quickly. From the students who were getting it, I thought it was an "in and out" process. I didn't follow up on it, as I should have. Years later, I realized all that I should have been doing. After I got married, my wife instructed me about VR.

### The Church

Only about four of the nine participants discussed the role of the church in their successful transition. This is a low figure because traditionally the African American church has played a major role in the college education of African American students. All of the participants who stated church had played a role in their transition were hard of hearing. A major reason for this is that most African American churches did not have interpreters until about 15 years ago. Though many hearing parents took their deaf children to church with them, they could not benefit from the service because there were no interpreters. With the increase in interpreters in African American churches, African American deaf and hard of hearing individuals are taking a more active part in the church, including leadership roles

such as presidents of Deaf ministries, directors of sign choirs, sign class teachers, and leaders of Deaf awareness workshops.

Providing interpreters in churches has opened up more opportunities for African American deaf and hard of hearing children, youth, and adults. African American churches are the primary institutions in the African American community that have provided for spiritual growth and have taken a leadership role in enhancing educational opportunities, self esteem, self-efficacy, and cultural enrichment. It would be quite beneficial for school administrators to work collaboratively with African American churches in providing educational opportunities for African American deaf and hard of hearing students. Many public schools have done this. For example, schools have coordinated mentoring programs, tutoring programs, cultural activities, and scholarship programs with African American churches.

### *Meaningful Participation*

For the participants who were involved in the church, it provided a spiritual foundation that inspired them and gave them the faith that they could succeed in school and graduate from college. They developed leadership skills and training related to accessing information as hard of hearing persons. Their parents expected them to participate in church.

Development of leadership, reading, and self discipline skills, plus the establishment of priorities and learning to interact with persons outside of the home, were abilities that participants learned and developed in the church, as illustrated in this excerpt:

> I was considered one of the youth leaders in the church. I was not very vocal, I was very quiet and reserved, but when it came to the choir I was very vocal. Church activities were mandatory in our home, but I enjoyed them. In our church we fasted 10 days. We had prayer and fasting every three months, 40 days out of the year. That would start on Fridays and it finished on Sundays. During that time, we were not permitted to watch TV. Our time was supposed to be spent serving the Lord, praying and fasting. During that time, we had no TV and we did not socialize with anybody outside of the church. We did a lot of reading, writing, and other creative activities during that time. We got together and prayed together. My parents believed that TV took away the ability to develop a bond with God. That was your time to do that. We got together and prayed and read scriptures together. We went to church every night for 10 nights and fellowshipped with the members of the church.

### *High Expectations and Positive Reinforcement*

Church was a place of enjoyment as well as a place where participants developed assertiveness skills and learned how to establish goals for themselves and to think independently:

> I went to Sunday school and gospel concerts. I love gospel music. My family went to church every Sunday. There was no question whether or not we were going to church. That is what we did on Sunday; we got dressed and went to Sunday school and church. In church, the preachers and members were always talking about goals, thinking for yourself, accomplishing things, and being assertive.

Involvement in church provided role models, information about college from the experiences of others, motivation to succeed, and financial support for this participant:

> Really, I thought I was ready for college. I was enthusiastic about going to college, but when I left home and my parents, I found that I was not really ready for college. What helped me was my church. When people in my church went away to college and came back to the church and talked about their experiences and their graduation, I looked at them and wanted that experience. I wanted to be able to go away and come back a new person. I wanted to show that I could graduate. I stayed focused. I wanted to succeed for the church because the church had supported me a lot when I was growing up. The church gave me money, awards, and recognition. If you went to college, they paid for your books. They did not pay for all your books. I had 20 to 25 credits, 6 or 7 classes, so they didn't pay for all of my books, but some money helps.

## Summary of Community Protective Factors

1. Community factors that contributed to the successful transition of the participants included cultural factors, vocational rehabilitation, and the church.
2. A majority of the participants found that cultural factors such as support from the African American community, cultural activities, and African American role models had a positive influence on their academic achievement and graduation from college.
3. Though two participants did not view culture as having an impact on their transition, all of the participants had a positive sense of cultural identity as African Americans. A positive cultural identity is important in accepting oneself and one's ability to succeed academically. Many

of the participants wanted to represent themselves positively as African Americans so their families and the African American community would benefit from their graduating from college. They wanted to prove that African American deaf and hard of hearing students could succeed in college, especially in a college with a predominately White population.

4. VR provided financing and various types of guidance to participants in selecting the college of their choice.

# Overcoming Obstacles

# 8

The participants discussed specific obstacles that interfered with their successful transitions through elementary school, high school, and postsecondary programs. These obstacles included lack of understanding of Deaf culture and sign language; lack of academic readiness; negative influences; lack of faculty and staff support services; lack of diverse staff; and lack of assistive technological devices. Despite the obstacles, however, the participants found ways to overcome them and to make progress.

## Lack of Understanding of Deaf Culture and American Sign Language

In order to socially and culturally integrate into any community, all individuals from outside of that community must learn the language of the community inhabitants. Without knowledge of the accepted language, the outsider will remain an outsider who does not become a connected member of the larger group. Once the language is learned, the outside individual can then communicate with others as well as become an integral part of the intellectual, social, and cultural community. ASL is taught by individuals in the environment who understand the culture, the language becomes a vital asset for new individuals in the environment. Once the new individual learns ASL, it is an internal asset that enables him or her to function and become accepted within the Deaf community.

The lack of information about deafness created obstacles for two of the participants while they were in elementary school and for one of the participants in high school. In some cases, this lack of understanding resulted in inappropriate placements that presented barriers to some of the participants:

> The lack of knowledge about deafness in my public school was an obstacle for me. When I was growing up, if there had been more knowledge about deafness, my education and the program would have been better.

The major obstacles that confronted four participants in college were lack of understanding of Deaf culture and sign language. The lack of sign language skills made it difficult for the participants to participate in classroom discussions, and they could not communicate directly with the instructor without the help of an interpreter. It also interfered with their social interactions with deaf peers. They overcame these obstacles after eventually learning about their culture and sign language through their peers.

Lack of cultural awareness and inability to use sign language fluently were obstacles for four participants, but they were able to overcome this obstacle. Some of the participants did not visit the college before they enrolled, like the following participant. However, her mother had visited the campus with her deaf sibling. The participant discusses some of her many cultural mistakes on the way to succeeding in college:

> I experienced cultural shock. I had never been in an all-deaf place before. I looked around and I didn't understand the culture. For example, I was slow to make friends. I made friends with a girl that was hard of hearing like me and we talked. One day we were in the dorm, and I told her something. Another girl asked, "What's up?" You need to sign what you said. I said, "I was not talking to you." At that time I did not know that was an insult, that it was wrong. I learned. It was a hard lesson, but I learned.
>
> I didn't know about captioned TV. I was shocked. When I first arrived I didn't know if I would be able to sign well enough to sign in class. Oh my God. I didn't know. I didn't realize that teachers would be signing full time. I didn't know that you were not to sign and talk at the same time. I didn't know to turn off my voice. I didn't know. Oops! I made mistakes, but I kept moving forward and progressing.
>
> I should have visited and seen the classrooms first. My mother saw it first. She called me and told me about the football team. She told me I would like it because they had a dance company. I asked her how they had a dance company when they were deaf. I knew nothing about it. I was ignorant about it. I didn't know. I tried out for the dance company and I thought they would dance without music. Then I found out that they had Black music and I said, "What?" Really, I felt like a fool.

Another participant recounts similar troubles while learning to communicate:

> Sign language communication was an obstacle for me. When I first went to college, I didn't understand sign language. I was taking sign language before I arrived in college, but that was only for about two months prior to my arrival.

> My communication was a problem. My social life also suffered because I could not communicate with others. If you can't communicate, you can't have a social life.

### Lack of Academic Readiness

There were participants who questioned whether they would be able to understand sign language well enough to succeed, but only one participant questioned if he had the academic skills to succeed in college. This participant had attended a parochial school, and he had difficulties adjusting to new environments in middle and high school. He felt he could not function at the academic level in that school and questioned if he would be able to succeed in college. The adjustment became an obstacle that he did not overcome while in high school. He never adjusted to high school and graduated with very low grades:

> No one knew about support services at that time. People who were not familiar with disabilities didn't know how to set up services. All the teachers knew was that I had a hearing loss, I had a hearing aid, and I was stubborn and refused to wear it. I was the obstacle. When I lived with my mom I had no problem wearing my hearing aid. When I moved in with my father, I had to make a lot of new friends. I didn't know anyone. I didn't feel comfortable disclosing that I had a hearing disability and that I needed a hearing aid.

Later, he realized that he did have the intellectual capability and that, in fact, he had acquired enough academic training in the parochial school to become an honor roll student in college:

> When I went to college, I questioned whether I had the ability to function at the college level. I was my own obstacle to success. I was involved in the college life, participating in the fun activities. I was going to the student lounge and drinking beer, and then I was too tired to do my homework. However, I would study and work hard to overcome my fatigue. I would punish myself. I knew that I had to accept those consequences if I wanted to do those things. I had the financial support, I was motivated, and I was willing to put in the hours needed to do the academic work. The only question I had was whether I could handle the work.

The participants were aware of their weaknesses and corrected them. Another participant also viewed himself as an obstacle to his success, and he talked about what he needed to change about himself in order to become successful:

> I always did what was needed. I think that I was my biggest problem. I had to overcome my own personal laziness. I knew if I could overcome it, I could be successful. I had to play a lot of mind games with myself. I had to tell myself, you have to do it. I had to push myself. I was my greatest obstacle.

### Negative Influences

In discussing obstacles in his environment, one participant talked about negative people that he associated with who had low expectations of him and who predicted that he would fail. Sometimes he thought those individuals were friends. The participant's response to negative people and his spiritual support and relationship with God are presented in the following excerpt:

> You will always have people around who don't want to see you succeed. They were the obstacles. Those are the people who want to see you fail, who want to tell you the negative stuff. They want to tell you, you can't do this, and you can't do that. Those are people you thought were your friends, who you thought were rooting for you, and you find out that they really don't want to see you succeed. I think it helped me overcome the negatives when I realized who they were and identified them. I am a daredevil. When someone says I can't, it makes me want to succeed more. It motivates me more. When I realize that a person thinks I can't succeed, I say, "Oh you think I can't, just watch me." Sometimes, you need the negative people because when they try to bring you down, it helps you move up even further. Another way that I overcome obstacles is through my relationship with God, my spirituality. I guess He always has a way of showing you His support, a way of encouraging you and pushing you to go further. It has been my spirituality and relationship with God that has helped me overcome a lot of obstacles.

### Lack of Faculty and Staff Support

One participant was involved in many organizations and activities in which she competed for leadership positions. Her obstacles were the lack of support and guidance of faculty and staff in the college environment in her efforts. She wanted faculty and staff with whom she could discuss her plans and concerns. Few or no African Americans had held those positions. In describing her experiences, she stated: "I didn't have anyone to provide guidance and support for me during my campaigns, only my family. It was family support that got me through. They helped a lot."

There is still a need for mainstream postsecondary programs to improve support services for deaf and hard of hearing students. Students have a

right to interpreters and other related services. Attendance at a mainstream school without support services became an obstacle for another participant, who stated that there was a lack of sensitivity and support services for deaf students as well as a lack of academic advisors:

> I went to two mainstream colleges. I missed a great deal of information in my first mainstream college. I was smart in the second college. In the first college, I knew nothing. I was in the wrong classes. The first semester I was lost. I was so, so, so lost. I had no one to show me what to do or guide me. Finally, I found the schedule of classes. No one explained the classes to me. I had no advisor. I don't know if those classes were canceled from my schedule or what. I don't know what happened with that. Another barrier was that I could not hear everything and the college instructors were so rude to me. I grew up in an elementary school and middle school where I sat in the front of the class. I told the college instructors that I was deaf and needed to sit in the front of the class so I could read their lips. They would walk around with their backs to me and talk to the wall and move their heads around so I had difficulty seeing their mouths. I would get their attention and remind them. I am deaf and need to read your lips. I finally gave up.

### Lack of Diverse Staff

Two participants discussed the need for a more diverse staff at the college level. The lack of a sufficient number of diverse staff members presented a problem for the following participant at both the high school and college levels. In this situation, she was discussing lack of a diverse staff at the high school level: "We didn't have enough diversity in the dorm staff. I remember there were two Black dormitory staff members, but they couldn't pay attention to everyone. I understood that and I knew that I was on my own." The residential living arrangement for both high school and postsecondary programs need to be learning environments for students. These learning environments should involve multicultural staff and programs that socially and academically integrate diverse students into campus life.

### Lack of Assistive Technological Devices

Lack of technology to access information without the use of an interpreter was an obstacle to this participant. Like other deaf or hard of hearing individuals, she wanted the opportunity to access information directly from

TV. She was assertive and initiated action to get decoders in her classroom so she would be able to directly gain information from videotapes shown to the class. Another obstacle to her was not being able to hear everything in her environment. She also viewed the inability to express the foreign language she was talking directly to the instructor as a hindrance. She had to go through an interpreter because she was in a mainstream program where the teacher could not sign:

> In high school in my freshman year, we had to watch a special video. I was shocked to see that it was not captioned. I was from a middle school for the deaf where everything was captioned. I asked why wasn't it captioned. We have a deaf program, and it is supposed to be the best in the county. My interpreter told me that no one had ever said anything. I went back and talked to the resource teacher and told her about that. She was glad I noticed it. I wrote a letter to the county and we got a decoder. Back then, that's what they had, decoders. Not having the captions was a barrier to me because I had to look at the interpreter and then at the TV. That was an obstacle.
>
> Another obstacle was my Spanish class. I couldn't really speak Spanish. My interpreter spoke for me, but it worked out well because I would sign the answers.

The research identified some additional problems confronting the participants that they did not list as obstacles: (a) lack of sign communication by two parents, (b) a divorce that resulted in the participant attending a school where he did not achieve, (c) inappropriate school placements, and (d) low expectations in the form of referrals for vocational training instead of college.

## Overcoming Obstacles

The participants had different methods for dealing with obstacles. Instead of permitting obstacles to have a negative impact on their lives, they turned the negatives into positives for themselves. They recognized that there could be various obstacles to success; some obstacles might be large and some small. They recognized that they had to learn how to handle the obstacles in their lives. The following is a description of how the participants handled obstacles, such as learning about Deaf culture and becoming fluent in sign language. The majority of the participants who needed to learn about Deaf culture were assertive in doing so, as demonstrated in this excerpt:

> Learning signs was not a big problem for me because I wanted to learn it. I practiced. Sometimes when people signed too fast, I would have a problem. I never will forget my first semester in college. My academic advisor told me that I had greatly improved my sign skills. She remembered me as being awkward in my signs, signing the wrong words, and using sign English. She told me I was picking it up fast. I remember in big classes, I would pick up signs fast. I am a fast learner. I learned sign language by socializing in the dorm, paying attention, listening, and joining discussions with friends who knew signs and who were profoundly deaf. I asked them questions if I didn't understand a sign and made sure I remembered the sign.

All of the participants developed strategies to overcome obstacles. They found the following strategies to be most effective:

1. Being assertive and taking steps themselves to eliminate obstacles within their control that interfered in their academic progress
2. Viewing themselves as proof that African Americans could succeed even in situations that created barriers to them and having others view them as role models
3. Viewing themselves as representatives of their families in their academic accomplishments so that family members who had not graduated from high school or college would experience success through their success
4. Being able to find humor in some negative actions of others toward them
5. Focusing on their priorities
6. Being more motivated by the fact that other persons felt they could not succeed and letting the negative statements become sources of energy and motivation, spurring their achievement and serving as proof that others were wrong about their abilities
7. Being steadfast in their spiritual relationship with God and seeking God for inspiration and support
8. Dealing directly with institutional and individual racism and stereotyping, especially when they threatened to interfere with their academic progress. Examples include teachers scoring White students higher than African American students for the same answers and people using derogatory and stereotyping terms

9. Discerning what is important to address in racially biased situations and what to ignore. This approach includes deciding what needs to be addressed immediately, what strategies to use in specific situations, and what things could be ignored. They understood that the source of stereotyping and discriminatory behavior was ignorance and/or prejudice
10. Forming peer groups that they could depend on for moral support, unbiased information, and positive feedback

Though the participants encountered some obstacles in their homes, schools, colleges, and communities, they prevailed and continued their education. The major obstacles that they had to deal with were related to understanding Deaf culture and sign language. Lack of faculty and staff support, negative influences, lack of a diverse faculty and staff, and inappropriate school placements were also impediments.

The participants received their parents' support while they were in elementary school, high school, and college. However, they relied more on their own problem-solving skills and the support of their peers to handle obstacles that confronted them. They developed strategies that were effective in overcoming the obstacles without becoming negative themselves. They understood themselves well enough to institute techniques that would help them overcome their own personal characteristics that needed to be changed. When confronted with external obstacles, they were able to use their decision-making and problem-solving skills effectively so that the problems would not continue to escalate. They knew when to ask for the help of others, especially their peers, in analyzing and resolving problems. They relied on parental support, and some relied on their faith in God to help them through difficult situations.

The majority of the participants did not list faculty and staff as persons from whom they could seek advice. One participant specifically stated that the White students received support from White faculty members, but she did not receive the same support. One other participant stated that he was aware of the lack of faculty and staff support for African American students; however, he was not sure if this same lack of support did or did not exist for other ethnic groups.

## Participants' Recommendations for Facilitating Transition

This section addresses the recommendations the participants made concerning how best to facilitate the transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing students through college. The participants viewed successful transition as the responsibility of parents and teachers as well as those in a position to implement effective educational policies, programs, and practices. In this section, the role of parents and teachers as perceived by the participants will be discussed first, with recommendations for educational policy and programs to follow. All of their comments were discussed in the context of facilitating successful transitions of African American adolescents through four-year postsecondary programs.

### *The Role of Parents*

The participants felt strongly that parents were crucial in the transition process. Their recommendations were based on how their parents had positively contributed to their transition. They also made recommendations to remedy problems that had confronted them during their transition.

First and foremost, parents need to establish and maintain a positive relationship with their children. Parents should provide guidance by teaching and by example. Parents are a child's source of encouragement, their first source of ideas, and their first source of discipline. They are in a unique position in that they see their young children every day. Early on, parents should establish clear rules, and they should build in rewards for positive behaviors and consequences for inappropriate behaviors.

The key to establishing a strong and positive relationship is open and ongoing communication in the mode of communication that is most comfortable for the child. When children can communicate in an open, ongoing and nonthreatening manner with their parents, they not only learn to express their needs but they are able establish close, stable, secure, nurturing, and trusting relationships with their parents. This type of communication ensures that their social, emotional, and intellectual needs would be met. It provides an avenue for children to learn how to effectively relate to others. They enter school with important communication skills and a positive self-concept that promotes academic achievement. Further, communication with their parents provides children with the opportunity to learn about their culture, their family's background, and

their parents' occupations, values, goals, and aspirations. They can learn about the world around them and share their victories and well as their concerns. Children see the world through their parents' words as well as their actions. Some of the participants talked primarily about their communication with their mothers, but it is equally as important that they view the world through the eyes of the African American males in their lives. Communication with positive adult male role models has been and continues to be a challenge in the lives of some African American children. Single female heads of households can contact their local churches, schools, sports, and community organizations to find out about recommended programs in their area in which background checks have been conducted on the adult male volunteers.

As a part of their discussions with their children, parents need to talk about goal setting and how to accomplish goals in different careers. All of the participants recommended that parents encourage their children to accomplish at high academic levels and provide them with support through their words and actions. Parents need to communicate expectations regarding homework completion, school performance, and attendance. They need to monitor their children's homework and school performance. They should also give their children a strong educational foundation by supplementing the school program with educational experiences like trips, library memberships, cultural activities, and museum visits. Parents should teach their children values, especially the value of work.

### *Teachers' Roles in Successful Transition*

The participants' recommendations for teachers are similar to the recommendations for parents. Teachers who provide a caring and supportive environment make students feel that they belong and are respected as individuals. In order to create this type of environment, teachers must do the following:

1. Provide a climate in which the students feel cared about, valued, and recognized.
2. Advocate diversity within the school.
3. Give students praise and recognition for their accomplishments.
4. View all students as individuals with potential.

5. Avoid low expectations and stereotyping of students. Avoid labeling and judging students. Do not label all African American deaf and hard of hearing and other minority students as low-functioning students. Avoid referring and relating to students as low-functioning.
6. Avoid placing students in low-level classes or giving them low-level academic work without documentation of how the student is functioning.
7. Use tests along with classroom observations, team feedback, and parent and student participation to develop an individual plan for each student.
8. Educate African American students without racism and prejudice. Eliminate and avoid the stereotyping and labeling of African American students.
9. Identify and promote student interests in reading, special projects, and other subjects to encourage student participation in class.
10. Seek ways to motivate students and find out why they are not performing well.

Teachers should hold high expectations for all students. They should not make judgments about students because of their racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. There are intelligent students from all backgrounds, and teachers should treat students equally and challenge them to learn. By giving positive reinforcement and promoting high expectations, teachers will cause students to have a different attitude toward learning. Teachers can help students develop academic skills in the following ways:

1. Challenge students to learn how to think critically and logically. This will help students become independent decision-makers and problem-solvers.
2. Provide high-quality education for all students regardless of deafness or other disability, income level, family status, or ethnic group.
3. Provide challenging coursework.
4. Help students become aware of the resources available to them in the school and how to access those resources.
5. Be creative and not "stuck" in traditional ways of doing things.

Open and ongoing communication in school is just as important as it is in the home. Teachers must be good communicators and good "listeners." They must be willing to sit and listen without being judgmental.

Sometimes teachers will tell students what they should and should not do without really listening to what the students are trying to express. By paying careful attention to the students' needs, teachers will be able to guide students to where they should focus.

### Educational Policies and Program Recommendations

The participants recommended educational policies and programs that focused on facilitating the successful transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing students into four-year colleges and universities. They recommended that schools and postsecondary programs do the following:

1. Establish programs that have African American deaf mentors. Students need to see African American deaf mentors so they will have proof that they can become successful. African American deaf mentors expose students to successful people from different professions and at different levels in their careers. One participant talked about how many young African American deaf students think that all African American professionals are hearing: "Many of the deaf students thought I was hearing because I have a degree. Though they don't see me talking, that did not matter to them."
2. Involve parents with their children in the transition planning process as they advance from one level to the next in school. Transition should start when the students are in elementary school.
3. Ensure that deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream programs have appropriate accommodations for taking tests.
4. Provide programs that give students the experience of what to expect in college.
5. Counsel students about college. Postsecondary information should be made available in an unbiased manner and enable the student to review college options and select the college that best meets his or her academic interest and goals.
6. Include enough information during counseling to ensure that the student can make intelligent transition decisions.
7. Establish cooperative agreements with colleges for high school students to take college courses.

8. Develop residential programs that will foster clear communication between the school and dormitory staff and facilitate their collaboration to help students.
9. Establish programs that will promote more skills for independent functioning and acceptance of responsibility in students.
10. Teach students information that is equivalent to that received by hearing students. Some participants expressed that the coursework in schools for the deaf is not challenging enough. They want course work to be the same as that of hearing students to prepare them for postsecondary programs. They felt academic material that deaf students receive in mainstream programs is more challenging.
11. Provide a concentration of training in English skills.
12. Provide avenues for deaf students to take many classes in mainstream programs with hearing students.
13. Listen to the opinion of students. Teach them to express themselves and learn how to make decisions.
14. Provide meaningful activities for student participation.
15. Have interpreters in mainstream programs that are highly skilled in sign communication and can adapt it to meet the students' modes of communication.
16. Institute advisor programs that provide guidance for students, evaluate why they are failing in school, and help them stay in school.
17. Develop programs that will promote involvement of African American parents in their child's education and in the school's mission. Provide a parent involvement program, school transition program, and literacy program.
18. Avoid establishing programs that will separate African Americans from other students. Some students are placed in low-level academic programs, which often have a higher concentration of African Americans than other racial groups. For example, this participant was placed in a remedial college program that had a high number of African American students and was considered a remedial program:

> I don't think it's a good idea to have separate programs with mostly Black students in one program and White students in another program. When I went to college, I felt that the teachers made the assumption that "He is

not going to succeed, so why waste all those resources? If he succeeds fine and if he doesn't there is no sweat off our noses."

## Summary

Resilience is not a panacea for preventing and eliminating all problems. Obstacles, challenges, crisis situations, mistakes, and everyday problems will occur in the lives of resilient people no matter the income level, family status, or gender of the individual. The advantage that resilient students have is that they have the mindset and skills to handle these situations better. Resilience research and the response of the participants in this study show that the initial and major influences on the postsecondary graduation rates of African American students are their parents or other primary caregivers. In the educational realm, school personnel are very important in providing students with the academic skills to function in a global community. The collaboration of parents and the school with the community provides a comprehensive approach to advancing the transition of students through schools, college, and other postsecondary programs. It is therefore important that parents, caregivers, school personnel, and community stakeholders understand the pivotal role that each plays in building and strengthening resilience in students and facilitating high academic achievement. Acquiring academic information without the resilience to persevere through problems and traumatic situations will not necessarily provide students with the foundation they need to graduate from college and to become productive and contributing citizens of the world. They will need the beliefs, mindset, value systems, and skills that enable them to view themselves as an integral part of society. They need to be able to see themselves as capable individuals who can succeed in their academic goals. They need to be able to understand their interdependence on others within their environment, have others that they can depend on for support, guidance, and resources while accepting responsibility, and be willing to take action to control their futures regardless of the obstacles and challenges that face them.

# A Resilience Program Model

# 9

The data from this research suggest that the participants were resilient individuals. Protective factors in their lives helped them become resilient, and these factors facilitated their successful transitions through elementary school, high school, and postsecondary programs.

Much can be learned from the data in this study. Its findings suggest that protective factors in families, schools, postsecondary programs, and communities could contribute to the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. Further, their resilience and academic achievement could prepare them for postsecondary programs.

The participants' families, especially their parents, played major roles in fostering their resilience. There were only three participants whose parents had set the goal of a college education for them prior to graduation from high school. The other parents set a goal of high school graduation. The data does not show that most of the parents had an established plan for their child's academic transition into and graduation from college. However, they had practices that promoted resilience in their children, and their children succeeded in postsecondary programs.

Though schools and community organizations were involved in the education of the participants, the research does not show that there was a coordinated plan of action that was set in motion with the ultimate goal and outcome of postsecondary graduation for the participants. From the information gathered from the participants, in most cases their families, the schools, and the organizations acted independently of each other in fostering resilience, and their independent actions ultimately contributed to the participants' earning bachelor's degrees.

The key question is: how can parents, schools, and community stakeholders who provide protective factors that contribute to academic achievement collaborate on a comprehensive resilience program designed to prepare students for postsecondary programs? This study and other

research clearly point out that there are factors within families, schools, and community organizations that promote resilience and positive academic outcomes for young children, adolescents, and young adults.

The recommendation of this researcher is a collaborative program model for developing and building protective factors in the students' environments that lead to resilience. From the study data, resilient African American deaf and hard of hearing students are able to successfully transition into and through four-year colleges and universities. The more resilient students are, the better able they are to function.

## Purpose of the Resilience Program

The goal of the resilience program is to strengthen the likelihood of success for a larger group of African American deaf and hard of hearing students by unifying the family, school, postsecondary programs, and community stakeholders into a cohesive group with the same academic goals. The members of this group would work together in an organized fashion to provide the necessary protective factors that foster resilience, enabling students to prevail over obstacles and succeed in school. The resilience program should be housed in the school so that the key groups in the lives of children have a central place to meet and plan how to help students transition from elementary to secondary school and through postsecondary programs (see Figure 1).

This resilience program focuses on African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adults because the percentage of these students who enter and graduate from four-year colleges and universities is very small. The program is designed to enhance and facilitate the educational attainments of African American deaf and hard of hearing students and to enable each child to reach his or her fullest potential. However, it could benefit other students with other disabilities as well as students without disabilities. The key components of the program are the protective factors that promote understanding and respect of African American culture, Deaf culture, and other cultures; academic achievement; healthy social and emotional developmental; and culturally relevant curriculum, programs and activities. It involves a diverse staff that includes African American administrators, teachers, and staff; African American

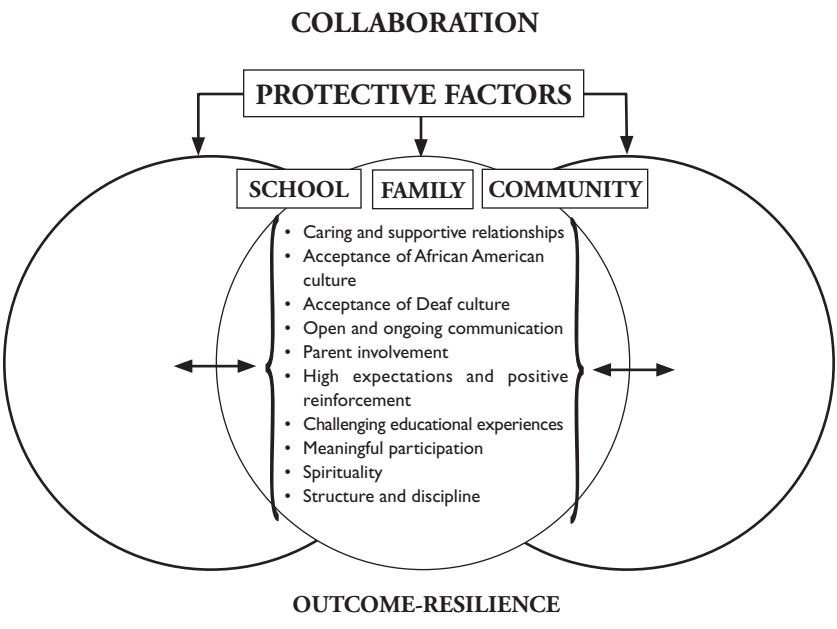


Figure 1. Model for Fostering Resilience in African American Deaf and Hard of Hearing Young Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults

parents and age-appropriate students; community organizations; and other stakeholders in the planning and decision-making processes (see Table 6).

The theory underlying the program is that the more resilience students possess, the better able they are to achieve in school. The resilience program will eliminate gaps in services, create appropriate interventions for students to succeed in school, and promote a cohesive and caring environment for African American deaf and hard of hearing students and for students from other ethnic groups to grow and develop to their fullest potential. It provides an avenue for the family, school, and community to reinforce each other. Working together, they can provide the guidance, intellectual stimulation, support, nurturance, opportunities, and resources students need to achieve success by changing systems, structures, and beliefs within schools and communities. This includes providing and modeling the protective factors children need to persevere in spite of obstacles to their academic, social, and emotional progress. Students are key elements in the resilience process, and they need to understand what contributes to resilience and the transition process, what resources are available, and

how to access the resources. With the help of their families, schools, and community organizations, they must take active roles in their own development through age-appropriate activities.

Resilience, like transition, is a lifelong process. The following are three characteristics of the process that should be taken into consideration when planning policies, programs, and practices:

1. The process is developmental and ongoing.
2. The strengths of the students rather than their weaknesses should be recognized.
3. The process promotes protective factors that help students achieve through changes in the systems, structures, and beliefs within their environment (Winfield, 1994, p. 4).

These characteristics have been considered in designing the proposed resilience program. The program would be initiated early in the life of the child and continue through their postsecondary program. Schools and postsecondary programs need to begin planning programs that focus on children's strengths and are ongoing. In too many schools systems today, administrators are continuously changing programs to fit new educational fads with no real vision of where they are going and how they will educate African American deaf and hard of hearing students and other minorities.

### *Structure of the Program*

The resilience program consists of the family, the school, postsecondary programs, and community stakeholders. Universities and colleges, as community stakeholders, could play major roles in this process by providing research, professional training, and postsecondary credit courses in the high schools for teachers and staff. The components of this resilience program are connected and support each other. This proposed program would have a director of resilience who reports to the principal of the school and would have the following roles:

1. Coordinating the services of the schools with parents, postsecondary programs, and other community stakeholders in developing and implementing a resilience program

2. Providing best practices of linking academic and student support services (mental health, athletic, and residence life programs) to resilience goals
3. Providing resources and training and development for teachers and staff, as well as parents and community agencies, to develop innovative approaches to develop and enhance resilience
4. Serving as a resource on resilience to administrative, teacher, and staff development program planning
5. Identifying and planning strategies to address practices and programs that are in conflict with fostering protective factors
6. Coordinating resources for the library and for a resource center on resilience
7. Coordinating workshops and speakers for the school on innovative programs that focus on resilience
8. Building partnerships with community organizations to promote student resilience
9. Creating partnerships with colleges and universities for advanced placements of students, research and data analysis assistance, grant writing, and professional development purposes
10. Administering the program

*Program Development*

The program would use a collaborative approach that is developed through planning meetings that involve teachers, administrators, students, parents, community organizations, and other stakeholders. This would be accomplished through formal planning meetings as well as ongoing informal communications. The initial meetings would include retreats involving facilitators to help the group process, and the information from these meetings would be used to develop the resilience mission statement, develop annual goals, and gather information for the strategic plan. A series of scheduled meetings would be held to discuss goals, develop new ideas, and to exchange information about program development. In addition, those involved would attend monthly and annual forum and planning meetings.

The purpose of the resilience program is to link the home, school, and community in establishing environments that promote resilience through

Table 5. Protective Factors and Processes in the Community (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Cultural Role Models, and Church Members)

| Protective factors | Examples |
|---|---|
| Caring and supportive relationships | Acceptance of African American culture<br>Acceptance of Deaf culture<br>Technological assistive devices<br>Information<br>Encouragement<br>High quality services<br>Recognition |
| Open and ongoing communication | Fluency in ASL<br>Use of communication mode of child<br>Active listening<br>Meaningful feedback |
| High expectations | High goals and standards<br>Praise<br>Rewards and recognition<br>Postsecondary planning |
| Challenging educational experiences | Rigorous coursework<br>Development of critical thinking skills<br>Classes with diverse groups of students<br>Coursework applicable to life experiences<br>Culturally relevant coursework |
| Discipline and structure | Clear and consistent expectations<br>Structure<br>Equitable rules and consequences |

such protective factors as (a) care and support, (b) open and ongoing communication, (c) high expectations, (d) challenging educational opportunities, (e) meaningful participation, (f) parent involvement, and (g) discipline and structure. The goals of the program would include the following:

1. Enhancing the resilience of more African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adult students to facilitate their transition
2. Linking academic, student support services, residential living, and athletic objectives with resilience enhancement
3. Coordinating school resilience programs with parents, community, and other stakeholders

Table 6. Proposed Resilience Program

| Program | Program components | Program partners |
|---|---|---|
| Infancy to elementary school | Involve parents in school and community program planning and implementation. | Parent/school/community |
| | Hold sign language/Deaf awareness classes. | School/community/deaf adults |
| | Hold infancy and childhood development workshops. | School/community agencies |
| | Create challenging classes. | School/community |
| | Provide mentoring programs and other activities that expose students to successful African American deaf and hard of hearing adults. | Parent/school/community |
| | Create social skills groups. | School/community |
| | Provide independent living skills activities. | Parent/school/community |
| | Initiate cognitive and physical development after school activities. | Parent/school/community |
| | Develop and disseminate infancy and child development materials. | School/community |
| | Incorporate culturally relevant information into the curriculum and community activities. | School/community |
| | Create a transition program to elementary school. | Parent/school/community |
| | Provide on-site community agency services. | School/community |
| Elementary to high school | Continue with age-appropriate components above and add the following: | |
| | Develop childhood to adolescent workshops. | Parent/school/community |
| | Create and disseminate adolescent development materials. | School/community |
| | Transition to high school activities. | Parent/school/community |

Table 6. (*continued*)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| High school to college | Continue with age-appropriate components above and add the following: | |
| | Provide access to advanced classes and college courses. | School/community |
| | Hold adolescent to young adulthood development workshops. | Parent/school/community |
| | Provide work experiences. | School/community |
| | Transition to college activities. | Parent/school/community |

Note: Community includes postsecondary programs

The following would be critical outcomes of this program:

1. More African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adults will benefit from protective factors in their homes, schools, and communities.
2. Schools serving African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adults will integrate protective factors into the curriculum, mental health programs, athletic programs, after-school programs, and residence life programs.
3. Schools for the deaf and mainstream programs will collaborate with parents, postsecondary programs, and community stakeholders to provide protective factors that enhance resilience.
4. More collaboration will occur between schools for the deaf and mainstream programs.
5. More African American students will enter four-year colleges and universities and graduate.

### *The Role of the Schools*

In addition to schools being an educational institution for students, they would also become advocates and community resources for students and parents before their children are enrolled in school. Such a program would become a resource for parents of deaf and hard of hearing students, regardless of whether or not the child is enrolled in the school. The program would provide resource materials, conferences, and workshops on factors that contribute to resilience in children from infancy through young

adulthood. For example, parents of newborn children recently diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing would have access to information that would help them provide experiences for their child that would foster resilience. The focal point or hub of the program must be the school because it alone possesses the expertise to assemble all of the other resources. An additional reason is that the primary beneficiaries, the children, would be educated in the school in partnership with their parents and their community.

In order for the schools to serve as advocates for promoting resilience, cultural changes within the school, home, and community may be necessary. The importance of culture and its impact on educating African American deaf and hard of hearing students needs to be addressed in the program's initial organizational retreats. Schools are in the central position to take the lead in implementing policies, programs, and procedures that contribute to the students' resilience and thus their successful transition. A well-planned, comprehensive school program that focuses on organizing and coordinating environmental factors that promote protective factors is essential to facilitating the educational and transition process. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has mandated schools to facilitate transition.

To develop a program that has high potential to accomplish the established goals, there must be a clear agreement among the participants. For example, the program would require cooperation among the schools, the families, and numerous organizations throughout the community. Furthermore, to ensure that increased academic achievement and more successful school transition takes place for African American deaf and hard of hearing students, the school administrator must be able to promote the vital role of resilience in this process and must also view the role of the school as critical in fostering resilience through a collaborative partnership among parents, the school, and community stakeholders. Successful academic transition should be an expressed outcome mentioned in the mission statement's goals. Parents, teachers, staff members, and stakeholders should participate in the process of developing and finalizing the mission statement, which should include goals that promote and foster student resilience.

School policies and programs will promote collaboration among the staff members within the schools to foster protective factors, and the policies, programs, and strategies will focus on collaborative partnerships with

parents, community organizations, and key stakeholders to facilitate the resilience process. Programs should address protective factors from the child's infancy through high school graduation and beyond. The model's plan will have a strong commitment to acknowledging and embracing diversity, including different ethnic cultures and Deaf culture, and it will provide training in understanding various cultures, including Deaf culture and sign language.

The school should provide parents with information about what contributes to resilience, how to promote resilience in the home, how the school and parents can work together to promote resilience, how community organizations can be involved in this process, and how resilience facilitates successful transition. These programs, with any necessary changes, will continue as long as their child is in school.

The director will ensure that the development of all school programs will take into account the need to promote resilience and transition by providing a high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum. In addition, the program will include the following:

1. Instructional practices that are inclusive and challenging to all students
2. A supportive and positive reinforcing school climate
3. Extracurricular activities that build self-esteem, leadership, and teamwork
4. Programs that promote relationships with positive adult role models
5. Procedures for including students in age-appropriate decision-making
6. Recognition of the accomplishments of students

When a student's academic placement is in question, a team approach would be required in keeping with school policy in order to avoid inappropriate class placement. The parent and student would participate in the process. A school assessment team consisting of a teacher representative, a school mental health staff member, dormitory staff member, and a lead teacher would review appropriate school data to determine school placement. These data would include student test scores, progress reports, student portfolios, written feedback from all of the student's teachers with samples of the student's work, and a form developed to assess students' resilience. This approach could eliminate heavy reliance on test results and one person's recommendation for class placement.

A survey, the School Success Profile, has been used in mainstream schools to assess students' individual adaptation in their social environments, which includes their neighborhood, school, friends, and family. It assesses their self-perceptions of their well-being. Richman, Rosenfeld, and Bowen (1998) suggest that this survey could be useful in providing interventions to promote academic resilience and educational outcomes for students placed at risk (p. 311). There is a strong need for a resilience form or survey that assesses the resilience of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. This form also could be used for students with other disabilities.

The program would designate responsible personnel for each step of the resilience process. It would also indicate how resilience factors are incorporated into the process. Though all teachers and staff would participant in the resilience process, the procedure would not be left to chance. A clearly developed program with designated individuals for each task would ensure the absence of gaps in services to students.

In order to implement and facilitate the policies, procedures, programs, and practices that promote resilience and transition in the school, school administrators should institute a comprehensive professional development program. Professional development is critical in the orientation of new teachers and support staff and the ongoing training of continuing teachers and staff. A professional development program can provide training and strategies to effectively implement the school's mission, goals, policies, procedures, and programs. Professional development is also beneficial in developing educators' cultural awareness and sensitivity and in incorporating relevant cultural practices.

Evaluation procedures are necessary to ascertain whether the school is accomplishing its mission and goals. For individual students, the administrator, with input from teachers and staff, will need to determine what types of tests will be used by the school to evaluate student progress and how they will be administered. This is especially important because tests have resulted in inappropriate placements of African American deaf and hard of hearing students in many academic settings. Administrators will need to be aware of how best to use tests and other forms of evaluation for student academic placements.

The director will develop methods for evaluating the progress of the program. One method would be biannual evaluations of goal accomplishment.

The director should also utilize ongoing feedback from students, parents, teachers, staff, and community organizations that are stakeholders in the school through periodically scheduled meetings that elicit feedback about policies and programs.

By fostering open and ongoing communication between the home and school, schools will develop an effective working relationship with parents that promotes resilience and successful transition. Parent discussion groups are an ideal way for parents to share information with the school as well as for the school to share information with parents. Schools could also provide workshops and training activities for new parents as well as school age children. As seen in the study, the participants' parents were primary factors in their transition, and they provided the protective factors that facilitated their children's successful transition through school. Workshops that focus on information about resilience should be coordinated with community organizations, including local churches. These workshops will include information about infants', toddlers', and preschoolers' development that enhances cognitive, social, communication, and perceptual-motor skills. Parents can learn ways to help their infants and young children learn language, writing, reading, thinking, mathematical, and social skills, thereby making parents partners in the child's learning process.

Topics for the discussion groups could be generated from surveys sent to the parents. Also, parents could be asked for their input and feedback on the mission goals and new programs that the school wants to implement. Times for the discussion groups should be coordinated with the parents. In addition, residential and day programs will develop outreach programs that would involve setting up meetings in communities in centrally and conveniently located places such as libraries, churches, and community organizations where large groups of parents normally attend. The school will also make the workshops available to any parent in the community who wants to attend, which will make information available to parents whose children are not yet school age. The principal of the school and professionals who have information about the topic to be discussed should attend the meetings. It is important that school administrators attend some of the meetings because their presence will communicate commitment to the school's mission and also provide a personal method for the dissemination of information about the school's goals and how the school is meeting those goals. During the meetings,

administrators will obtain feedback from parents regarding whether the school is meeting its goals and both can exchange views about the effectiveness of school programs.

In this study, many parents began preparing their children with learning opportunities prior to their children's entrance into school. The information from the participants on what they viewed as important to their success and the problem areas that could have impeded their progress could be helpful to other parents of African American students.

The question that arises is how this type of information can be disseminated to all African American parents of deaf and hard of hearing students. Professionals usually receive information about effective parenting skills through college courses, professional development training, and professional magazines, but parents usually do not receive this information. School professionals must address how to provide to parents literature on current topics for discussion groups and how to schedule times for meetings that ensure opportunities for parental attendance.

Parents, teachers, and staff can learn from one another. Parents of successful students can exchange information about techniques that they have found to be effective, and parents of older students in the school can help parents of new children as their children transition into the school. Parents of graduates who have succeeded in entering and graduating from college should be invited to speak to parents of continuing students. School staff can use the forum to obtain input from parents regarding the schools' programs and policies and how they impact on their child's academic, social, and emotional development. This approach will be useful especially when schools are planning new programs and policies or have controversial policies that are not accomplishing the goal of improving academic performance.

Information bulletins that focus on resilience factors—how to develop and enhance resilience in the home as well as how resilience contributes to academic achievement—can be shared with the parents. Also, these bulletins will provide parents with information that helps them identify resilience factors in the school and community.

Workshops to enhance parents' communication skills will include sign language, open and ongoing communication skills, and active listening skills. These skills will enable the parents to communicate effectively with their children about transition plans. Effective communication skills will

also foster resilience because parents will be able to directly offer the support their children need rather than going through a third party to do so.

Workshops will provide important concepts that will enhance understanding of the transition process from elementary to high school and from high school to postsecondary programs. They will be designed to increase awareness of parents' roles in these transitions in school and postsecondary programs and of available financial resources. They should include panels of successful graduates and their parents to share information with parents and students.

### *The Role of Teachers*

To foster resilience and facilitate successful transition, teachers can make their classrooms a setting in which all students feel that they are important and valued participants who can achieve academically to their potential. The following characteristics are recommended for teachers:

1. Understand Deaf culture.
2. Be able to sign fluently.
3. Promote a caring and supportive environment.
4. Provide challenging coursework and experiences.
5. Have high expectations for all students.
6. Promote open communication.
7. Develop students' problem-solving and decision-making skills.
8. Promote activities that build social skills.
9. Communicate high expectations for all students.
10. Actively engage all students as participants in the class.
11. Use words of encouragement and praise to positively reinforce appropriate behaviors and academic performance.
12. Treat all students as worthwhile individuals.
13. Use culturally relevant instructional material.
14. Incorporate information about transition, including college resource information, into the existing curriculum.
15. Work collaboratively with parents by encouraging their active participation in decision-making, exchange of information, the classroom, field trips, and general school activities.
16. Provide workshops on how parents can reinforce what is being taught in the classroom.

Young children can also begin to learn about their environment and the people in it. Teachers can offer age-appropriate information about careers and how people obtain jobs. Students can learn this information from books, films, field trips, workshops and other activities designed specifically to enhance resilience and successful transition.

### *The Role of Support Staff*

Support staff will include the professional development staff, dormitory staff in residential schools, counselors, transition advisors, and parental advocates. These staff persons, working collaboratively with parents, teachers, administrators, and outside community agencies, can help make a positive difference in fostering resilience and academic accomplishments. In all planning and implementation of programs, it is important that the role of each is clear so that they are not duplicating or leaving gaps in needed services. Staff can help in identifying needs of students and parents and can be vital contributors to planning and implementing individual, group, and workshop programs. The key here is that roles are clear and supportive of each other. For example, the mental health team of social workers, psychologists, and school counselors will coordinate their efforts with dormitory staff, parent education advocates, and transition staff in identifying needs and developing programs for students to foster resilience and transition activities. The mental health team plays a key role in helping to develop and implement workshops and group training sessions for parents, staff, students, and community organizations that focus on student resilience and transition. They will also coordinate efforts with community agencies that would provide the necessary resources to help facilitate transition. However, specific persons should be designated to provide individual, group, and workshop training for students, parents, teachers, and community organizations. Programs that focus on resilience and transition need to be well-planned and well-coordinated. The following are recommendations for support staff:

1. Develop manuals of activities for the elementary, middle, and high school levels that would be used in workshops and groups to teach students about different careers. These activities should be age-appropriate and include problem-solving, decision-making, and self-advocacy skill

development activities; social skills activities; role playing; video tapes for use in workshops; and topics for research on careers. It is suggested that student input is included in developing the manual.

2. Develop mentoring programs.
3. Develop a program for students to shadow adults in the school on their jobs and to visit their parents for a day to learn what they do.
4. Develop workshops on various careers, resources, self-advocacy skills, and colleges, and discuss at the high school level how to access resources and financial aid.
5. Develop transition workshops that facilitate students' moves from elementary to high school and from high school to college. Students who have successfully transitioned from elementary school and middle school to high school could help those currently entering high school. Students who are in college and those who have graduated from college could be asked to share their perspectives on what helped them succeed and how they handled obstacles that interfered with their progress.
6. Develop a comprehensive work-study program that has a variety of careers that require college degrees that students can apply for based on their interest level. Make this program a part of the students' requirements for graduation that they can fulfill either during the school year or during the summer.
7. Develop collaborative relationships with colleges and universities that allow students to take courses and visit and ask presenters from those schools to come to the high school for presentations.
8. Develop mentor programs that will provide African American deaf and hard of hearing students with mentors who will provide ongoing and open communication on an informal basis. It is important that the students have mentors that they can also relate to as role models.
9. Develop career and college fairs with input from African American students and parents and participation of African American parents and former graduates.

### *The Role of Community Organizations, Businesses, and Key Stakeholders*

Community organizations and key stakeholders can provide a variety of resources and opportunities for students to enhance their resilience. This

was evident in the participants' description of how VR, churches, and cultural organizations contributed to their transition by providing care and support, high expectations, and learning opportunities.

The model uses regular meetings to obtain feedback and to discuss ways to enhance collaborative efforts, and it will ensure that African American deaf and hard of hearing individuals and advocate organizations are included in the process. Written agreements, which include policies, programs, and procedures, need to be developed with the community organizations, other schools, and local colleges so it is clear what is expected from the schools, colleges, and the organizations in collaborative partnerships.

VR is a very important agency in the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students, which is why students and their parents need to be aware of these services. VR administration helps deaf and hard of hearing individuals obtain competitive employment and enhance their independent living skills. Eligibility for this service is based on individual physical or mental impairments that interfere with the individual's ability to obtain or maintain employment. This agency provides training, educational assistance, and employment services to eligible individuals to help them become and remain employed. There is no cost for the services. For financial assistance for college, students should check with their local VR counselors discuss the services available to them. Students' VR cases should be opened no later than the end of their junior year in high school so that they will be able to enter college with the proper support services and financial aid. High schools need to coordinate their transition programs with VR by having periodic meetings with them to discuss their students and how they can work together to help them and their families understand how to use this service effectively. The school and VR representatives should arrange an orientation session at the school for students and their parents that provides information about VR services. The school should also arrange office space for VR personnel to come to the school to meet with individual students and their families.

All of the organizations and individuals who work with the school in the transition process should be invited at least twice a year to school. The first meeting would focus on how the school and all of the agencies could collaborate in meeting the needs of the students. A second meeting at the end of the year will evaluate the year's work and include a reception

to thank the community agencies for their contributions to the students' resilience and transition. The following are some recommendations for working with community agencies and key stakeholders. It is proposed that schools provide training in Deaf culture and sign language for mainstream school personnel, employers, and other stakeholders who are providing transition services for the students. In addition, schools will need to provide workshops on resilience and transition. The collaboration of family, school, community organizations and key stakeholders will provide a more comprehensive approach to developing and strengthening resilience.

Local universities can provide many services for students and school personnel. Nettle (1991) discusses the need for postsecondary programs to establish partnerships with schools, "especially in schools with high minority populations." These partnerships can assist with curriculum development and help teachers develop teaching and learning techniques directed toward university preparation (p. 90). In addition, research staff at the postsecondary level can aid schools in developing databases for collecting useful information that will help schools with identifying educational areas that need strengthening and developing strategies for improving student achievement.

## Conclusions and Research Recommendations

There is a great need to establish models of policy and program planning that would help schools develop protective factors that contribute to African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents' academic success and transition to postsecondary programs. Very little empirical research focuses on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents, and much of the research that exists is not recent. Given the absence of longitudinal studies of African American deaf and hard of hearing students that use the resilience construct as a frame of reference, there is a need for more in-depth and ongoing study in this area.

It is crucial that the research on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents move beyond identifying risk factors. Such research must focus on protective factors that foster academic achievement and postsecondary transition to either a four-year college, a training program, or gainful employment. These are the issues that need to be addressed for policy, program planning, classroom instruction, and developing parent partnerships to improve academic achievement, career development,

and transition. There is a need to know what schools, administrators, teachers, and support staff can do to facilitate and enhance protective processes. Research has shown that a large group of African American deaf and hard of hearing students, though in desegregated schools, are still receiving below-standard education. Some researchers, educators, and administrators are continuing to reinforce stereotyped theories about African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents. This deficit perspective perpetuates low achievement and subsequent poor transition results in those African American deaf and hard of hearing students who otherwise could be prepared to enter postsecondary programs. Research on resilience should focus on the interrelationship of parents, schools, and cultural identity as protective factors in the functioning of high-achieving African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

Studies of parents of African American deaf and hard of hearing students should focus on the protective factors that lead to achievement when their children are separated from them for most of the year while they are in residential programs. Parents should be taught how to set in motion the steps that other parents of successful children in mainstream programs are taking to provide protective factors for their children when they have an additional barrier of being the minority in a hearing school setting. They should learn how parents promote their children's positive racial and ethnic socialization when they are separated from them and in predominantly White settings. They should be shown how parents perceive their roles in the IEP as it relates to transition goals and what factors contribute to positive outcomes in the IEP process.

A collaborative partnership needs to be established among families, schools, businesses, community organizations, and key stakeholders. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine if a comprehensive transition plan that focuses on resilience increases the number of African American students who successfully transition through four-year colleges and universities.

From the participants' discussions in this study, there is clearly a need for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary school programs to be more culturally sensitive to African American deaf and hard of hearing students. This can be achieved through more support from teachers and support staff in student development and by schools taking a more active role in

training programs related to cultural sensitivity. Many schools have policies and mission statements regarding cultural diversity; however, based on the participants' comments, more is needed to create cultural awareness and respect. In addition, colleges and universities should be more aware of how the lack of cultural awareness affects instructional and other services for African American students. Research is required to understand what factors contribute to African American deaf and hard of hearing students' likelihood of graduating from predominately White high schools, colleges, and universities for the deaf.

Until more models emerge and until longitudinal data are collected on successful African American deaf and hard of hearing students, there will continue to be a lack of understanding of how to establish effective policies, programs, and strategies that result in increased numbers of African American deaf and hard of hearing college graduates.

This model presents one research-based approach that is not costly and is relatively easy to implement. It could make a vast difference in the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

# Conclusions and Recommendations 10

In this study, the African American deaf and hard of hearing participants described the protective factors that their parents, schools, postsecondary programs, community organizations, and other stakeholders provided for them. These protective factors contributed to their academic preparation for postsecondary programs and their perseverance to earn bachelor's degrees. The conceptual framework for this study was the resilience model. Studies have shown that with the necessary protective factors in their lives, students can prevail through obstacles and have successful academic outcomes. There were seven major findings from this study:

1. All of the African American families, especially the parents, provided protective factors that were primary contributors to the participants' academic achievement and graduation from postsecondary programs.
2. The individual characteristics of the participants that prepared them for school and enhanced their ability to succeed in school and postsecondary programs were primarily developed and strengthened in their homes.
3. Both African American and White teachers were the primary agents in participants' elementary, middle, and high schools who had a major impact on their educational achievement.
4. There was no indication of a coordinated effort to help the participants' transition from high school to postsecondary programs.
5. Postsecondary programs provided no organized approach for social and academic integration of the participants into the programs.
6. The community resource that was most vital to their graduation from postsecondary programs was the VR agency that provided them with postsecondary information and financial support.
7. Protective factors had more influence on the participants' academic achievement and their graduation from postsecondary programs than family demographics.

## Families

First and foremost in this study, it was found that families, especially parents, played a paramount role in the preparation of their children for school. The participants' families provided a caring and supportive environment, and they let the participants know through their words and actions that they were loved and considered important and valued members of the family. Each of the participants had at least one parent with whom they had a caring and supportive relationship during the time that they were in school. The participants also had the support of their siblings and extended family members. Caring and supportive relationships provided them with the foundation and strength they needed when confronted with difficult situations. There is consistent evidence that children's likelihood for academic achievement is enhanced when protective factors exist in the home. The participants entered school with positive self-images and educational preparation, and they felt cared for and valued by their parents. Children whose behaviors and educational skills are consistent with expected school behaviors are more likely to progress well in school (Taylor, 1991).

The participants received academic, social, and cultural preparation through their parents prior to entering school, and their parents provided competent and appropriate role models for them. The participants discussed learning many of their behaviors by watching their parents' behaviors. For example, some of the parents were avid readers who encouraged their children to read by buying them books, taking them to the library, and encouraging them to buy books instead of toys. The participants' parents provided protective factors early in their lives that prepared them for school such as encouraging and helping them to learn to read. The parents also limited the time that their children watched TV. Their parents monitored their homework. Though some of their parents could not help them with their homework and they had to rely on a sibling or others to help them, their parents made the arrangements for this to take place. Most of their parents were not college graduates, but they made sure their children achieved in school. The parents' determination to ensure that their children succeeded in school again supports the research that it is not the demographics but the protective factors in the home that make the difference.

The participants' parents prepared them to function well in school by having high expectations for them to perform well academically and

for their behavior to be appropriate. Their parents knew they had the intelligence to succeed, and they communicated that they expected their children to achieve in school. They also held high expectations about how children would behave in the home, at school, and in the community. They provided them help with their academic work when needed; however, they expected them to complete their own homework and their household chores. When they became of age to work during the summer, they were expected to work or participate in meaningful activities.

Participants' parents were clear about their expectations, the consequences for not meeting expectations, and the built-in rewards for following what was expected. Their parents' expectations, structure, and discipline provided standards for the participants' school, home, and community behavior, goals, achievement, and completion of tasks.

The parents assumed responsibility for providing learning opportunities prior to their children's entrance into school and throughout their years in school. Their parents were involved in the IEP and other parent meetings and attended activities in which their children participated. They went to the school to see about their children and actively participated by making decisions about their classes, school placements, and other issues that needed to be resolved to facilitate their children's education. They expected their children to have challenging classes. In situations where the parents felt the class or school was not meeting the needs of their children, they made arrangements to have them moved to more appropriate classes or schools. In cases where there were two parents in the home, both attended meetings, and if one was not available for reasons beyond their control, the available parent attended the meeting or activity. These were parents who actively participated in academic decision-making and other matters that impacted their children's future. The participation of their parents in their school activities let the participants know that their parents placed high value on their education.

Participation in community activities increases students' ability to effectively participate in groups and increases their awareness of community and world events. Participants' parents encouraged their participation in activities outside of the home. Their parents supported their children through their attendance or involvement in these activities, which provided the participants with leadership and interpersonal skills, spiritual training, and

cultural information. Their parents taught them racial and cultural pride through their own actions and words, and through involving them in cultural activities. Some of the participants participated in church and some in meaningful community, school organizations, and discussion groups. Their parents also attended their children's school and community activities. Spiritual training was important in the homes of three of the participants. Traditionally, the church has played a major role in the lives of African American families. The low number of participants who participated in church could be due to lack of interpreters in the churches.

In postsecondary programs, the participants maintained close ties to their parents, who continued to provide them with encouragement, support, and praise for their accomplishments. The participants continued to seek their advice and feedback. Their parents modeled competent behaviors, and the participants replicated and internalized many of their parents' characteristics and behaviors, which they found to be helpful to them in achieving in school, postsecondary programs, and the community.

Some of the participants' parents could sign. In other situations, the parents depended on siblings and school personnel to communicate in sign language for them. To learn sign language, some parents, siblings, and extended family members attended sign classes. Though two participants did not have direct sign language communication with their parents, they felt that their parents supported their education because they took steps in their school placements, monitored their progress, and followed up on educational recommendations to ensure that their children received top quality educations. Participants still had close relationships with their parents; however, they wished that they could have communicated directly to their parents about some of their concerns, joys, and accomplishments. Though both participants were able to achieve in school and graduate from college, they highly recommend that parents learn how to sign so that they can communicate with their children. The participant who did not understand the reason her mother sent her out of state to school could have been told if her mother had been able to communicate with her in sign language.

Participants' deafness was accepted by all members of the family, but it is also very important for parents to learn how to use sign language. It is vital that school personnel, when working with students whose parents do not sign, advocate for sign language programs for parents within the school

system that are held at times convenient for parents who have minimum wage jobs. Also, there is a need for the classes to focus on vocabulary that will enable them to communicate with their children in daily living activities. In addition, school personnel must be careful not to judge parents as not caring about their children because they do not sign. It was found that the inability to sign by parents in this study did not stop their children from graduating from college. The two deaf participants whose parents did not know sign language, said their parents clearly cared about them, and the care and support that their parents demonstrated provided the protective factors needed for them to successfully transition through college.

Though the parents of the participants in this study provided them with the necessary protective factors to earn bachelor's degrees, there is a large group of African American deaf and hard of hearing students that is functioning below grade level, dropping out of school, or graduating with certificates. Those students are not prepared to earn an adequate living for themselves and certainly are not prepared for postsecondary programs. Schools will need to take a leadership role in providing information to African American parents of deaf and hard of hearing students about protective factors that contribute to academic achievement, preparation for postsecondary programs, and availability of other programs that will prepare African American deaf and hard of students to earn enough income to take care of themselves.

### Individual Factors

The second finding was that most of the participants learned and developed character traits through interaction with their parents, who reinforced positive characteristics. The characteristics of the participants in this study have been consistently reported in the literature on resilient children (Garmezy, 1987; Masten, 1994; Werner & Smith, 1982). The participants possessed intelligence, self-esteem, faith, leadership skills, self-discipline, positive interpersonal skills, and a positive work ethic. They demonstrated a sense of humor, self-efficacy, confidence, and determination. For example, at the time they entered college, four of the participants had never interacted with large groups of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, had no sign skills, and did not know anything about Deaf culture. Yet they did not permit this lack of knowledge to stop them from pursuing their

degrees. They vigorously participated in peer support groups, immersed themselves in the Deaf culture, learned ASL, and gained an understanding of Deaf culture. They put forth the needed effort to socially and academically integrate themselves into the postsecondary program as much as they could, without help from the postsecondary program.

Their strong cultural identity was a major protective factor that was helpful to them in predominately White postsecondary programs. It helped them to avoid succumbing to inequitable treatment or stereotyping and enabled them to confront it. Their cultural pride also contributed to their determination to persevere through obstacles so they would not be added to the statistics on failure.

### Schools

The third finding was that both African American and White teachers were the primary agents in the school who provided protective factors that promoted the participants' educational opportunities and achievement. The majority of the participants felt that their teachers accepted them as African American deaf and hard of hearing students who could succeed in school. Schools for the deaf and mainstream school administrators need to ensure that teachers provide the caring and supportive environments, high expectations, and challenging coursework that helped the participants flourish in their social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Less frequently, African American and African mentors, a coach, and guidance counselors were discussed as being helpful to the participants. The lack of consistent involvement of guidance counselors in the transition planning for the participants presented a problem for four of them. Transition services should not be left to happenstance; this service should be assigned to designated persons who are highly qualified in transition planning and unbiased in providing postsecondary information. Lack of adequate transition services to African American deaf and hard of hearing students denies them the opportunity to learn how to plan effectively for their future education, and it is an indication of low expectations of them.

Though the four participants who were placed inappropriately in school were able to move from those schools, there are still other African American deaf and hard of hearing students who are inappropriately placed in low-level academic programs and receive little or no preparation for advanced

educational opportunities. This misplacement happens both in schools for the deaf and in mainstream programs, where students tend to be separated into different academic levels within the larger group, thereby depriving some students of challenging academic work. This, in itself, becomes an obstacle. It is important that schools for the deaf and mainstream programs begin to assess why such a large number of African American deaf and hard of hearing students are placed in low-level academic groups. From what we have learned from the participants and research on academic achievement, challenging coursework prepares students for postsecondary programs.

Three of the participants did not have guidance counselors or teachers to provide them with the guidance they needed to go to college. There is a need to assess the type of guidance African American students are receiving in schools for the deaf. The counseling staff continues to remain predominately White. Three participants in this study were out of school for more than a year due to lack of information and guidance about their college options. It should be clear that guidance counselors are not doing their jobs in a school if they do not serve all of the students. Schools need to develop methods to evaluate the type of services that are being delivered to African American deaf and hard of hearing students from counselors. Also, information should be given in an unbiased manner. The situation in which the counselor discouraged one of the participants from going to a mainstream program should not have happened. Students need to receive information and make decisions based on facts, not on the biases of counselors.

The lack of sensitivity and understanding of African American culture and Deaf culture were double obstacles for the participants. Schools for the deaf and mainstream programs must address these issues in professional training with staff. It is important for these students to be able to see counselors who understand and respect both cultures, since they are integral parts of the students' identities. Positive responses from teachers and staff to the students' African American culture provide a supportive and welcoming environment in which learning becomes easier and positive self-esteem is enhanced.

The participants recommended the hiring of more African American teachers and staff to serve as role models and mentors with whom they could discuss their concerns. African American students need successful African American deaf and hard of hearing persons that they can emulate.

### Transition Support

The fourth finding was that there was no coordinated effort to help the participants achieve academically in school, transition from one academic level to the next, prepare for postsecondary admissions, or graduate from postsecondary programs. In most situations, they, along with their parents, were basically left to figure out how to navigate the educational system on their own. This strongly supports the need for schools and postsecondary programs to establish coordinated and collaborative programs for incorporating protective factors into a unified approach to helping African American deaf and hard of hearing students to achieve in school. Without a systematic, consistent, inclusive, and collaborative approach to integrating resiliency-building tools into the education programs of all students, there will continue to be a wide gap between the graduation rates of African American deaf and hard of hearing students and their White peers.

### Postsecondary Programs

The fifth finding was that postsecondary programs did not have in place academic and social integration programs designed to facilitate African American deaf and hard of hearing students' adjustment and academic achievement. The participants arranged their own support groups—their peers. Their strong cultural identity was helpful to them in predominately White postsecondary programs because it helped them establish strong African American peer support groups to avoid succumbing to inequitable treatment or stereotyping, and to confront obstacles and accomplish in spite of them. Their cultural pride also contributed to them having the determination to persevere through adversities so they would not become college dropout statistics.

At the college level, the majority of the participants did not identify college professors as factors that enhanced their successful transition. Only one participant discussed receiving positive reinforcement from professors, and those professors were African American. The participants developed their own peer groups for support and as study groups. Although the participants were able to succeed, it seems clear from their comments that it would be very helpful for African American deaf and hard of hearing college students to be provided with more interaction with their professors

outside of the classroom for support, intellectual stimulation, guidance, and feedback about their performance.

There is a need to focus on college and university retention of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. The participants in this study were resilient, but what happens to students who do not have the same protective factors in their environments? Though the participants did not state that lack of teacher support was an obstacle at the college level, it was obvious that this was not a factor that contributed to their graduation from college. This may help to explain why there are a low number of African American students graduating from predominately White colleges that serve the deaf. Most of the participants had to look to their support groups or individual peers for help in adjusting to and remaining in college. They were resourceful in overcoming obstacles by forming peer support groups.

Many of the African American students who attend colleges and universities for the deaf do not graduate. Colleges and universities for the deaf must examine their policies and practices to identify ways that they can retain more African American deaf and hard of hearing students. One way would be to hire more African American administrators, professors, and staff to demonstrate that they are indeed a diverse and inclusive college or university. Diversity should be a strong part of the recruitment process and not remain as just a written statement. Having more African American staff will provide more mentors and role models for African American deaf and hard of hearing college students in those settings.

This leads to the second point. Interaction with faculty and staff provides intellectual stimulation and feedback as well as support that would be helpful to African American students. Colleges and universities should encourage all of their faculty and staff to interact with students in a manner that creates an atmosphere of support and high expectations for the students. Universities and colleges for the deaf can promote this type of atmosphere through training programs that focus on factors that contribute to a positive college environment and how professors can facilitate that atmosphere.

Universities also should establish formal peer advisors and mentors for students at the college level. The peer advisors—students from various ethnic groups who are succeeding in college—would advise new students as they transition into school, and the mentors would be college professors and staff from various ethnic groups. The college would provide training for both the peer advisors and the mentors. Gallaudet University has such a program.

### Community Factors

The sixth finding is that VR counselors gave the participants more support for transitioning into college than did school guidance counselors. VR counselors encouraged students to attend college and provided information about what to expect in college and how to access the resources needed to get into college. Schools need to become more actively involved in the transition process by designating specific staff members to provide African American deaf and hard of hearing students with information about colleges. Lack of funds for postsecondary programs has been listed as one of the leading reasons for African Americans failure to enter and continue in postsecondary programs (Jones, 2001, p. 9). Failure to provide postsecondary and financial information is an indication of low expectations of this group of students to attend college. Schools and postsecondary programs need to collaborate with community organizations in providing for students' financial needs and other school-related services.

Churches and cultural organizations also played a role in some of the participants' transitions. Being involved in cultural activities helped participants to develop leadership skills, understand others, and understand themselves. Churches provide students with spiritual understanding and support.

### Family Demographics

The seventh finding of this study was that demographic factors often associated with underachievement did not prevent this group of participants from succeeding in school and graduating from college. Their ethnic group as well as their deafness could have become risk factors for them, and some of their other demographic data could have presented obstacles for them that could have impeded their progress and resulted in their failure in

school. However, their families provided protective factors early in their lives that enabled them to graduate from postsecondary programs.

## Summary

Parents, schools, and community stakeholders need to start putting protective factors in place. Tests results and future research will show whether the resilience model is effective. Protective factors are needed to build resilience in every phase of life. Research has shown that protective factors are the "keys" that open the doors to academic accomplishments regardless of the school, postsecondary program, or the demographics of the child's family. Parents, schools, and postsecondary programs need to be sure that each African American deaf and hard of hearing student has the "keys" to academic success and other life goals. The protective factors discussed in this study have been found to be effective in the achievement of students from various ethnic groups and students with different disabilities.

# Appendix

## Research Design and Method

Researchers using qualitative methodology are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed and how they make sense of their world and their experiences (Merriam, 1988). Because qualitative research is a method for producing knowledge about the world, a major consideration in selecting a research topic is the researcher's philosophical orientation, which includes the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality, knowledge, and how knowledge is produced.

### Philosophical Paradigm and Assumptions

The philosophical foundation for this research is the emancipatory paradigm. The researcher selected this paradigm for the following reasons (Mertens, 2005; Mertens, Farley, Madison, & Singleton, 1994):

1. It emphasizes the influence of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender, and disability values in the construction of reality.
2. It addresses the need to examine critically what is taken to be real by exploring from an ideological perspective how this reality perpetuates social structures and policies that are oppressive.
3. It empowers the study's participants by actively involving them in the study environment through addressing political and oppressive issues that directly affect them.
4. It allows the participants to tell their story in their own language and, in many situations, within their own environment.
5. It posits that the relationship between the researcher and the participant is interactive. The relationship is expected to be empowering to the participants in the study.
6. The philosophical foundation of the emancipatory paradigm includes data from a diverse group of people and reflects multiple positions of individuals within the various populations. It includes "diverse

voices" from the margin and places primary importance on the lives and experiences of the diverse groups that traditionally have not been included in decision-making, including women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. This paradigm analyzes how and why inequities based on gender, race or ethnicity, and disability are reflected in asymmetric power relationships and examines how results of social inquiry on inequities are linked to political and social action.

7. It uses an emancipatory theory to develop the program theory and the research approach.

The researcher using this approach does not have one method. In this study, interviews, field notes, and demographic surveys were used to gather data from the nine participants. Because this type of research is based on a participatory approach, the participants in the study were viewed as important in the planning, conducting, analysis, interpretation, and use of the research. Emphasis was placed on the need to avoid sexist, racist, or other biased results (Mertens, 2005). A case study method was used to explore and identify possible patterns in protective factors that contribute to successful transition to post-secondary programs. This inquiry gave successful deaf and hard of hearing persons the opportunity to be understood and provided data for African American deaf and hard of hearing persons to be seen as a heterogeneous group of successful persons. It possibly can contribute to a successful transition model for schools serving African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

## Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to serve as a basis for development of this study. The method used in the pilot study involved one interview, one observation, and document review. This pilot study provided information that was useful in writing a proposal for a full study of transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents through post-secondary programs. The researcher found that an interview time of one and a half hours would not be sufficient for a full research study. A follow-up session to clarify and gather additional data was added for data collection for the dissertation. The researcher made the decision that hand notes would not be taken because this interfered with the flow of the interview. The

researcher could not look at the participant's signs and give full attention to the deaf participant while taking hand notes. Videotape allowed for smoother communication between the subject and the researcher. Notes were written immediately following the interview.

The participant extensively discussed experiences during the first year of college. This was not anticipated, but this information was helpful in understanding the impact of the participant's college experiences that contributed to graduation. The first year of college is a time when many students drop out of college, so additional questions related to college experiences were added.

There were themes related to protective and risk factors in the successful transition of one African American deaf male to a postsecondary program that emerged from this pilot study. These protective and risk factors are in the literature on resilience and educational achievement (Masten, 1994). The conclusions from the pilot study indicated that there were protective factors in the home and school that contributed to successful transition of this participant. Risk factors that interfered with college progress were also identified.

## Use of Case Study Method

The researcher used a multiple case study design (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). The case study approach is a naturalistic research strategy in behavioral and social sciences that allows for an understanding of complex social phenomena. Case studies provide data on individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena (Yin, 1994). The participants presented their life stories using a life history methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher found that all of the participants were enthusiastic about telling their stories of how they had overcome obstacles and succeeded in graduating from colleges and universities. In signing their stories, it was apparent that the participants had a strong awareness of the challenges that African Americans face in our society, and this made their determination to succeed even stronger. Their case reports described their perceptions about their homes, schools, communities, events, processes, and programs that impacted their transition.

Interview transcripts, memos, field notes, and research journal information were used to collect the data. The coding process was started during

the interviews, continued throughout the interviews, and was done after each of the interviews. The coding and comparative analysis provided the criteria for interpreting the findings (Mertens, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Case studies contribute to an understanding of distinctive differences in individuals, programs, experiences, or settings (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). The data in this inquiry were derived from the participants' stories based on their perspectives of their experiences as students who transitioned successfully into postsecondary programs and graduated. This inquiry focused on the distinctive differences in factors that contributed to successful transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. This allowed the researcher, who had experiences as an administrator and social worker in educational settings, the opportunity to understand the factors that have influenced and challenged the participants in their transitioning through postsecondary programs. The participants' stories may assist administrators and educators by providing insights that may be useful in the development of policies, procedures, programs, and classroom practices.

## Selecting the Cases

The nine participants in the case study were selected through the following characteristics and criteria:

1. The participant must be an African American deaf or hard of hearing person who has successfully completed a four-year college program.
2. The participant must meet the attempted balance of the sample based on gender and deaf and hard of hearing status.
3. The participant must agree to be interviewed in depth for an hour and a half session with a follow-up session for an hour and a half.
4. The participant must be willing to read drafts of the interview transcripts and a draft of the written report of their individual case.

The researcher selected samples with the goal of identifying cases that were rich with information and would allow the researcher to study the samples in depth. This inquiry used a purposeful sampling strategy (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 1990) called "snowball" sampling, which enables the researcher to ascertain who has information that is significant to the study. Key informants are defined as persons who can provide the researcher with recommendations of individuals who fit the criteria for the inquiry

and who would possibly participate in the inquiry. The key informants, professional individuals in the Deaf community, both African American and White, were contacted to obtain names of African American deaf and hard of hearing men and women who had graduated from four-year colleges or universities. They were asked to provide names of persons who would possibly be interested in and willing to describe and discuss their school, family, cultural, and other experiences that facilitated their transition from high school and graduation from college. The key informants were persons whom the researcher knew personally, who had graduated from a college or university, and were active in the Deaf community, education, and other related organizations. Some of the key informants who met the criteria were asked to participate in the inquiry. Also, they were asked to provide names and phone numbers of other possible participants who had transitioned from high school to college and graduated. Prospective participants were called on TTY by the researcher and invited to participate in the research. The researcher continued telephoning persons whose names were given as prospective participants until ten persons agreed to participate in the research. The researcher started with a somewhat short list of possible participants. The list increased (like a snowball) with the addition of names through the referrals of key informants (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 1990). To try to obtain a representative sample, the researcher tried to obtain an equal number of women and men and deaf and hard of hearing participants. Initially there were six females and four males in the study. One female withdrew from the study due to other commitments. This is a very busy group of professionals who are involved in many activities as well as persons who have careers that are rapidly advancing. Four of the participants were enrolled in graduate school, three were enrolled in master's degree programs, and one was enrolled in a doctoral program. Two of the participants had earned master's degrees.

The African American Deaf and hard of hearing community is very small, and it becomes even smaller when focusing on African American Deaf and hard of hearing professionals. Due to the small number of professionals, most of them know each other and are known in the Deaf community. Special care was taken to conceal the identities of the participants because they could easily be identified through the types of schools they attended, occupations, and their community affiliations.

Initially, the researcher decided to use fictitious names in the study. However, it was decided that the fictitious names would be eliminated in favor of a composite of the case data. Choosing this method rather than presentation of individual cases helped to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

## Data Collection

In this inquiry, the researcher had planned to use multiple sources of evidence: a demographic survey, interview data, and high school and college yearbooks. However, only one of the participants had his yearbook; therefore, this source of evidence was eliminated. The interviews, field notes, and demographic survey were used to corroborate information from the participants and to provide information about factors that contributed to their transitions through a post-secondary program.

To gather demographic data, each participant was asked to complete a brief demographic survey. The demographic information, including place of residence, place of birth, age, family data, and educational data, was used to help the researcher understand and describe the person in the context of the environment in which they grew up and their present environment. The demographic information was kept confidential and has been reported in a way to protect the participants' identity. To further protect the participants, a composite presentation of the case data is presented in the study. The demographic data was destroyed at the conclusion of the project.

Each participant was interviewed twice, and both interviews were videotaped. The total time of interviews ranged from 1 hour and 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes. Following each interview, the researcher transcribed the videotape and wrote a case analysis and case report. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. The interviews were informal, which allowed each of the participants to interpret and respond to questions from his or her perspective (Mertens, 2005). The mode of communication for the interview was the mode of communication that was the primary language used by the participants. The researcher is fluent in the use of sign language, and in all cases, the interviews were conducted in sign language because this was the primary mode of communication used by the participants. In conducting this research, the researcher was

sensitive to the culture of the participants in the study and demonstrated respect for each individual. This included the use of the appropriate mode of communication, dress apparel, and behavior. The fact that this researcher is African American, related in a natural manner, and is fluent in sign language was instrumental in creating a comfort level during the interview that allowed the participants to communicate freely about their experiences. This helped to facilitate the interviews and accounts for the in-depth and candid information received from the participants that resulted in a detailed description for the study. The participants made statements such as, "I can trust you with this information and trust you to present the information accurately." Open-ended questions were used as guides during the interview, which allowed each participant to describe events in his or her own way and did not restrict answers. This method is flexible and provided each participant with the time needed to explain and elaborate when there was a need to do so.

A brief meeting was held with them prior to the interview to provide information about the research, to review, and to obtain their signature on the consent form. The interview was videotaped to ensure that the researcher gave an accurate description of what each participant intended, and the videotape provided data that the researcher may have overlooked during the interviewing process. Only the researcher viewed the videotape.

## Data Analysis

Qualitative studies of cases have criteria for judging quality. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, and emancipatory (Mertens, 2005). The case study design provides a method of exploring different theories, which is an ongoing process for supporting reliability (Yin, 1998).

The time allotted for interviews permitted prolonged and substantial engagement, which allowed the researcher to determine if the participants' responses had become similar or repetitive. Each participant allocated two 80-minute time intervals for the interviews. In addition to the interviews, a peer debriefer, a journal of progress, member checks, and triangulation were utilized. When the cases did not fit the categories of the questions that the research had established and new themes occurred, the

researcher sought additional data for negative data analysis. For example, the researcher found that many of the participants relied on their peers in college instead of their college professors as sources of help. The researcher sought more data on the protective factors that their peers provided.

A peer debriefer should ask probing questions to help the researcher face his or her own values and to guide the next steps in the study (Mertens, 2005). The researcher met with a peer debriefer during the time that interviews were being conducted and while case reports were being written. The debriefer assisted with the case report editing process and chapter summaries, a process that helped the researcher confront her bias and guided the steps of the study. The debriefer was helpful in challenging the researcher by critically reviewing her line of thinking so she remained open to developing constructions that did not fit what she envisioned at the beginning of the research. The debriefer saw parts of the raw data and parts of the transcripts. However, no identifying information was on the transcripts. The debriefer for this study is a person who has expertise in qualitative analysis and in the research topic, transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents (Mertens, 2005).

Member checks are the "most important criteria in establishing credibility" (Mertens, 2005, p. 182). These checks help the researcher verify with the participants that the developing themes from the data collected and analyzed are what the participants intended in their responses. The researcher scheduled time with the participants to review the transcripts and summarized data. This procedure provided an avenue for clarifying the participants' perspectives and helped to enhance and more accurately present the information participants provided. Active involvement of the participants in review of the data enabled the researcher to handle controversial issues that were discussed during the data collection. Each participant was asked to review drafts of his or her case report to see if they accurately represented the data he or she had presented to the researcher. All of the participants reviewed drafts of their interviews. In some cases, the participants thought of additional comments that they wanted to share with the researcher while reviewing their data. The researcher, using field notes, documented those comments. Member checks were used in the collecting and analysis of data for the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 2005). All of the participants were offered the opportunity to review the

final draft of their summaries in the composite report. Six of the participants stated that they were satisfied with the researcher presenting the data without further review. Three of the participants reviewed the summaries of their excerpts in the report and made very positive comments about how the information was presented.

Triangulation provides a check for consistency of evidence across sources of data by collecting data from different sources or methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 2005). The methods used in this study were the interviews, field notes, and the demographic surveys. The researcher also relied on her doctoral committee, which consisted of five professors who have provided guidance in the conceptual framework, methodological design, and the analysis. They provided an insider educational and research perspective. The peer debriefer provided an outside perspective.

In qualitative research, the burden of transferability is left to the reader. The reader determines the degree of similarity between the study and their own personal context. The responsibility of the researcher is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make that judgment (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 2003). The multiple cases provided sufficient detail related to the research questions that resulted in an in-depth and rich description of the phenomenon. The researcher made every effort to collect detailed and complete data that provide a picture of what factors contributed to the successful transition of African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 1994). The data provide the reader with details that produce the voices and interactions of the participants. The reader has a feeling of experiencing the events that are illustrated (Creswell, 1998, p. 184).

Emerging patterns suggesting the importance of examining additional data was expected and documented. A case study protocol was maintained to track the data so that as new data emerged it could be analyzed and documented (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 1998).

In this study, the peer debriefer was able to review the field notes and parts of the transcribed interview transcripts to determine if the conclusions reached were supported by the data (Mertens, 1994). Confirmability is a "chain of evidence" that allows qualitative data to be tracked to its source, and the logic that is used to interpret the data is explicit (Yin, 1994). The field notes, demographic surveys, and interview transcripts

from the pilot study provided a chain of evidence that was maintained during the collection and analysis of data for the study (Mertens, 2005).

Ultimately, this research provided an avenue for the voices of successful African American deaf and hard of hearing persons to be heard and to offer information about what important factors contribute to the successful transition into and through postsecondary programs.

# References


Allen, T. E. (1994a). School and demographic predictors of transition success: A longitudinal assessment. In T. E. Allen, K. H. Lam, B. W. Rawlings, D. E. Rose, & A. N. Schildroth, *Young deaf adults and the transition from high school to postsecondary careers* (Gallaudet Research Institute Occasional Paper 94-1, pp. 61–70). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University.

Allen, T. E. (1994b). Who are the deaf and hard of hearing students leaving high school and entering postsecondary education? In Plavin Institute Project, *A comprehensive evaluation of the postsecondary educational opportunities for students who are deaf and hard of hearing* (pp. 1–14). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet Research Institute.

Allen, T. E., Lam, K. H., Rawlings, B., Rose, D. E., & Schildroth, A. N. (1994). *Young deaf adults and the transition from high school to postsecondary careers* (Gallaudet Research Institute Occasional Paper 94-1, pp. 1–70). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University.

Allen, T. E., Rawlings, B., & Schildroth, A. N. (1989). *Deaf students and the school-to-work transition*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Allen, W. & Haniff, N. (1991). Race, gender, and academic performance in U.S. higher education. In W. R. Allen, E. G. Epps. & Haniff, N. Z. (Eds.). *College in Black and White: African American students in predominately White and historically Black public universities* (pp. 95–110). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

American Educational Research Association. (2004, Fall). Closing the gap: High achievement for students of color. *Essential information for education policy*. Retrieved July 4, 2006, from http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Journals_and_Publications/Research_Points/RP_Fall-04.pdf.

Anzul, M., Evans, J. F., King, R,. & Tellier-Robinson, D. (2001). Moving beyond a deficit perspective with qualitative research methods. *Exceptional Children*, *67*(2), 235–249.

Aramburo, A. J. (1989). Sociolinguistic aspects of the Black Deaf community. In C. Lucas (Ed.), *The sociolinguistics of the Deaf community* (pp. 103–119). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Baker, G. (1983). *Planning and organizing for multicultural instruction*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Baldwin, A.L., Baldwin, C., & Cole, R. E. (1990). Stress-resistant families and stress-resistant children. In J. Rolf, A. Masten, D. Cicchetti, K. Neuchterlein, & S. Weintraub (Eds.), *Risk and protective factors in the development of psychopathology* (pp. 257–280). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Benard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school and community*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Benard, B., Amsden, L., & Diaz, M. (2002). *Resilience & youth development module*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office.

Bodner-Johnson, B., & Sass-Lehrer, M. (1999). *Family-school relationships: Concepts and premises*. Washington, D.C.: Pre-College National Mission Programs.

Borum, V. (2001). *Culture, disability, and the family: An exploratory study and empowerment perspective of African American parents of deaf and hard of hearing children*. Published doctorial dissertation, Howard University, Washington, D.C..

Boykin, A. W. (1979). Black psychology and the research process: Keeping the baby but throwing out the bath water. In A Boykin, A. Franklin, & J. Yates (Eds.), *Research directions of Black psychologists*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Boykin, A. W. (1983). The academic performance of Afro American children. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motives* (pp. 324–371). San Francisco: Freeman.

Boykin, A. W. (1986). The triple quandary and the schooling of Afro-American children. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children: New Perspectives* (pp. 57–92). Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum.

Boykin, A. W. (2000). The talent development model of schooling: Placing students at promise for academic success. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At-Risk*, *5*(1&2), 3–25.

Boykin, A. W., & Toms, F. D. (1985). Black child socialization: Conceptual framework. In H. McAdoo & J. McAdoo (Eds.), *Black children: Social, educational, and parental environments* (pp. 33–51). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Britt-Fries, S., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at Black and a White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25, 315–330.

Brown, J. H., D'Emidio-Caston, P., & Benard, B. (2001). *Resilience Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Christensen, K. M., & Delgado, G. L. (1993). *Multicultural issues in deafness*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Clark, M. L. (1991). Social identity, peer relations, and academic competence of African American adolescents. *Education and Urban Society*, *24*(1), 41–52.

Clark, R. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor Black children succeed or fail*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clark, R. (2004, October 30). Unity, A&M style. *The Dallas Morning News*, p. 3E.

Cohen, O. P. (1991). At-risk deaf adolescents. *Volta Review*, *93*(5), 57–72.

Cohen, O. P., Fischgrund, M. A., & Redding, R. (1990). Deaf children from ethnic linguistic and racial minority backgrounds. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *135*(2), 67–73.

Comer, J., Haynes, N., Joyer, E., & BenAvie, M. (1996). *Rallying the whole village: The Comer process for reforming education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Comer, J. P. (1980). *School power*. New York: The Free Press.

Cooper, R. (1999). Preparing students of the new millennium. *Journal of Negro Education*, *68*(1), 1–3.

Corbett, D., Wilson, B., & Williams B. (2000). *Assumptions, actions, and performance: Final Report* (OERI Field-Initiated Studies Grant 1996–1999).

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Danek, M. M., & Busby, H. (1999). *Transition planning and programming: Empowerment through partnership*. Washington, D.C.: Pre-College National Mission Programs.

Denbo, S. J., & Beaulieu, L. M. (2002). *Improving schools for African American students*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Edelman, M. W. (2002). Introduction. In S. J. Denbo & L. M. Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving schools for African American students*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Epstein, J. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *76*(9), 701–712.

Fine, M. (1993). Making controversy: Who's "at-risk?" In R. Wollons (Ed.), *Children at risk in America: History, concepts, and public policy* (pp. 91–109). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Ford, B. A. (1992). Multicultural education training for special educators working with African American youth. *Exceptional Children*, *59*(2), 107–114.

Ford, D. Y. (1993). Black student's achievement orientation as a function of perceived family achievement orientation and demographic variables. *Journal of Negro Education*, *62*(1), 47–63.

Ford, D. Y. (2002). The recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education: Beyond deficit ideologies. In S. J. Denbo & L. M. Beaulieu

(Eds.), *Improving schools for African American students* (pp. 31–42). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Fordham, S. (1988). Racelessness as a factor in Black students' school success: Pragmatic strategy or pyrrhic victory? *Harvard Education Review*, *58*(1), 54–84.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of "acting White." *The Urban Review*, *18*(3), 176–206.

Fort Wayne Community Schools. (2003). *Closing the achievement gap one child at a time*, 1–16. Fort Wayne, IN: Author.

Gallaudet University (2000–2004). Gallaudet university enrollment reports (2000–2004). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University, Office of Planning.

Gallaudet University. (2003). Gallaudet University *Campus Climate*: President's update of the Climate Process (9/17/03). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Campus Climate Papers.

Gallaudet University Division of Academic Affairs. (March 12, 2004). *New directions for academic affairs*. Retrieved January 26, 2004, from http://academicaffairs.gallaudet.edu/planning/documents/NewDirectionsforAcademicAffairs_000.pdf.

Garmezy, N. (1971). Vulnerability research and the issue of primary prevention. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *41*, 101–116.

Garmezy, N. (1987). Stress-resistant children: The search for protective factors. In J. E. Stevenson (Ed.), *Recent research in developmental psychopathology* (*Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* book suppl. 4, pp. 212–233). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Gartner, A., & Lipsky, D. K. (1993). Children at-risk: Students in special education. In R. Wollons (Ed.), *Children at risk in America: History, concepts, and public policy* (pp. 157–182). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Gay, G. (1989). Ethic minorities and educational equality. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 167–188). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gordon, E. W. (2004).The state of education in Black America. In L. A. Daniels, R. J. Frazier, D. Brown, & S. K. Mayeri (Eds.), *In the state of Black America* (pp. 97–112. New York: National Urban League.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guild, P. B. (2002). An educational leader's guide to culture and learning style. In Denbo, S. J. & L. M. Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving schools for African American students*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Hale, J. E. (1982). *Black children: Their roots, culture and learning styles*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Hall, J. M. (1998). The association between racelessness and achievement among African American deaf adolescents. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *143*(1), 55–63.

Henderson, N., & Milstein, M. (1996). *Resiliency in schools: Making it happen for students and educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hinderlie, H. H., & Kenny, M., (2002). Attachment, social support, and college adjustment among Black students at predominantly White universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, *3*(43), 330–338.

Horn, L., Berktold, J., & Bobbitt, L. (1999). *Students with disabilities in postsecondary education: A profile of preparation, participation, and outcomes*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Hrabowski, F. A., Mato, K. I., & Greif, G. L. (1998). *Beating the odds: Raising academically successful African American males*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hrabowski, F. A., Mato, K. I., & Greif, G. L. (2002). *Overcoming the odds: Raising academically successful African American women*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton, A. R., & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education*, *21*(3), 279–302.

Irvine, J. J. (1990). *Black students and school failure: Policies, practices and prescriptions*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Irvine, J. J. (1985). Teacher communication patterns as related to the race and sex of the student. *Journal of Educational Research*, *78*(6), 338–345.

James, L. M. (2001). Developing academic warriors: Things that parents, administrators, and faculty should know. In L. Jones (Ed.), *Retaining African Americans in higher education* (pp. 77–92). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Jones, L. (2001). Creating an affirming culture to retain African-American students during the post–affirmative action era in higher education. In L. Jones (Ed.), *Retaining African Americans in higher education* (pp. 1–19). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

King, G. A., Brown, E. G., & Smith, L. K. (2003). *Resilience: Learning from people with disabilities and the turning points in their lives*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

King, S. H. (1993). The limited presence of African American teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, *63*(2), 115–149.

Kluwin, T. N. (1994). The interaction of race, gender and social class effects in the education of deaf students. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *149*(5), 465–471.

Knowledge Is Power Program. (2006). *All of our students are climbing the mountain to college*. Retrieved May 13, 2006, from http://www.kippschools.org.

Kochman, T. (1981). *Black and White styles in conflict*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Kuykendall, C. (2001). Improving Black student achievement by enhancing student's self-image. *The Mid-Atlantic equity consortium*. Retrieved January 22, 2007, from http://www.maec.org/achieve/achieve.html.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994a). *The dream keepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994b). What we can learn from multicultural education research. *Educational Leadership*, *51*(8), 22–26.

Lang, H. G. (2002). Higher education for deaf students: Research priorities in the new millennium. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, *7*(4), 267–280.

Lang, H. G., & Stinson, M.S. (1982). Career education and occupational status of deaf persons: Concepts, research and implications. In J. Christiansen & J. Egelston-Dodd (Eds.), *Socio-economic status of the deaf population*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University.

Legler, R. (2004). *Perspectives on the gaps: Fostering the academic success of minority and low-income students*, Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory at Learning Point Associates.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Losen, D. J., & Orefield, G. (2002). *Racial inequity in special education*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights project at Harvard University.

Lynn, M., Johnson, C., & Hassan, K. (1999). Raising the critical conscious of African American students in Baldwin hills: A portrait of an exemplary African American male teacher. *Journal of Negro Education*, *68*(1), 42–53.

MacLeod-Gallinger, J. (1993, April). *Deaf minorities: Have they a double liability?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Madison, A. M. (Ed.) (1992). *Minority issues in program evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Masten, A. S. (1994). Resilience in individual development: Successful adaptation despite risk and adversity. In M. C. Wang & E. W. Gordon (Eds.), *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects* (pp. 3–25). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and Psychopathology*, *2*, 425–444.

Masten, A., & Coatsworth, D. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American Psychologist*, *53*(2), 205–220.

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Meadow-Orlans, K. P., & Sass-Lehrer, M. (1995). Support services for families with children who are deaf: Challenges for professionals. *Topics In Early Childhood Special Education*, *15*, 314–334.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mertens, D. M., Farley, J., Madison, A. M., & Singleton, P. (1994). Diverse voices in evaluation practice: Feminists, minorities, and persons with disabilities. *Evaluation Practice*, *15*(2),123–129.

Mincy, R. B. (Ed.). (1994). *Nurturing young Black males: Challenges to agencies, programs, and social policy*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

Mitchell, W., & Conn, C. P. (1985). *Power of positive students*. New York: Morrow.

Mooney, M., & Scholl, L. (2002, April 1–6). Profiles of resilience: Students with disabilities in Wisconsin's youth apprenticeship program. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Moores, D. F., & Oden, C. W. (1977). Educational needs of Black deaf children. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *122*(3), 313–318.

Morial, M. (2003). Black families matter. In L. A. Daniels, R. J. Frazier, D. Brown, & S. K. Mayeri (Eds.), *In the state of Black America* (pp. 9–12). New York: National Urban League.

Morley, K. (2003). Fitting in by race/ethnicity: The social and academic integration of diverse students at a large predominantly White university. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *5*(2), 147–174. Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing.

National Technical Institute for the Deaf (Rochester Institute of Technology). (2003, December 12). *NTID fiscal year 2003 annual report*. Retrieved October 26, 2004, from http://www.ntid.rit.edu/media/annualreport.php.

Nelson-LeGall, S., & Jones, E. (1990). Cognitive-motivational influences on children's help seeking. *Child Development*, *61*, 581–589.

Nettle, M. T. (1991). Racial similarities and differences in the predictors of college student achievement. In N. Z. Haniff (Ed.), *College in Black and White* (pp. 75–94). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping Track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case analysis of six African American high school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, *34*(4), 593–629.

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (2006). *Frequently asked questions about RSA*. Retrieved July 13, 2006, from http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/faq.html

Ogbu, J. U. (1978). *Minority education and caste: The American system in cross cultural perspective*. New York: Academic Press.

Ogbu, J. U. (1986). The consequences of the American caste system. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children* (pp. 19–55). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ogbu, J. U. (1987). Variability in minority school performance: A problem in search of an explanation. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *18*(4), 312–334.

Ogbu, J. U. (1995). Understanding cultural diversity and learning. In J. A. Banks, B. McGee, & A. Cherry. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 498–524). New York: Macmillan.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA. Sage.

Rawlings, B. (1994). Postsecondary education: Its impact and outcomes. In T. E. Allen, K. H. Lam, B. W. Rawlings, D. E. Rose, & A. N. Schildroth, *Young deaf adults and the transition from high school to postsecondary careers* (pp. 17–31). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University.

Richman, J. M., Rosenfeld, L. B., & Bowen, G. L (1998). Social support for adolescents at-risk of school failure. *Social Work*, *43*(4), 309–323.

Rose, D. E. (1994). Relationship between academic performance on an achievement test and later postsecondary outcomes. In T. E. Allen, K. H. Lam, B. W. Rawlings, D. E. Rose, & A. N. Schildroth. *Young deaf adults and the transition from high school to postsecondary careers* (pp. 49–60). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University.

Rutter, M. (1979). Protective factors in children's responses to stress and disadvantage. In M. W. Kent & J. E. Rolf (Eds.), *Primary prevention of psychopathology: Social competence in children* (vol. 3, pp. 49–74). Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Rutter, M. (1984, March). Resilient children. *Psychology Today*, 57–65.

Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *147*, 598–611.

Rutter, M. (1990). Psychological resilience and protective mechanisms. In J. Rolf, A. S. Masten, D. Cicchetti, K. H. Nuechterlein, & S. Weintraub (Eds.), *Risk and protective factors in the development of psychopathology* (pp. 181–214). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sanders, M. G. (1997). Overcoming obstacles: Academic achievement as a response to racism and discrimination. *Journal of Negro Education*, *66*(1), 83–93.

Schildroth, A. N., & Hotto, S. A. (1995). Race and ethnic background in the annual survey of deaf and hard of hearing children and youth. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *140*, 96–99.

Schroedel, J. G., Watson D., & Ashmore, D. H. (2003). A national research agenda for the postsecondary education of deaf and hard of hearing students. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *148*(2), 67–73.

Scott-Jones, D. (l987). Mother as teacher in the families of high and low achieving low income Black first graders. *Journal of Negro Education*, *56*, 21–34.

Sedlacek, W. E. (1983). Teaching minority students. In J. H. Cones III, J. F. Noonan, & D. Janha (Eds.), *New directions for teaching and learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shaffer, S., Ortman, P. E., & Denbo, S. J. (2002). The effects of racism, socioeconomic class, and gender on the academic achievement of African American students. In S. J. Denbo & L. M. Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving schools for African American students*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Slater, R. B., Clarke, C. A., & Gelb, C. R. (2003, Autumn). The nation's colleges show a modest improvement in African American graduation rates, but a huge racial gap remains. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, *41*, 109–117.

Solorzano, D. G. (1992). An exploratory analysis of the effects of race, class and gender on student and parent mobility aspirations. *Journal of Negro Education*, *61*, 30–44.

Spencer, M. B, Dornbusch, S. M., & Mont-Reynaud, R. (1990). Challenges in studying minority youth. In S. S. Feldman & G. R. Elliott (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 144–146). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

SRI International. (1993). *The National Longitudinal Transition Study for the U.S. Office of Special Education*. Menlo Park, CA: Author. Retrieved January 22, 2007, from http://www.sri.com/policy/cehs/publications/dispub/nlts/nltssum.html.

SRI International. (2003). *NLTS2 home and news*. Retrieved February 1, 2003, from http://www.sri.com/policy/cehs/nltssum.html.

Steinberg, L., Dornbusch, S. M., & Brown, B. B. (1992). Ethnic differences in adolescent achievement: Ecological perspective. *American Psychologist*, *47*, 773–729.

Stinson, M. S., & Walter, G. G. (1992). Persistence in college. In S. B. Foster & G. G. Walter (Eds.), *Deaf students in postsecondary education* (pp. 43–64). New York: Routledge.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Swadener, B. B. (1995). Children and families "at promise": Destructing the discourse of risk. In B. B. Swadener & S. Lubeck (Eds.), *Children and families "at promise": Destructing the discourse of risk* (pp. 17–49). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Symonds, K. W. (2004). Using data to close the achievement gaps. In R. Legler (Ed.), *Perspectives on the gaps: Fostering the academic success of minority and low-income students* (pp. 10–22). Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.

Tatum, D. B. (1997). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

Taylor, A. R. (1991). Social competence and the early school transition: Risk and protective factors for African-American children. *Education and Urban Society*, *24*(1), 15–26.

Taylor, R. D. (1994). Risk and resilience: Contextual influences on the development of African-American adolescents. In M. C. Wang & E. W. Gordon (Eds.), *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects* (pp. 3–25). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Taylor, T. (1995). *Promoting cultural diversity and cultural competency*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center

Thandiwe, N. (2002). Middle schools: African American children at the crossroads. In S. J. Denbo & L. M. Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving schools for African American students* (pp. 219–234). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Thompson, G. L. (2003). *What African American parents want educators to know*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Tidwell, B. J. (2000). Party progress and prospects: Racial inequalities in economic well-being. In L. A. Daniels (Ed.), *The state of Black America 2000* (pp. 287–316). Washington, D.C.: National Urban League.

Tinto, V. (1975). Drop-out from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Education Research*, *45*(1), 89–125.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed). Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Traxler, C. (1989). The role of assessment in placing deaf students in academic and vocational courses. In Allen, T. E., Rawlings, B., & Schildroth, A. (Eds.), *Deaf students and the school-to-work transition* (pp. 141–153). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Trent, S. C., Artiles, A. J., & Englert, C. S. (1998). From deficit thinking to social constructivism: A review of theory, research and practice in special education. In P. Pearson & A. Iran-Nejad (Eds.), *Review of Research in Education* (pp. 277–307). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

University of Virginia. (2004, August). *University of Virginia Office of African-American Affairs*. Retrieved December 14, 2004, from http://www.virginia.edu/oaaa/

Valentine, C. A. (1971). Deficit, difference, and bicultural models of Afro-American behavior. *Harvard Educational Review*, *41*(2), 137–157.

Viadero, D. (2000, March 22). Lags in minority achievement defy traditional explanations. *Education Week*, *1*, 18–22.

Wang, M. C., & Gordon, E. W. (Eds.). (1994). *Educational resilience in inner- city America: Challenges and prospects*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1994). Educational resilience in inner cities. In M. C. Wang & E. W. Gordon (Eds.), *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects* (pp. 45–71). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1994). Fostering educational resilience in inner-city schools. Retrieved February 19, 2005, from http://www.temple.edu/lss/htmlpublications/publications/pubs97-4.htm.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1982). *Vulnerable but invincible: A longitudinal study of resilient children and youth*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Williams, B. (2002). A no-excuses approach to closing the achievement gap. In S. J. Denbo & L. M. Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving schools for African American students* (pp. 71–80). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Winbourne, D. G. (1991). Perspectives on children "at risk": Cultural considerations and alternative educational approaches. In J. J. Harris III, C. A. Heid, D. G. Carter Sr., & F. Brown (Eds.), *Readings on the state of education in urban America* (pp. 251–265). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

Winfield, L. (1991). Resilience, schooling and development of African American youth: A conceptual framework. *Education and Urban Society*, *24*, 5–14.

Winfield, L. (1994). Developing resilience in urban youth. *North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)*. Retrieved December 10, 2002, from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le0win.htm

Yan, W. (1999). Successful African American students: The role of parental involvement. *Journal of Negro Education*, *68*(1), 5–11.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (1998). The abridged version of case study research. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *Handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 229–259). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

# Index

Please note that 'i' indicates an illustration and 't' indicates a table.


Academic achievement
  achievement gap, 1–2, 82–83
  obstacles to, 136–147
  protective factors, 85–86, 87t, 88–89
  and race, 72–73
  school factors, 82
  standards, 13
Academic advisors, 118, 125
Academic Affairs New Direction plan, 8
Academic Affairs Planning Committee, 8–9
Academic integration, definition of, 118
Acceptance, 21
Acknowledgement, 21
"Acting White," 71
Adaptation, 19
Administration
  academic success, 86, 87t, 88
  postsecondary factors, 112
  research recommendations, 168
  school environment, 85–86
  school factors, 87t
  school resilience program, 160
  student achievement, 16, 19–20
Admission, postsecondary, 116
Advanced Placement (AP) courses
  African American students, 1
  Gallaudet study, 99–100
Advice, 65
Advisors, 148
Advocacy
  resilience promotion, 65
  school resilience program, 158
  teacher's role, 145
African American church, 127, 132–134
African American community, 127–129. *See also* Community factors; Community organizations; Community stakeholders
African American culture. *See also* Cultural acceptance; Cultural pride
  personal information, 107
  respect for, 106
  school factors, 87t
  student differences, 106–107
African American deaf/hard of hearing students. *See also* Gallaudet University study
  achievement gap, 2, 3, 82–83
  and church, 132–134
  educational desires, 13–14
  inadequately prepared, 174
  insufficient research on, 38
  low achievement factors, 11–12
  low achievement impact, 14–17
  and postsecondary education, 115
  present status of, 7–8
  and the racial factor, 72–73
  research findings, 3, 6–7, 16
  research recommendations, 167–169
  resilience model, 151–152, 152i
  testing procedures, 14
  underservicing of, 10
African American family.
  and deaf/hard of hearing children, 39–40
  description of, 37–38
  extended support structure, 48–49
  facilitating academic transition, 144–145
  family pride, 73
  and postsecondary education, 117–118
  protective factors, 105
  research recommendations, 168
  resilience promotion, 65, 68–69

African American family *(continued)*
strengths of, 38–39
study conclusions, 170, 171–174
African American family demographics, 170, 179–180
African American identity, 69t, 69–70
African American students
achievement gap, 1–2, 82–83
barriers against, 104–105
and postsecondary education, 110
success factors, 2
African American teachers
postsecondary factors, 125–126
school factors, 93–94, 95, 97
value of, 92
Age
Gallaudet University study, 25
resilience research, 19
Amherst College graduation rates, 110
Assertiveness
effective strategy, 142
individual factors, 68, 69t, 79–80, 81
postsecondary characteristics, 117
Assistive technology devices, 136, 140–141
"At-risk"
resilience research, 17
term, 4, 5
At-risk population, school factors, 82
"At-risk" status
Kauai study, 18
stressors, 20
Attention deficit disorder, 22

Behavior, 42
"Blaming the victim syndrome," 5

Campus Climate Team and Work Groups, 8
Career education, 164–165
Career fairs, 165
Caregiver environment, 18
Caring about others, 68, 69t, 69–70, 77
Caring/supportive environment
and postsecondary education, 117–118, 126
postsecondary factor, 111
school resilience program, 163
Caring/supportive relationships
African American parents, 38–39
community factors, 127–128
family factors, 43, 44–49, 45t, 65
postsecondary education, 119–125
resilience program, 154–155, 155t
school factors, 87t, 89, 90–93
school professional factors, 91t
study conclusions, 171
VR services, 130–132
Case studies
research design, 183–184
selection criteria, 184–186
"Chain-of-evidence" analysis, 189–190
"Children first, as," 39
"Children placed at risk," 5
Coaches
postsecondary education, 118, 125
school factors, 90, 97
study conclusions, 175
Code-switch, 107
Colgate University, 110
Collaboration
resilience program approach, 154
resilience promotion, 21
school factors, 87t, 88
school resilience program, 158–159, 165
Colleges
enrollment rates, 7
graduation rates, 1, 82
and minority students, 109
participants' backgrounds, 34–36
and resilience programs, 156t, 157t, 167
study conclusions, 170, 177–179
Communication
academic obstacles, 137–138
academic skill development, 146–147
of African American parents, 38
facilitating academic transition, 144–145
family factors, 42–43, 45t, 49–50, 66
Gallaudet study method, 27–28, 32
resilience program model, 154–155, 155t
school factors, 87t, 89–90, 98
school professionals' protective factors, 91t
school resilience program, 161, 163
study conclusions, 173

Communication skills
individual protective factor, 68, 69t, 69–70
postsecondary characteristics, 116
resilience characteristic, 21
Community factors, study conclusion, 179
Community organizations
and postsecondary education, 116
research recommendations, 168
resilience program, 165–167
study conclusions, 170, 172–173
Community stakeholders, 19–20
Competence
Kauai study, 19
promotion of, 108
Concern for others, 116
Confidence
individual protective factor, 77
resilience characteristic, 21
Confirmability, 189
Cooperative agreements, 147
Coping skills, 42
Coping strategies, 64–66
Counseling, 147
Course work
academic skill development, 146
school factors, 99
Creativity, 146
Critical thinking, 146
Cultural acceptance
postsecondary protective factor, 112, 126
respect of, 106
school factors, 87t
student differences, 106–107
Cultural bias, 64–65
Cultural identity
community factors, 135–136
individual factors, 70–73
Cultural insensitivity, 176
Cultural pride
individual factors, 68, 69t
postsecondary characteristics, 116
Cultural shock
academic obstacle, 137
postsecondary education, 120–121
Cultural synchronization, 107–108
Curriculum
and minority deaf students, 83
resilience research, 17
school factors, 87t
school resilience program, 159

Data analysis, 186–190
Data collection, 186–187
Deaf culture
absence of understanding, 136–137
acceptance of, 59
overcoming obstacles, 141–142, 143
research recommendations, 168–169
school resilience program, 163
Deaf/hard of hearing students
and college enrollment, 7
postsecondary failure, 114–115
Decision-making skills
effective strategy, 143
individual factors, 68, 69t, 69–70, 75–76
postsecondary education, 121
resilience characteristic, 21
school resilience program, 163
Deficit research model
and deaf students, 38
need to eliminate, 16, 104
problems of, 3–6, 23
Demographic characteristics
African American family, 170, 179–180
resilience research, 17–18
Determination
individual protective factor, 68, 69t, 69–70, 73
Kauai study, 19
Development factors, 42
Disabled persons
obstacles of, 20
resilience characteristics, 21
resilience model, 151–152, 152i
Discipline
African American parents, 38–39
family factors, 43, 45t, 62–64
postsecondary characteristics, 116
resilience program, 154–155, 155t
school factors, 87t, 89–90
school professional factors, 91t

Discrimination, coping strategies, 64, 71, 142
Discussion groups, 161–162
"Diverse voices," 181–182
Dysfunctional families, 103–104

Ebonics, use of, 106, 107
Economic forces, 14
Education
  African American parents, 37, 38–39, 40
  African American teens, 71
  value of, 15–16, 37
Education Commission of the States, 4
Education system, barriers encountered, 40–41
Educational expectations, familial, 50–51. *See also* Expectations
Educational experience
  family factors, 43, 45t, 53–61
  individual factors, 74, 81
  policy/program recommendations, 148
  resilience program, 154–155, 155t
  school factors, 89, 98–99, 101–102
  school professionals' factors, 87t, 88–89, 91t
  school resilience program, 159, 163
Elementary school
  Gallaudet study, 28–30
  resilience program, 156t
Emancipatory paradigm, 181–182
English skills, 148
Equality, 146
Evaluation, 160–161
Expectations
  African American church, 134
  African American parents, 38
  "at-risk" students, 4
  community factors, 127, 128–129
  effective strategies, 142
  facilitating transitions, 146
  family structure/discipline, 62–64
  individual factors, 41, 43, 45t, 50–53
  postsecondary factors, 112
  resilience program, 154–155, 155t
  school environment, 84–85
  school factors, 87t, 89, 93–95
  school professionals' factors, 91t
  school resilience program, 163
  study conclusions, 171–172
  VR services, 131–132
Extended family. *See also* African American family
  communication, 49–50
  educational expectations, 51
  support of, 48–49

Faculty
  as academic obstacle, 136, 139–140, 141
  mentoring programs, 113, 126
  study conclusions, 178
Faith
  individual factor, 68, 69t
  Kauai study, 19
Family. *See* African American family, Extended family
Family pride factor, 68, 69t, 69–70
Feedback, 166
Financial aid, 110. *See also* Resources
"Finger-pointing," 7
"Fixing the kids' perspective," 5
Fort Wayne Alliance of Black School Educators, 89
Fort Wayne Community Schools program, 86, 88–89
Fort Wayne Ministerial Alliance, 89
Friends, 123

Gallaudet University
  African American students, 8
  choice of, 120
  diversity initiatives, 8–9
  postsecondary programs, 114
Gallaudet University study
  academic obstacles, 136–141
  case study methodology, 183–186
  childhood protective factors, 41–48
  community factors, 127–129
  data analysis, 186–190
  data collection, 186–187
  educational attainment, 41, 47
  educational backgrounds, 28–36

facilitating transition recommendations, 144–147
family characteristics, 26–28, 43
family composition, 25–26, 41, 43
individual characteristics, 24–25, 68–81, 116
major conclusions, 170–180
overcoming obstacles, 141–143
philosophical assumptions, 181–182
pilot study, 182–183
policy/program recommendations, 147–149
postsecondary graduates, 116
Garmezy, Norman, 16, 17
Gender of participants, 25
Geographical area, 25
Gifted programs, 100–101
Ginott, Ham, on teacher's role, 83–84
Goals
facilitating academic transition, 145
postsecondary education, 116
resilience program, 151, 155
Graduation rates
postsecondary minority students, 109–110
select colleges/universities, 110
student, 1, 7, 12, 82
Guidance counselors
Gallaudet study, 90
study conclusions, 175, 176

Harvard University, 110
High school
Gallaudet study, 30, 31–34
graduation rates, 1, 12, 82
residential living, 43
resilience program, 156t, 157t
Hispanic students, 1
Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), 109–110
Homework monitoring, 56–57
Humor
as effective strategy, 142
individual factors, 68, 69t, 78–79

Independent living skills, 58–59
Individual characteristics, 170, 174–175
Individual protective factors
childhood education, 80–81
Gallaudet study, 69–80
postsecondary education, 116, 117
resilience promotion, 68–69, 69t
Individualized Educational Program (IEP)
facilitating transitions, 146
student disabilities, 6
Information
resilience promotion, 65
school resilience program, 162, 163
Information bulletins, 162
Instruction, 17
Integration
policy/program recommendations, 148–149
postsecondary adjustment, 116–117
postsecondary factor, 111
study conclusions, 177
types of, 118–119
Intellectual skills, 116
Intelligence factor, 68, 69t, 76
Intergroup relations, 17
Interpersonal relationships, 42
Interpersonal skills, 78–79
Interpreters
African American church, 132–133
school factors, 90, 97–98
Intervention Assistance Teams (IATs), Fort Wayne schools, 89

Kauai study, 18–19
Key stakeholders, 165–167
Knowledge is Power program, 86

Labeling, 4
Language, 106–107. *See also* Sign language
Leadership skills
African American church, 133
individual factor, 68, 69t, 69–70, 77–78
postsecondary education, 116
Learning styles, 83
Luther P. Jackson Black Cultural Center, 113

Macalester College, 110
Mainstream programs, 28, 31, 33

Mainstream school culture, 108
Medical model, deficit research, 4
Member checks, 188–189
Mentors
  policy/program recommendations, 147
  postsecondary education, 124
  school factors, 90, 102–103
  school resilience program, 165
  study conclusions, 175
Middle school, 30
Minority status research, 17–18
Modeling, 65
Moderate to profound hearing loss (MP), 12–13
Motivation
  absence of protective factors, 42
  as effective strategy, 142
  facilitating transitions, 146
  individual factors, 68, 69t, 69–70, 73–75
  postsecondary characteristics, 116
  resilience characteristic, 21
Mount Holyoke, 110

National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test, 1
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 89
National Center for Education Statistics
  college enrollment rates, 7
  college graduation rates, 7–8
National Commission on Excellence in Education, 4
National Longitudinal Transitions Study, 10–11
National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)
  African American students, 8
  diversity initiative, 9
  postsecondary programs, 114
"Nation's Report Card, the," 1
Negative influences, 136, 139, 141, 143
Nontraditional knowledge, 116
Nurturance, 65

Obstacles
  disabled persons, 20
  effective strategies, 142–143
  overcoming academic, 136, 141–142
  in postsecondary education, 117
in the school environment, 87t
Office of African American Affairs (OAAA), 113
Opportunities, 19
Oppression, 71
Organization skills, 58
Outreach
  to African American parents, 40
  to caregivers, 67
  and student achievement, 16

Parent Advisory Association, 113
Parent education, Gallaudet study, 27
Parental involvement
  African American parents, 38–39
  family factors, 43, 45t
  fostering resilience, 150
  meaningful participation, 59–61
  policy/program recommendations, 147, 148
  resilience program, 154–155
  resilience research, 17, 19–20
  school resilience program, 159
  study conclusions, 172
Parenting skills, 66
Parents. *See* African American family
Participation
  African American church, 133
  community factors, 128
  facilitating transitions, 146
  family factors, 43, 45t, 58–61
  individual factors, 74
  policy/program recommendations, 148
  resilience program, 154–155
  school factors, 87t
  school resilience program, 163
"Pathology paradigm," 5
Peer Advisor Program, 113
Peer debriefer, data analysis, 188, 189
Peer mentoring, 126
Peers
  as effective strategy, 143
  postsecondary education, 118, 121, 123, 124

Perseverance, 116
Persistence, 21
Personal information, 107
Placements
  academic obstacles, 143
  educational experience, 57–58
  facilitating transitions, 146
  minority deaf students, 83
  school factors, 87t
  school resilience program, 159
  study conclusions, 175–176
  teacher's role, 95
Policies/practices
  resilience research, 17
  stressors, 20
Postsecondary education. *See* Colleges, Universities
Poverty, 17–18
Praise
  facilitating transitions, 145
  school factors, 89–90
  school resilience program, 163
Preparation
  postsecondary factors, 111–112, 115
  study conclusions, 171
Princeton University, 110
Principals, 95–96
Problem-solving characteristic, 21
Problem-solving skills
  as an effective strategy, 143
  individual factor, 68, 69t, 69–70, 75–76
  resilience characteristic, 21
  school resilience program, 163
Professional development training
  as protective factor, 19–20
  school factors, 87t
  school resilience program, 160
  and student achievement, 16
  for teachers/staff, 86
Professors, 118, 124–125. *See also* Faculty
Protective factors
  African American families, 105
  benefits of, 16, 17, 19
  community factors, 127, 134–135
  family characteristics, 43
  impact of absence, 42
  individual factors, 43–44
  postsecondary programs, 109, 111–113
  resilience program, 151–152, 152i, 155, 155t
  school environment, 82, 85–108, 87t
  school professionals, 91t
  "turning points," 22

Qualitative methods, education research, 6

Race, 72–73
Racial identity, 70, 71, 72
Racism
  coping strategies, 64–65, 71
  effective strategies against, 142–143
  facilitating transitions, 146
  in postsecondary education, 116
Readiness, 136, 138–139. *See also* Preparation
Reading
  African American church, 133
  educational experience, 54–56
  NAEP test, 1
  SAT, 12
Recognition, 145
Recommendations
  for academic development, 146–147
  academic transition, 144–146
  policy/programs, 147–149
  research, 167–169
Recruitment, 109
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 130
Reinforcement
  African American church, 134
  family factors, 43
  school environment, 95–97
Residential programs, 148
Resilience
  encountering obstacles, 149
  individual factors, 68–81, 69t
  parental promotion of, 65
  postsecondary education, 116
  postsecondary students, 109
  postsecondary success, 114
  purpose of, 151, 154–155
Resilience program model
  characteristics of, 153
  component factors, 151–152, 152i

Resilience program model *(continued)*
components/partners, 156t
critical outcomes, 157
development of, 16–17
program development, 154
structure of, 153–154
theory of, 152–153
Resilience research
disabled students, 21
factors studied, 17
implications of, 22–23
Kauai study, 18–19
minority student research, 6
protective factors, 19
Resilient students' characteristics, 21
Resources
academic skill development, 146
postsecondary factors, 112–113
and postsecondary success, 126
resilience characteristic, 21
stressors, 20
and student achievement, 16
Retention, 109
Risk factors, 4, 6
Risk protective factors, 19
Role models
African American teachers, 92
effective strategy, 142
study conclusions, 176

School environment
and African American families, 105
school factors, 87t, 89–90
and student achievement, 16
School Success Profile survey, 160
School-to-work transition study, 12
Schools
absence of protective factors, 42
development programs, 16
development role, 82
research recommendations, 168
resilience program, 157–163
study conclusions, 170, 175–176
Secondary School Graduate Follow-up Program for the Deaf, 7–8
Self-appraisal, 116
Self-assessment factor, 69–70
Self-awareness
individual protective factor, 68, 69t, 76
postsecondary education, 121
Self-concept, 116
Self-confidence
individual factor, 68, 69t, 69–70, 75
postsecondary characteristics, 116
Self-discipline
African American church, 133
individual factor, 68, 69t, 69–70
Self-efficacy
postsecondary characteristics, 116
protective factors, 19
resilience characteristic, 21
Self-esteem
absence of protective factors, 42
protective factors, 19
Self-image
academic achievement, 85
postsecondary characteristics, 116
resilience characteristic, 21
Severe profound hearing loss (SP), 12
Sign language
academic obstacle, 136, 137–138
communication, 49–50
Gallaudet study, 27–28, 32
overcoming obstacles, 141, 142, 143
postsecondary education, 120–121
school resilience program, 163
study conclusions, 173–174
Single-parent homes, 17–18
Sneed, S. D., 111
"Snowball" sampling, 184–185
Social competency, 82
Social environment, 85
Social integration definition, 118–119
Social skills, 42
Socialization, 38–39
Special education
African American students, 11
deficit research model, 5–6
Spina bifida, 22
Spiritual beliefs
as effective strategy, 142
resilience characteristic, 21

Spiritual training
African American parents, 38
family factors, 43, 45t, 61–62
SRI International study, 10–11
Staff. *See* Support staff
Stanford Achievement Test (SAT)
postsecondary experience, 15–16
reading performance, 12
Stereotypes
educational denial, 67
effective strategies against, 142–143
in school environment, 96
Stereotyping
of "at-risk" students, 4
facilitating transitions, 146
Stressors, 20
Structure
African American parents, 38–39
family factors, 43, 45t, 62–64
resilience program, 154–155, 155t
school factors, 87t, 89–90
school professionals' factors, 91t
Student Life Team, 9
Support staff
academic obstacle, 136, 139–140, 141
professional development training, 86
research recommendations, 168
role of, 84
school factors, 87t, 90
school resilience program, 164–165
student achievement, 16, 19–20
Supportive relationships factor, 43, 44–49, 45t, 65, 66

Teachers
academic skill development, 146
classroom cultural synchronization, 107–108
facilitating transitions, 145–146
professional development training, 86
research recommendations, 168
role of, 83–84
school factors, 87t, 88, 89–91, 93
school resilience program, 163–164
student achievement, 16, 19–20
study conclusions, 175
Teamwork, 107
Testing, 147
Time management, 58
Tracking, 83
Transferability, 189
Transition planning, 15
Transition programs, 170
Transition skills, 15
Transition support, 177
Triangulation, 189
"Turning points," 22
Tutorial services, 113

Understanding, 21
Universities
Gallaudet study, 34
minority students, 109–110
school resilience program, 167
study conclusions, 170, 178–179
University of Virginia
graduation rates, 110
Office of African American Affairs, 113

Vocational programs, 12, 14, 35
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
community support, 127, 130–132
resilience program, 166
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds, 26, 35
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs, 170, 179
Voice communication, 27–28

Wellesley College, 110
White deaf/hard of hearing students, 2–3
White students, 1
Williams College, 110
Work ethic
family factor, 42
individual factor, 68, 69t, 69–70, 80–81
Work-study programs, 165
Workshops, school resilience programs, 162–163, 165