OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL WELL-BEING OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS: AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION INVOLVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Phylicia Fitzpatrick Fleming: Out-of-home placement and educational well-being of Black adolescents: An examination of school engagement and special education involvement
(Under the direction of Rune J. Simeonsson)

Using an ecological systems framework, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between out-of-home placement and educational outcomes for Black adolescents, focusing specifically on school engagement and special education involvement. By analyzing the relationship between the two, this study provides insight into the experiences of children with significant out-of-home placement histories. Secondary data analysis was employed to extract data from the National Survey for Child and Adolescent Well-being –Wave 3, paying particular attention to Black adolescents, aged 11-17. More specifically, this project examined responses to education items provided by this adolescent population as well their parents and caseworkers. Data were analyzed using ANOVAs and regression analyses, controlling for confounding variables. Results indicated that there are no significant differences in school engagement for Black adolescents receiving in-home services and those receiving out-of-home services. More still, when out-of-home setting type was considered, no differences were found in students' educational experiences. Results indicated, however, that regardless of service type, a disproportionate number of students experienced grade retention—underscoring the importance of targeted intervention for students receiving these particular child welfare services. Lastly, when controlling for age, gender, and socio-economic status, out-of-home placement type did not significantly predict educational outcomes for Black adolescents. Implications of the findings are discussed with a specific focus on the practice of school psychology.

To my "Babe" for teaching me that there is more than one path, and always encouraging me to find my own way

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Child maltreatment is a complex issue that impacts children and families across the United States and throughout the world. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013 witnessed approximately 679,000 victims of child abuse and neglect that led to subsequent involvement with child welfare services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). The majority of these victims belonged to three primary racial and ethnic categories—White (44.0%), Hispanic (22.4%), and African-American (21.2%). While African-American children had a lower percentage rate, they had, nevertheless, the highest rates of victimization at 14.6 per 1,000 children. Hispanic and White children had lower rates of victimization at 8.5 and 8.1 per 1,000 children, respectively (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

In 2012, nearly 400,000 children were living in foster care in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). For over 20 years, several studies have demonstrated that youth in foster care are often educationally vulnerable and are more likely to experience academic, social, and behavioral difficulties than their peers in the school environment (Blome, 1997; Vacca, 2008). Children in foster care consistently score 15-20% lower on standardized achievement tests in reading and math, and receive poorer grades in these subjects (Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Zetlin, 2006). It is estimated that three-fourths of children in foster care perform below grade level, and more than half of these students have been retained at least one grade level (Zetlin et al., 2010). They are also disproportionately represented in special education classrooms, with 25-52% receiving special education services, compared to 11.5% of the general student population. Furthermore, somewhere between one-third and two-thirds of youth currently or

formerly involved in the foster care system drop out of high school before graduation (Leone & Weinberg, 2010).

Any examination of the outcomes of children within the child welfare system and the services this system provides necessitates a review of how child welfare systems emerged as well as the contexts in which these systems have evolved. In other words, the numbers and statistics related to child maltreatment and out-of-home placement are best analyzed in relation to a broader web of social, political, and policy-oriented dynamics that have informed this statistical information and the contemporary realities of child welfare, with particular reference to educational outcomes.

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History of Child Welfare Movement

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Public Child Welfare

Concern with the impact of childhood maltreatment has an extensive history in the United States, with origins as early as the 19th century (Schene, 1998). During this early historical movement, private associations known as anticruelty societies formed with the aim of protecting children from abuse. In 1877, New York State passed the first law to protect children and punish those who harm them. This legislation gave anticruelty societies the legal recourse and power to identify children who were being mistreated by their families. As the 20th century began, more states followed suit and passed laws protecting children from abuse (Schene, 1998). This marked the beginning of the modern child protective movement, but framed child maltreatment as a problem isolated to the family context (McGowan, 1983).

It was not until almost a century later that this mindset changed. During the mid-twentieth century, the issue of child protection shifted to focus on rescuing children from unhealthy environments and rehabilitating families through social services (Schene, 1998). Additionally, efforts to protect children gradually became part of the larger pool of human services provided by

governmental agencies. The growing acceptance by local governments of the responsibility for child protection marked a new era in the child welfare movement (Schene, 1998). This new era was characterized by the federal government's first venture into the child welfare arena, with the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935—more specifically, Title-IV-B Child Welfare Services Program (McGowan, 1983). This important legislation gave states federal funding to develop preventive and protective services for vulnerable children. However, in practice, states used these funds to pay for foster care instead of providing support and services to families whose children remained in the home (Schene, 1998).

In the 1960s, medical professionals began to call attention to what they identified as evidence that parents and caregivers routinely inflicted physical injuries upon children. For example, Henry Kempe and his colleagues (1962) used x-rays and other documentation of children's physical injuries to publicize what they called the "battered child syndrome." As a result of Kempe's public campaign, many parents hoped to avoid detection by seeking care for their injured children at different hospitals. Parents' and caregivers' attempts to outmaneuver such detections prompted national efforts to keep track of potential perpetrators and victims. The eventual publication of Kempe et. al's *The Battered-Child Syndrome* catapulted these issues into the public eye, and thereby led to increased awareness of child maltreatment among medical professionals and society more broadly. In this way, child maltreatment was further transformed into, and perceived as, a social problem rather than an issue confined to the family and the home (Kempe, et al., 1962). The publicity from the Kempe and colleagues' publication helped to usher in the establishment of child abuse laws. Child abuse and neglect, therefore, became national issues, and the role that government agencies played in identifying and responding to child maltreatment expanded significantly.

In 1974, the U.S. Congress enacted the first comprehensive federal legislation addressing

child abuse and neglect: The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). In exchange for federal funding for child abuse prevention and treatment, CAPTA required states to establish child abuse reporting procedures and investigation systems. In response, all 50 states implemented mandated child abuse reporting laws, along with the expansion of their foster care programs (Cicchetti & Carlson, 1989). This resulted in rapid growth in the number of children who were removed from their homes and placed in foster care (Cicchetti & Carlson, 1989). Since then, several pieces of legislation, such as the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in 1997, and the Fostering Connections Act of 2008, have affirmed that child maltreatment is a social problem that deserves examination and intervention (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011). CAPTA was reauthorized in 2010, making it the most current national legislation related to child abuse and neglect. The 2010 reauthorization included the addition of adoption opportunities programs and the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011). Such recent legal and legislative measures index the continued role of federal authority in managing instances of child maltreatment. Despite such advancements and national attention, acts of child maltreatment persist.

Black Children and Child Welfare

Within this complex apparatus that has developed around issues of child maltreatment, Black children have historically occupied a fraught place. When tracing the history of the child welfare movement in relation to Black children, Jimenez (2006), for example, argues that Black children—because of histories of racial oppression and exclusion—were originally occluded from the public child welfare system (as it is described above). As a result of these racial dynamics, a shadow system emerged. This system relied primarily on principles of shared responsibility and community support in order to ensure the wellbeing of Black children. Black communities' investments in

shared responsibility grew not only out of economic necessity, but also out of deeply rooted cultural practices that have historically animated relationships between and among Black peoples throughout the global geographies of the African diaspora. In this vein, there is considerable research that posits community responsibility for children as a constitutive dimension of various African societies (Turner, 1991, Jimenez, 2006). In West African cultures, for example, shared parenting was a common practice. And even after a sizeable portion of West African populations were enslaved and transported to the New World, many of these traditions continued to be a mainstay of the relations that developed within enslaved communities (Jimenez, 2006). West African societies featured extensive kinship systems in which most people in a tribe were related. The stability of the extended family was one of the most important characteristics of West African societies. Even though slavery fractured and disrupted West African families, these kinship networks, particularly practices of shared parenting, continued to thrive and operate as common communal practices in the thick of New World slavery (Jimenez, 2006). The role of protecting Black children from abuse and neglect, then, has often fallen to extended family and other individuals who are members of African diasporic communities.

According to Hill (1991), kin and community oversight have served collectively as an aegis of sorts, historically ensuring the safety of Black children. In particular, Black churches have played an integral part in aiding Black families in need of emotional supports, and have been, in the process, a chief source of disseminating and providing resources about parenting (Hill, 1991). Thus, Black churches have not only functioned as important sites for religious direction, but have also been a key institution from which Black people have taken cues—and "rules" indeed—about family practices and social life more broadly. Because of their historical authority within Black communities, churches have often operated as agents of social control for Black families (Poole, 1990, cited in

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Jimenez, 2006). It was this kinship and community system that formed the basis of the "shadow"

system that emerged in earlier epochs that found Black people excluded from the public child

welfare system. It is important to note that this tradition of community responsibility remains a

constitutive part of Black communal practices, even as the United States ostensibly moves toward

the inclusion of Black children in the public child welfare system—a trend that was set in motion

during the 1960s. What this means, then, is that Black children have historically, and continue to,

live under informal kinship care arrangements (Jimenez, 2006).

Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Whereas Black children were originally excluded from the public welfare system, they have,

in recent years, become increasingly overrepresented in this same system (Smith & Devore, 2004).

Not only do Black children have the highest rates of victimization based on population sampling, but

a disproportionate number of them are in state custody—a reality that is both alarming and

staggering. Researchers continue to find that Black children: (1) are more likely to be placed outside

of the home than children of other ethnic groups who come into the child welfare system; (2)

comprise the largest group in the foster care population; (3) are more likely to be placed in foster

care that other groups; and (4) are less likely to be reunited with their parents (Brown & Bailey-Etta,

1997; Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004; Gould, 1991). According to Roberts (2003), Black children

make up more than two-fifths of the foster care population, although they represent less than one-

fifth of children in the U.S. Additionally, Roberts (2003)—citing a 1998 report on child

maltreatment—argues that child protective agencies are far more likely to place Black children in

foster care rather than offering their families less traumatic interventions. A national study also

found that minority children, and more specifically African-American children, are more likely to be

in foster care placement than to receive in-home services, even when they have the same problems

and characteristics as their white counterparts (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

Such abrupt displacement from the home has serious and potentially long-lasting consequences on victims of child maltreatment. It disrupts their relationships to the environments in which their very sense of self has been forged—though such disruptions are often lifesaving. Even still, these transitions in environment significantly impact victims of child maltreatment, and therefore have the potential to affect their educational outcomes. This relationship between environment and child well being is a useful theoretical framework to consider the possible influence of environment upon this population's educational outcomes. As the recent literature on disproportionality within child welfare has revealed how, even in the contemporary moment, these issues not only persist but also are exacerbated by factors such race and culture.

These issues of disproportionality impact outcomes for children within the child welfare system in multiple and varied ways, especially for those students who are removed from their homes. Youth in out-of-home placements in general are disproportionately overrepresented in the special education population (Barrat & Berliner, 2013; George, Voorhis, Grant, Casey, & Robinson, 1992; Smithgall et al., 2004). Additionally, Black children are overrepresented in certain special education categories and underrepresented in others (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010). Just as the history of how child welfare systems emerged and evolved is pertinent to understanding outcomes for children involved in this system, so too is a review of the ways in which special education evolved in an ever-changing public education system.

History of Special Education

Special education broadly refers to the academic, physical, cognitive and/or social-emotional instruction provided to students with one or more disabilities (Zirkel, 2012). Throughout the history of American public education, services to children with disabilities were minimal and were provided

at the discretion of local school districts (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996). Students with disabilities were historically either excluded from public education, educated in separate classrooms, or placed in general education classrooms with little to no support (Drury & Baer, 2011). According to Winzer (2013), these special classes were both the cause and result of, new medical and scientific knowledge, increasing social fears, and a climate of interventionist social reform.

Between 1910 and 1930 there was a precipitous surge in enrollments in special classes (Winzer, 2013). Additionally, because educators operationalized the medical model, they assumed that disorders had distinct patterns of symptoms/signs that resulted from different causes and responded to different treatments. Following this logic, they created numerous special classes to meet the needs of various disabilities (Winzer, 2013). As a result, children who were labeled with particular disability designations were routed to classes and provided pedagogical practices that were ostensibly best suited for their particular disability. Along with the traditional groups of children with visual and hearing impairment, and intellectual disability, schools targeted those with motor impairments, academic maladjustment, emotional disturbance, speech impairments, physical diseases, dyslexia, and giftedness. This separation and routing of students towards particular learning environments fit into a larger paradigm of categorizing individuals who were different, faced challenges, or were uniquely talented. Soon there were special classes under a variety of generic titles such as auxiliary, opportunity, open air, welfare, and "steamer," which served immigrant children who could not speak English (Winzer, 2009). Special classes were almost universally accepted in the early 1950s and education policy was generally characterized by varying layers of exclusion.

Legal and Legislative History

Reforms in special education can be traced back to the 1960s. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was the first major federal effort to subsidize direct services to selected populations in public elementary and secondary schools, and it remains the primary vehicle for federal support of public schools today. While the original ESEA did not provide for direct grants on behalf of children with disabilities, in the second year of that Congress, Public Law 89–313 provided that children in state-operated or state-supported schools "for the handicapped" could be counted for entitlement purposes, and special Title I funds could be used to benefit this relatively small population of children in state schools.

During the early 1970s, two cases were catalysts for change: *Pennsylvania Assn. for Retarded Children* v. *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (PARC) and *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia.* PARC dealt with the exclusion of children with mental retardation from public schools. In the subsequent settlement, it was agreed that educational placement decisions must include a process of parental participation and a means to resolve disputes (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996) . Mills involved the practice of suspending, expelling and excluding children with disabilities from the District of Columbia public schools. The school district's primary defense in Mills was the high cost of educating children with disabilities. The ruling found, (1) the failure of the District of Columbia to provide publicly supported education and training to plaintiffs and other "exceptional" children, members of their class, and (2) the excluding, suspending, expelling, reassigning and transferring of "exceptional" children from regular public school classes without affording them due process of law (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998).

As a response to these cases and the encouragement ushered in by *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), parents of children with disabilities pressed for legislation to improve the

education of students with disabilities (Winzer, 2009). This movement sparked Congress to pass the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA or P.L. 94-142) in 1975. The law stated that public schools must provide children with special needs the same opportunities for education as other children and provide one free meal a day for these children. The hallmark of this seminal legislation included the guarantee of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities, ages 5-21. It also required that, to the maximum extent appropriate, all children and youth with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive education (LRE) environment. Public schools were required to provide special education classes for students with disabilities and develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each student with a disability (Katsiyannis et al., 2001). In 1986, an amendment (P.L. 99-457) to the EHCA, extended its purpose to include children ages 0-5. This amendment guaranteed a FAPE to children with disabilities, ages 3-5 and established early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Although students with disabilities began to receive public education after the EHCA, students and advocates began to recognize that special education services were segregated and different. As such, the EHCA was amended and renamed in 1990. The renamed legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), replaced the phrase "handicapped child" with "child with a disability" and extend eligibility to children with autism and traumatic brain injury. Additionally, the IDEA extended the parameters of LRE to require the child, to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated with children without disabilities, in the same class she/he would have been without a disability. This change allowed for students with disabilities to be more fully integrated with the public school environment. The IDEA was amended in 1997 to further strengthen the rights of students with disabilities and gave students with disabilities access to the general curriculum.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) was reauthorized to ensure "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). This act demanded that students with disabilities be granted a "free and appropriate public education" in the "least restrictive environment" (as cited in Drury & Baer, 2011, p. 595). As a result of this legislation, disabled children may be educated in the regular classroom with necessary supports. The IDEA also indicates that states should implement policies and procedures to prevent the inappropriate over-identification of disabilities or overrepresentation of students in special education settings by race or ethnicity (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

The IDEA now delineates thirteen categories of impairments, which qualify for special education services (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, n.d.). The categories range from hearing and sight impairments to autism and intellectual disability (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, n.d.). The most prevalent type of impairment is a specific learning disability, which comprises approximately 39% of those receiving special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The IDEA has succeeded in some ways, such as overall increases in placement of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms. On the other hand, the IDEA has not been successful in decreasing disproportionality; African-American students remain underrepresented in general education and overrepresented in special education (Skiba et al, 2006).

Policy and Practice in Special Education

Intervention models and special education practices play an important role in the identification of students who are performing below grade level in academic subjects or who

may exhibit difficulties in school. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) set

legislative standards that required schools to be more accountable by increasing intervention

practices for all children earlier and more effectively (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). NCLB, the

reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was founded on four

pillars: stronger accountability, more freedom for states and communities (i.e., greater local

control), use of proven educational methods (i.e., scientifically-based research), and more

choices for parents. Its purpose was to make sure that every student has access to and achieves

a quality education based on high standards (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

NCLB required that individual states use assessments that align with academic

standards, set by each state's Department of Education, to measure the achievement of all

students in each grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Schools were held

accountable for their students' achievement through these assessments (NCLB, 2001). Since

the enactment of NCLB, the pressure for public schools to ensure academic achievement for all

students has grown (NCLB, 2001).

The IDEA (2004), guarantees a free and appropriate public education in the least

restrictive environment for students with disabilities, with a focus on individualization and

protection under due process (Turnbull, Huerta, & Stowe, 2006). The most recent

reauthorization of IDEA emphasized access for students with disabilities to the general

education curriculum and participation in general large-scale assessments, in alignment to

NCLB. Thus, NCLB and IDEA both focus on what to teach (curriculum) and where to teach it

(instructional environment) and suggest what is valued and desired in the education of students

with disabilities.

With NCLB and the reauthorization of the IDEA (2004), regulations for a Response to

Intervention (RTI) approach for identifying students who require assistance in gaining the necessary reading and/or mathematic skills to become college and career ready and who may be eligible for specific learning disability services were adopted in schools across the United States. Before the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, schools utilized the IQ - achievement discrepancy model to identify children with learning disabilities (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007). IQ - achievement discrepancy is a diagnostic procedure that was approved in the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This diagnostic model identified children as learning disabled only if there was significant underachievement when compared to what would be expected based on a child's intelligence quotient. The current model, reflected in IDEA 2004, recognizes "a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Today, the general practice has moved away from relying on the traditional diagnostic method of the IQ - achievement discrepancy model towards the multi-tiered RTI approach for identifying children with weaknesses in reading and/or mathematics. However, despite the attempts to focus on interventions and progress, Black children and children involved in the child welfare system remain overrepresented in special education.

Disproportionality in Special Education

Research has demonstrated that youth receiving child welfare services, and those in out-of-home placements in particular, are overrepresented in the special education (Barrat & Berliner, 2013; George, Voorhis, Grant, Casey, & Robinson, 1992; Smithgall et al., 2004). Scherr (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of 31 studies conducted in the 1990s and 2000s, with the purpose of comparing special education placements and experiences of students in out-of-home care versus dependency involved youth who were living with a parent. Using a mixed effects model, between 27% and 35%

of foster care children were found to qualify for special education programs. Employing a random effects model yielded an odds-ratio showing that children in foster care were five times more likely than peers living in their original housing placement, to be identified as needing special education services.

Berliner and Lezin (2010) attribute the placement of foster care youth in special education to several factors. The first factor they note is making the determination with incomplete or missing information from parents and teachers. The second factor Berliner and Lezin note is the myth that special education means the child will get more services and that more services are always better for the child. The authors also fault group home operators, who may get higher fees for special education youth, thereby pushing a youth to be given a special education label. Foster parents, teachers, and case workers may also believe that special education services will serve as a way for the youth to catch up on schooling they have missed because of their multiple placements

Meanwhile, the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education has been a topic of interest in the United States for almost 50 years (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch, Cuadrado, & Chung, 2008). Debates surrounding disproportionality in special education tend to pivot around overrepresentation in the high incidence disability categories (learning disabilities, emotional disturbances (ED), intellectual disability) and underrepresentation in gifted/talented education programs (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010). When looking specifically at Black students, their disproportionality emerges not only in the general category of special education, but also in specific disability categories (Office of Special Education Services, 2011; Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002). U.S. Department of Education statistics (2011) report that 11% of African American students in school are identified

as having ED, compared to only 8% of White students (Office of Special Education Services, 2011). More recently, there has been significant debate as to whether or not Black and other minority students are actually overrepresented in special education. This debate centers on issues of research methodology and individual similarities/differences. What follows is a brief introduction to key sides of the debate.

One side of this recent critical debate focuses on overrepresentation, which has received by far the most attention in the research literature. The evidence of minority disproportionality in special education suggests that students of color, and African American students in particular, may receive differential access to educational services (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006). Research suggests that African American students are overrepresented in more restrictive educational environments and underrepresented in less restrictive environments (Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Serwatka, Deering, and Grant, 1995). Fierros and Conroy (2002) found that among students with disabilities, 55% of White students, compared to 37% African American students, were educated in inclusive settings.

Additionally, Serwatka, Deering and Grant (1995) found that African American students are placed in more restrictive environments than White students across a range of disability categories. In their study of special education students in Indiana, Skiba, et.al., (2006) found that despite representing only 13% of students served in special education, African American special education students were the least likely to be educated in the general education setting. According to Waitoller, Artiles, and Cheney (2010), African American learners are overrepresented at the national level in the categories of intellectual disabilities and emotional behavior disorders; Latino students are overrepresented in learning disabilities and speech-language impairments in some states; and Native American students are disproportionately represented in learning disability and emotional

behavior disorders at the national and state levels.

Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that English language learners (ELLs) are disproportionately enrolled in special education and placed in more restrictive settings in California and New Mexico (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; de Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi, & Park, 2006). Scholars on the overrepresentation side of the debate propose several explanations for overrepresentation in certain special education categories. Hosp and Reschly (2003), for example, offer three key factors that contribute to overrepresentation: "labeling effects, segregation of placement, and presumed ineffectiveness of special education services" (Hosp & Reschly, 2003, p. 68).

Most recently, scholars have argued that African American children and other minorities are underrepresented in special education services and less likely to be referred for services. Specifically, Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, Mattison, Maczuga, Li, & Cook (2015), in their investigation of whether minority children attending U.S. elementary and middle schools were disproportionately represented in special education, used hazard regression models to identify factors predicting children's identification as disabled. They argue that when compared to otherwise similar White, English-speaking children, minority children were consistently less likely to be identified as disabled and to receive special education services (Morgan et al., 2015).

Similarly, Hibel, Farkas, and Morgan (2010), found that after controlling for academic achievement and behavior, students of minority race/ethnicity are equally or less likely than non-Hispanic whites to be placed into special education in general. Essentially, they found that the disproportionality of African American children with learning disabilities subsided or disappeared when their model controlled for the academic achievement of children when they started kindergarten. The higher the achievement test scores when children entered school, the less likely

they were to be placed in special education. They also found that students exhibiting externalizing behaviors, such as being off task and behaving inappropriately in class, were more likely to be placed in special education (Hibel et al., 2010). These researchers then added school-level variables and found that when the percentage of minority enrollment was added to the model, much of the effect of being placed in special education could be attributed to minority student race at high minority schools (Hibel et al., 2010); schools with low-SES populations also increased the chances of students being placed in special education.

While disproportionality cannot be explained simply or by one identifiable cause, research does show that students placed in special education are at risk for poor academic and behavioral outcomes, which affects their short-term academic life while negatively impacting their long-term academic and employment outcomes. According to Morgan and colleagues (2015), the disproportional underrepresentation of African American and other minority students argument centers on child-, family-, and school-level factors, which confound estimates of these students' involvement in special education; when these confounds are controlled, these groups are marginalized from special education services (Morgan et al., 2015; see also Hibel, Farkas, & Morgan, 2010). However, undergirding the current study are the ways in which environment and environmental factors influence developmental and life outcomes. As such, the individual cannot and should not in practice be separated from her/his lived experience. That is to say, from an ecological system perspective, the experiences of African American students (and other minority groups) cannot be separated for the environmental factors (or child-, family-, and school-level factors) that influence how they grow and develop, and to separate or negate the effects of these factors devalues minority lived experiences, while also limiting the effectiveness of educational service delivery.

Students receiving special education services (and Black students regardless of special education involvement) tend to have achievement gaps relative to their school-age peers. For example, in a longitudinal study with youth aged thirteen to sixteen, Wagner et al. (2006) investigated gaps in achievement in reading and math among special education youth and general population students. The authors found that while special education students significantly performed below that of students without a disability, outcomes varied by impairment type. Youth with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities had significantly lower performance in both reading and math. Overall, White youth performed significantly better, and low socio-economic students had significantly worse achievement.

Low achievement for special education and Black students has long been a concern for educators, especially for those students with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties. Students with emotional and behavioral disorders are at risk for severe deficits in academic functioning. These children are more likely to experience low achievement, suspensions and expulsions, school dropouts, involvement with the juvenile justice system, psychiatric hospitalization, and residential treatment (Cannon, Gregory, & Waterstone, 2013). What follows is a brief introduction to the ways in which gaps, specifically related to achievement for Black children, impact educational outcomes.

Achievement Gap

Black children have historically encountered more academic difficulties when compared to other races. White students have historically produced significantly higher achievement scores at all levels of education (Bali & Alvarez, 2003). Earlier studies have shown that African American adolescents generally perform more poorly on cognitive tests and receive lower grades in school than European Americans (Steinberg, Dombusch, & Brown, 1992).

Continuing research found that African Americans, on average, lagged behind their White peers in terms of academic achievement (US Department of Education, 2013). While overall math and reading scores have increased since 1990, according to the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), White students, on average, still had overall higher scores than Black students on all assessments. And while the nationwide gaps in 2013 were narrower than in previous assessments at both 4th and 8th grade in mathematics and at 4th grade in reading, White students had average scores at least 26 points higher than Black students in each subject. On the 2013 main National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment, a higher percentage of White students scored at or above proficient than did Black students in 12th grade (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014).

There have been several arguments to explain the documented achievement gap. Steele (1997) suggested that African Americans have historically faced a history of judgment by teachers who have low expectations of them, which influences how these students perceive their capabilities. This phenomenon, called stereotype vulnerability or stereotype threat, is a process by which teachers communicate negative stereotypes to students and students, in turn, internalize these negative perceptions (Steele, 1997). As with self-fulfilling prophecy (Jussim & Harber, 2005), the strain of being judged negatively—based on academic ability—threatens the self-esteem of African American students, resulting in disassociation from school, which in turn leads to academic underachievement (Steele, 1997). Warren (2005) echoed Steele's sentiments, suggesting that schools cannot teach children if teachers lack clear understandings of their students' cultures and lives, and if schools fail to establish meaningful relationships with families. "Poor communities," he argues, "face problems associated with concentrated poverty and racism. He continues: "[B]ut too often educators see families only as problems to be "fixed"

(Warren, 2005, p. 134).

Other researchers have attributed the achievement gap to uneven distributions of financial resources. As they point out, schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods have been historically underfunded. In another vein, they have highlighted the inadequate attention paid to multicultural education as part of these school's curricula (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004; Grant, 2003). Some scholars, in fact, have even argued that underprepared teachers in urban areas contribute to the achievement gap by not adequately meeting the needs of diverse learners (Sleeter, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Zeichner, 2002).

Research done by Ogbu (1986) argued that African Americans have the same cognitive abilities as European Americans, including the capacity to "remember, generalize, form concepts, operate with abstraction, and reason logically" (Ogbu, 1986, p. 34). However, he argues that academic failure among Black students is due to a long history of inferior education and exclusion from middle-class, white-collar jobs that require advanced cognitive skills. He theorized that as a reaction to racial discrimination, many African Americans have become disillusioned about future job prospects and the value of schooling, which leads to scholastic underachievement (Ogbu, 1986).

Socio-economic status may be a critical factor impacting student performance (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). "Socio-economic status (SES) is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group" (American Psychological Association, 2014, p. 1). Research indicates that children from low-SES households and communities may develop academic skills more slowly when compared to children from higher SES groups (Morgan et al., 2009). Families from low SES communities are less likely to have the financial resources or

time availability to provide children with academic support (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Children from low SES environments may acquire language skills more slowly, exhibit delayed letter recognition and phonological awareness, and are at risk for reading difficulties (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008).

For minority youths, poverty and poor academic achievement continue to be salient concerns. Racial and cultural backgrounds continue to be critical factors influencing academic achievement in the United States (House & Williams, 2000). African American children are three times more likely to live in poverty than White children (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Research also suggests three main factors to explain the lower academic achievement of minority students: (1) minorities are more likely to live in low-income households and/or in single parent families; (2) their parents are likely to have less education; and (3) they often attend underfunded schools (Sirin, 2005). Thus, although schools must make an effort to educate children equitably, the effects of racism and poverty often compromise these efforts (Warren, 2005). What this previous research points to is the importance of considering environment and the ways in which it bears upon educational outcomes, particularly for children in out-of-home placement.

Theoretical Framework

Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner developed ecological systems theory in the early 1970s as a means of understanding how children grow and develop in their environments. According to Bronfenbrenner, "development is defined as the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment and his relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 p. 9). Additionally, not only must one consider

how an individual perceives his or her environment, but also how that individual interacts with his or her environment.

Because there are multiple levels of influences on the developmental outcomes of children in out-of-home placement, it is important to understand the interrelations between the individual and the environment. The ecological systems theory has been posited as an appropriate framework for the design of intervention approaches that address complex issues (Anderson & Mohr, 2003; Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1994; Schweiger & O'Brien, 2005). According to this theory, the interrelations among the five systems levels affect children's developmental outcomes: microsystem (immediate settings or environment), mesosystem (link between two or more microsystems), exosystem (settings not directly affecting the individual but that influence the microsystem), macrosystem (broader society and culture that encompasses the other systems), and chronosystem (consistency or change over the life course). Bronfenbrenner observed the keys ways in which humans' surrounding environments influenced their development. He argued that in order to understand human development, the entire ecological system in which growth occurs must be examined (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Figure 1. Ecological Model of Interaction Among Persons and Environments

Macrosystem
Includes norms and values of cultures and subcultures (belief systems, ideologies, societal structure, gender role socialization, national and international resources, etc.).

Exosystem
Distal systems that influence the individual indirectly through their impact on meso- and Microsystems (e.g., education policies, program components).

Mesosystem
Interconnections among two or more Microsystems (e.g., interactions among family members and teachers). Expands as individual enters new settings over time. Impacts individual indirectly through his/her interactions within the microsystem.

Microsystem
Activities, roles, relations in a defined setting where the individual interacts directly with others (family, peers, etc.).

Individual

Chronosystem- Changes in systems over time via a process of mutual accommodation.

Source: Based on Bronfenbrenner, 1989, 2006; as cited by McEathron & Beuhring, 2011.

Bronfenbrenner posited that individual human development is influenced by the individual's interactions with their environment overtime. At the outset, the microsystem refers to the relationship between the person and their immediate environment. More specifically, the most immediate level influences on child development are within the microsystem level, which consists of the most proximate setting or environment in which the individual is situated, such as family and school. Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1994) depicts the microsystem as a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the individual or group of individuals in a direct setting (e.g., family). Considered through the lens of out-of-home placement in particular, microsystem level contexts include caregiver-child relationships, attachment between the caregiver and the child, and the family environment.

Secondly, the mesosystem refers to interactions between microsystems. These include, for example, interactions between families and teachers. Although proximal processes within the family are considered as the primary mechanism of development, the links between the different contexts in which the child is directly situated also affect their developmental trajectories (Schweiger & O'Brien 2005). Experiences at the microsystem level, or experiences involving a direct interaction, may influence another microsystem. Examination of the mesosystem may be important in understanding the relationships between the microsystems, which include, for example, kinship caregivers, foster parents, house parents, and biological families. Few research studies suggest that children in out-of-home placements are likely to maintain ties with their birth families, to experience continuity of relationships and community environment, to develop cultural identity, and to enter into the home of a known person (Schwartz, 2007).

The exosystem, the third system in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, refers to relationships between a social setting and the individual's immediate context. The exosystem consists of connections between two or more interactions or settings, but only one directly affecting the developing person (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1994). The quality of caregiver-child relationship can be influenced by a larger system that is not directly experienced by the child, such as social-support and involvement of child welfare professionals. Ecological systems theory highlights the importance of kinship foster caregivers' experiences with social-support network outside the family (e.g., relatives, friends, and neighbor), which can affect their relationship with their children (Hong, Algood, Chiu & Lee, 2011). According to Turner et al. (1998), conditions that may have some bearing on the availability of social-support networks theoretically fall within one of six categories: 1) the caregivers' placement in the social

structure, representing their socio-economic status; 2) the relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient; 3) the demands and conditions of caregiving; 4) the caregivers' social network attachment and the level of their integration into the community or neighborhood; 5) the caregivers' personal assets and resources; and 6) the caregivers' use of formal community services.

Next, the macrosystem refers to larger institutions of culture, such as the economy, and customs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological systems theory emphasizes the impact of wider society on individual level factors, such as how families function and view themselves (Schweiger & O'Brien 2005). The macrosystem level has commonly been referred to as a ''cultural blueprint'' that may influence social structures and activities in the immediate system levels (Bronfenbrenner 1977; as cited in Eamon 2001). Examples of macrosystem level include, for example, race/ethnicity and policies, which affect the particular conditions and processes occurring in the microsystem, such as caregiver-child relationships. As reported by a number of studies (e.g., Beeman et al. 2000; Chipman et al. 2002; Ehrle & Geen 2002; Schwartz 2007), a disproportionate number of children placed in foster care are racial minority children, particularly African Americans. African American children are overrepresented in the child welfare system and are more likely to live in poverty than children of other racial/ethnic groups (Strozier & Krisman, 2007). Additionally, IDEA specifically outlines provisions for individual education rights. The statutes and tenets of the law are formulated through structures of the macrosystem, and are enacted by individuals who deliver services that directly impacts students' lives.

The fifth subsystem, called the chronosystem, defines the role of time in human development. This system was added to the model later and refers to major historical events

and policy changes that directly influenced outcomes for children. As child welfare and educational policies change over the life course, so too will the outcomes for students.

In recent years, researchers have extended the ecological systems theory to examine the relationship between environment and education. For example, Johnson (2008) recently applied the ecological framework to schools, arguing that student achievement could only be understood through examining the complex ecological contexts in which schools are located. According to Johnson (2008), determinants of individual student achievement are not only located within the school (micro-level) but also within students' home environment (meso-level, due to the interaction of school and family), the cultural, political, social and economic climate of the local community (macro-level), and the changes within these systems that occur over time (chrono-level).

As ecological systems theory has developed, the interactions between the individual, systems of influence, and processes that impact development have been described. Brofenbrenner and Morris (1998) posited that proximal processes occur when people interact on a regular basis with micro levels in their environment. Proximal processes are people, objects, and symbols that impact a developing child's life on a fairly regular basis over an extended period of time. For example, a proximal process may include children's interactions with their guardian. Proximal processes are the primary focus of ecological systems theory, yet other interactions with the environment, sometimes referred to as distal processes, should be considered in order to understand the proximal processes. Distal processes are environments and interactions that a developing child does not interact with regularly, yet indirectly impact the child, such as their guardian's employment. Bio-ecological resources of the individual, such as ability, experience, or skill, impact proximal processes. For example, a mother's not

graduating high school may impact her belief about her child's ability to graduate high school. Demands from the social environment may also enable or disrupt proximal processes. Such demands could include expectations in school and unsafe neighborhoods (Brofenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Overall, ecological systems theory posits that children develop within multiple, interdependent systems, and that the immediate family system—the system in which the child has relationships with caring adults—is the most important for the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Children who are removed from their homes because of maltreatment may be particularly at risk for poor educational outcomes because of the disruption in their immediate family system. This disruption may also cause them to withdraw from other systems (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2013). Bronfenbrenner argued, "the ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3).

Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, understanding the ways in which out-of-home placement impacts educational wellbeing becomes a question of how children interact with environment and systems around them.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study examines the relationship between out-of-home placement and educational outcomes for Black children removed from their homes because of maltreatment, abuse and neglect. In the literature, the definition of child maltreatment is ambiguous. For the purposes of this particular study, the term maltreatment will be used as an all-encompassing term covering both abuse and neglect.

Maltreatment

The literature associated with child maltreatment over the past 25 years bears witness to the reality that the effects of maltreatment often echo throughout the lifetime of a child (Bank & Burraston, 2001; Browne & Winkelman, 2007; Carlson, Furby, Armstrong, & Shales, 1997; Cicchetti & Carlson, 1989). Child maltreatment has been recognized to have negative consequences, which include school difficulty, emotional behavioral challenges, substance abuse, and even early death (Anda et al., 2006; Dube, Felitti, Dong, Chapman, Giles, & Anda, 2003; Shields & Cicchetti, 1998; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). Furthermore, the diminished ability of the child to learn and to regulate behavioral and emotional states, which is associated with child maltreatment, often results in a negatively altered developmental trajectory (Nickoletti & Taussig, 2006).

Impacts of Maltreatment on Development

Teicher and colleagues (2006) hypothesized that early childhood abuse and neglect are linked to brain development in multiple ways. They examined how the brain responds to stress through a

cascade of events while measuring the release of stress hormones, which, according to these researchers, enhances the turnover of neurotransmitters in key brain regions. They found that severe stress generates large amounts of neurotransmitter and neurohumeral effects that produce long-lasting changes in brain functioning, and varying degrees of impairment (Teicher, Polcari, Andersen, Anderson & Navalta, 2003). When facing a threat, the body responds by increasing and activating cortisol and other hormones, which in turn triggers the flight or fight response (Davies, 2002). If the child continues to experience ongoing real and perceived danger, the physiological changes begin to negatively impact the body, affecting systems as they develop (Cook et al., 2005; Davies, 2002).

Researchers at Harvard, using brain scans, found that stress in early childhood affected the corpus callosum, the neural pathway connecting the hemispheres. These findings indicate that left and right hemispheric integration may be impacted by the experience of early stress associated with maltreatment. This area of the brain was also shown to be up to 40% smaller in children who experienced early stress than children who did not experience such stress in early childhood (Davies, 2002; Teicher et al., 2003). With deficits in neural communication between the left and right hemispheres, more complex thinking that requires abstract reasoning and planning cannot fully occur (Cook et al., 2005). These neurological differences may directly influence the ways in which children who are maltreated perform in the school environment.

Impact of Maltreatment on Educational Outcomes

The altered neurobiology and associated behavioral and emotional responses of trauma survivors often interfere with their ability to learn, socialize, and integrate prosocially within the school setting (Cole et al., 2005; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). Failure in this setting sets the course for reduced or diminished productivity and engagement in adult society (Cole et al., 2005; Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron, & Shonkoff, 2006). Cook et al. (2005) at the Trauma Center at Justice

Resource Institute described "sensory and emotional deprivation" as having the utmost influence on cognitive development. They found that children who experience trauma demonstrate less creativity and flexibility in problem solving, and have significant delays in receptive and expressive language. These children were also found to have lower IQ scores (Cook et al., 2005; Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001).

Daignalt and Hebert (2009) in a study of social, behavioral, and academic functioning in sexually abused girls found that a substantial amount of girls showed academic-specific difficulties. They used a cluster analysis to develop school functioning profiles. In the academic specific impairment cluster, the girls experienced severe and long-lasting academic difficulties; however, their social and emotional functioning was within the average range. A review of academic history indicated that these particular girls were significantly more likely to have been retained in the past (75%) or to have had other academic problems (50%) prior to the abuse. Daignault and Hebert (2009) found that below-average cognitive functioning was the most common difficulty experienced by this population. This is consistent with other studies indicating that sexual abuse cases have higher rates of learning disability diagnosis (Jonson-Reid, Drake, Kim, Porterfield & Han, 2004). The authors assert that such findings may speak to a larger paradigm of abuse related academic difficulties.

In a similar vein, Jonson-Reid and colleagues (2004) found that even after controlling for other variables, abuse experience precipitated children's involvement in special education. They also concluded that abuse impairs cognitive development and contributes to other risk factors that influence academic success. Similarly, in a study estimating the potential that the initial maltreatment report would be followed by a student's decline in academic performance, Leiter and Johnsen (1997) found that the initial report of maltreatment increased the probability of poor

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academic performance, including falling grades, increasing absenteeism, being retained and special education involvement. According to Cook and colleagues, similar results can be found across maltreatment experiences and are not accounted for by other variables such as poverty (Cook et al., 2005).

Child maltreatment also impacts a child's academic achievement in school. Coohey and colleagues (2011) examined both math and reading levels of children who experienced maltreatment at three points in time. Ultimately, they found that while chronic maltreatment did not appear to impact reading levels directly, it did impact math scores. More specifically, at Wave 1, children who experienced chronic maltreatment scored 13.33 points lower on math scores, 5.93 points lower on math scores at Wave 2, and 8.29 points lower on math scores at Wave 3 (Coohey, Renner, Hua, Zhang, & Whitney, 2011). Similarly, Fantuzzo and colleagues (2011) found that maltreatment impacted a number of subject areas using the TerraNova, 2nd edition scale which measures reading, language, math, and science levels. However, they accounted for timing (pre/post kindergarten) and type of maltreatment (substantiated physical abuse, substantiated neglect, unsubstantiated reports). While there was no statistically significant relationship between subject areas and physical abuse and either pre- or post-kindergarten substantiated physical abuse, there were statistically significant relationships for substantiated neglect and unsubstantiated reports (Fantuzzo, Perlman, & Dobbins, 2011). More specifically, logistic regression analysis of data for children who experienced pre-kindergarten neglect revealed odds ratios of 1.31 for Reading, 1.42 for Language, and 1.35 for Science, but no statistically significant relationship for Math. Post-kindergarten neglect only demonstrated a statistically significant relationship on Science scores. Pre-kindergarten unsubstantiated reports of maltreatment demonstrated a statistically significant relationship on Reading, Math, Language, and Science scores. Post-kindergarten unsubstantiated reports of

maltreatment demonstrated a statistically significant relationship on Reading and Language scores only (Fantuzzo, Perlman, & Dobbins, 2011). These results indicate that early maltreatment may have a more detrimental impact on academic performance than maltreatment that occurs later in development. Furthermore, these studies highlight the importance of taking into consideration both the type of maltreatment and the developmental period when examining the impact of child maltreatment on child academic performance.

Maltreated children often manifest multiple forms of academic risk, show more externalizing and internalizing behavior problems, and have more involvement with special education services (Hoffman-Plotkin & Twentyman, 1984; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). Sullivan and Knutson (2000) found that mental retardation, emotional disorders, and learning disabilities were the most prevalent disabilities among children who experience maltreatment. They are also the most prevalent types of disabilities in U.S. special education. These findings, although significant, do not speak to larger issues surrounding whether or not these types of experiences themselves are precursors to underachievement or whether or not the symptoms associated with such experiences contribute to school and academic difficulties.

In an attempt to solve this research dilemma, Eckenrode, Laird, and Doris (1993) conducted a study in which they controlled for other factors that may influence academic performance. They found that, after adjusting for receipt of public assistance, age, and gender, when compared to non-maltreated children, maltreated children's test scores were nearly a full grade equivalent lower, and their grades were about one third of a letter lower. In an additional study, Rowe and Eckenrode (1999) examined the timing of school difficulties, comparing peaks in difficulties across the elementary school years in their sample of maltreated and non-maltreated children. The authors found that maltreatment increases the chance that children will be retained in kindergarten and first

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grade, but has limited impact thereafter. These findings highlight the complexities of the

relationship between maltreatment and educational outcomes. As such, a study that examines this

relationship, even indirectly, is timely and necessary to the advancement of the field. This study

seeks to contribute to this body of knowledge.

Out-of-home Placement

Being placed outside of the home in substitute care arrangements, such as foster care, kinship

care and other residential facilities, represents one type of risk experienced by children involved in

the child welfare system. Studies demonstrate that children with out-of-home placement histories

have higher risk for poor academic achievement while in school and experience high risk for school

drop out (Fantuzzo & Perlman, 2007). Using an epidemiology framework, Fantuzzo and Perlman

(2007) examined the impact of out-of-home placement and the mediating effects of child

maltreatment and homelessness on academic achievement and school adjustment. They found that

children with out-of-home placement histories were at increased risk for poor literacy and science

achievement, even when they controlled for demographics (Fantuzzo and Perlman, 2007).

Additionally, children with a history of out-of-home placement evidenced reading delays and were

more likely to perform below grade level in math, language and overall performance when compared

to their peers (Zima et al., 2000; Mitic & Rimer, 2002). These findings highlight the importance of

understanding the educational well-being of children in out-of-home placements.

In addition to experiencing greater risk of poor academic achievement, children with out-of-

home placement histories also encounter increased risk of poor academic adjustment (Evans, 2004;

Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; Stein, 1997; Zima et al., 2000). In a study of teachers' assessments of

children with out-of-home placement histories, teachers rated children in foster care as being less

likely to engage in pro-social behaviors and more likely to have difficulty with peer relationships

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(Stein, 1997). Similarly, Zima et al. (2000) found that 34% of children who had been in out-of-home placement had at least one classroom related behavioral problem. A study conducted by Canning (1974) found that children in out-of-home placement were more likely to evidence aggressive and withdrawn behaviors in the classroom. In a longitudinal study conducted by Fanshel and Shinn (1978), children in out-of-home placements had higher rates of school absences than their peers. Likewise, in a population-based study by Weiss and Fantuzzo (2001), children in out-of-home placement were at 28% greater risk of having poor attendance than children without a history of out-of-home placement. Taken together, previous research demonstrates that out-of-home placement severely compromises children's educational well-being across academic and behavioral adjustment outcomes.

Research also demonstrates that placement types may differ in terms of caregiver ability to respond to the academic needs of children. For example, some scholars argue that kinship placements are not monitored and supported as well as other types of placements by the child welfare system (Berrick, Barth & Needell, 1994; Dubowitz et al., 1993). Relative caregivers are, on average, more likely to be African-American, have lower levels of educational attainment, are more likely to receive welfare benefits, and experience higher rates of unemployment, and are older than non-kin caregivers (Ehrle & Geen, 2002). These findings fit within the larger paradigm of the child welfare system, where African-American families are overrepresented, as well as the larger societal context.

Kinship Care

Kinship care has become the fastest growing form of child placement in several countries around the world. In the Unite States, kinship care placement has increasingly become a preferred form of childcare arrangement (Cuddleback, 2004; Ehrle & Geen, 2002). Several studies have

examined academic and behavioral difficulties for children in kinship care (Benedict et al., 1996; Iglehart, 1994; Shin, 2003; Shore, Kelly, LeProhn, & Keller, 2002). In general, children in kinship care are rated by caseworkers, teachers, and parents as behaving better in both home and school settings. Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994) in their study of children in kinship care arrangements in Baltimore found that children in kinship care had lower reading and mathematics scores on the California Achievement Test and lower scores on the Cognitive Abilities test, based on teacher and caregiver reports. However, children in kinship care were slightly less likely to have problematic attendance, suspensions, or expulsions when compared to other Baltimore school children (Dubowitz & Sawyer, 1994).

Few studies have specifically focused on academic or cognitive outcomes for children in either kinship or non-relative care. Primarily descriptive work suggests similar levels of academic difficulties among children in kin and non-relative foster care (Farmer, 2009; Iglehart, 1994; Sawyer & Dubowitz, 1994) or higher school competence among kin-placed children (Tarren-Sweeney & Hazell, 2006), though these studies are unable to account for confounding factors. One study, using NSCAW, found no significant difference between placement types for the developmental trajectories of children ages 0 to 6 (Stacks, Beeghly, Partridge, & Dexter, 2011). However, for older children, another empirical study suggests a decrease in school grades for children spending more time in kinship care (Taussig & Clyman, 2011).

For African-American populations, grandparents are often called upon to be the primary caregiver for children placed in child welfare custody and subsequent kinship care arrangements. Dubowitz and colleagues, in their study of Baltimore children in kinship care arrangements, found that these children were mostly African-American and almost half of them were placed with a grandmother (Dubowitz, Feigelman & Zuravin, 1993). Evidence suggests that children reared by

grandparents are more likely to have been retained compared to children reared in a two-parent home, but performed similarly to children raised by one biological parent (Solomon & Marx, 1995). These findings suggest that it may be important to consider the possible impact of who the primary caregiver will be in kinship care arrangements.

Foster Care

Research has consistently found that child maltreatment and subsequent placement in foster care often results in poor educational outcomes (Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Stone, 2007). However, it is unclear whether these children enter the system already academically behind and in need of special education services, or if the experience of foster care creates these challenges. Nonetheless, it is evident that children in foster care tend to have greater academic, social and behavioral difficulty in school (Zeitlin et al., 2010).

Evans (2001), in a study of virtually all (90%) school-aged children (i.e., at least six years old) entering foster care between 1995 and 1999 in Arkansas, found that school-aged children entering foster care had a mean IQ of 88, which falls into the low average range. Additionally, Evans found discrepancies between measured IQ and achievement in basic reading, math calculation, and written expression skills. Children who were neglected had significantly lower IQs and higher rates of underachievement in basic reading, reading comprehension, and written expression. However, neglected children did not exhibit greater risks for underachievement in math calculation or math reasoning than children entering care for other reasons. This work reflects the general cognitive lags of children at entry to foster care and echoes findings generated from samples of maltreated youth about differences in the type of maltreatment experienced.

Additionally, Stein (1997) surveyed half of teachers of children receiving services from the Children's Home and Aid Society in London, Ontario, and compared these ratings to a community

sample of youth. When compared to the community sample, teachers were more likely to rate foster children as performing below grade level in reading and math, and less likely to possess special skills (i.e., talents or particular strengths). Stein also found that teachers were more likely to rate children in foster care as having relational difficulties with both teachers and peers. Additionally, even after controlling for cognitive delays and special education involvement, teachers were more likely to rate foster children below average in reading and math.

Blome (1997), using the High School and Beyond study, matched youth with a reported history of foster care placement to a comparison group on age, gender, and race to examine outcomes for children in foster care. When controlling for standardized reading and math achievement scores, relative to this comparison group, youth with a foster care placement history were more likely to be placed in general track classrooms and were less likely to enroll in college preparatory courses. These youth were also found to spend less time on homework, to have lower grades and more disciplinary problems and suspensions, and to have lower education-related expectations. Additionally, the youth with foster care placement histories were more than twice as likely to have dropped out, and less likely to receive a GED. Similarly, Buehler, Orme, Post, & Patterson (2000) compared adults who reported a history of foster care placement to a comparison group (matched on gender, race, age, and other characteristics), and to a random sample of adults. They found that although those adults with foster care placement histories were less likely than the random sample to have completed high school, their educational attainment was equivalent to the matched comparison group. As such, individuals with foster care placement histories may be at greater risk for poor educational attainment than individuals without foster care experiences.

As a counter argument to all of the literature previously presented on out-of-home placement, Healey and Fisher (2011) employed a resiliency perspective to examine the relationship of early

childhood factors to the development of favorable outcomes in middle childhood for children in

foster care. They found that a lack of environmental stress had a positive relationship with emotional

regulation and school adjustment. They also found that placement instability compounds the

negative consequences of abuse and neglect (Healey & Fisher, 2011). This study took a resilience

perspective for examining outcomes for children in foster care and highlighted that children in foster

care placement (and other out-of-home placements) can exhibit resiliency in the face of adversity.

Residential Group Care

Residential group care encompasses a variety of group settings including group homes,

residential treatment facilities, and shelters. These sites not only provide services for youth

receiving child welfare services, but also include homeless and runaway youth (Strack,

Anderson, Graham, & Tomoyasu, 2007). A national estimate of youth receiving child welfare

services that reside in group homes or similar residential facilities is between 15- 30% (Strack,

et al., 2007). This population in child welfare experience a high number of placement changes,

significant incidences of mental health disorders, and spend longer periods in out-of-home

placements (Freundlich &Avery, 2005; James, Landsverk, Leslie, Slymen, & Zhang, 2008).

In a study of young children comparing short-term group care to foster care, DeSena and

colleagues (2005) found that children in foster care fared significantly better than children in

group care. More specifically, they found that children in group-care spent more time in out-of-

home care than did their foster care counterparts. DeSena et.al, (2005) also found that children

in foster care were more likely to be placed with their siblings, more likely to be placed near

their town of origin, and less likely to experience new incidents of abuse. The only outcome

that substantively favored group care placement was the likelihood of children being placed

with their siblings at intake, which happened more frequently for young children who were

placed in group care immediately after removal from their home environments (DeSena et al., 2005). Similarly, negative outcomes were also found for adolescents placed in group-care settings. In one study, adolescents placed in group-care through child welfare services were more likely than youth in foster care to be arrested in the five-year period following placement (Ryan, Marshall, Herz, &Hernandez, 2008). These studies indicate that when compared to their foster care counterparts, children and adolescents in group-care placement experience worse outcomes across multiple indicators such as special education involvement.

Special Education

Research suggests that students identified as at-risk are often over-represented in special education classes. While this disproportionate placement may be due in part to culturally insensitive diagnostic tests, ethnicity, and low socio-economic status, special education status directly influences outcomes for students (Artiles & Trent, 1994). It is estimated that up to 80% of children in foster care have emotional and behavioral disorders and 48% of children referred for maltreatment have clinically significant emotional and behavioral problems (Burns et al., 2004). Approximately 30-50% (compared to 10-12% for the general child population) of children in a foster care placement receive special education services (California Education Collaborative for Children in Foster Care, 2008). Wulczyn et al. (2009) found that approximately 45% of sixth to eighth graders in out-of-home care were classified with a documented disability (compared to 16% in a general population sample).

Few studies focus on the intersecting population of youth with disabilities who were also involved in the child welfare system. Barrat and Berliner's (2013) study of approximately 43,000 youth in foster care and 5.9 million youth in California's public school system found that California's foster care youth scored lower on state tests than students in all other subgroups,

including English Language Learners (ELLs), low SES, and special education. They used state databases from the California Department of Education and California Department of Social Services, and pulled individual educational data for all public California students enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year. They also found that on the reading section of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), foster care youth scored 10 percentage points lower than students in the low SES group. Only 29% of foster care youth scored in the proficient range, while 24% of youth in the special education subgroup scored in the proficient range. The researchers refer to these discrepancies as an achievement gap. On the math portion of the CAHSEE, foster care youth had the lowest scores of all subgroups, including ELLs, low SES, and special education (Barrat and Berliner, 2013).

Smithgall and colleagues (2004) at the University of Chicago used information from their Integrated Database on Children and Family Services, which is pulled from the Chicago Public School Information System and Children and Youth Center Information System, to examine the scores of youth in out-of-home placements on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. They found that in June 2003 among youth in out-of-home care in grades 3 through 8, almost half scored in the bottom quartile in reading. The number of out-of-home care youth scoring in the bottom quartile was higher than other Chicago Public School students (Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, George, & Courtney, 2004).

Additionally, Geenen and Powers (2006) conducted a smaller study to compare four groups of youth ages 13 to 21 years: (a) 70 foster care youth with disabilities, (b) 88 foster care youth without disabilities, (c) 81 non-foster care youth with disabilities, and (d) 88 non-foster care youth without disabilities. The study found that students in foster care with disabilities had the lowest GPA, and earned significantly fewer credits toward graduation. Of particular

significance was the fact that these youth were twice as likely to be in a more restrictive placement than non-foster care youth with disabilities. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the significance of special education services to the overall educational outcomes of students in out-of-home placements.

Grade Retention

In addition to the increased involvement with special education services, students in out-of-home placements also experience challenges related to grade retention. Grade retention has traditionally been defined as requiring a student who has completed a grade to repeat that grade for an additional year (Jimerson, 2001). The primary premise of retention is that if students who are not reaching grade level expectations are given an extra year in the same grade, they will develop the academic skills they were initially unable to demonstrate, in turn reducing the likelihood of school failure in the future (Dombek & Connor, 2012; Silberglitt, Appleton, Burns, & Jimerson, 2006). According to Scherr (2007), 33 % of youth in foster care had been retained at least once during their school careers. Scherr's meta-analysis highlights that in the 1980s and 1990s, retention rates for foster care youth peaked at 45 % and 41 %, respectively. However, more recently they have decreased to about 22 %. Despite these decreases, it appears that grade retention continues to plague students in out-of-home placements.

There have been several common reasons for retention cited in the literature including: failure to meet grade level expectations, especially on high stakes testing; inability to make "adequate progress" or poor performance in one or more content areas (e.g., reading and math); and immaturity or age (Dombek & Connor, 2012). However, research has consistently documented that retention rates differ across gender, ethnicity, and other demographic groups. Several studies have suggested that males are about twice as likely to repeat a grade as females,

and that retention rates are higher for students of minority status, particularly Black and Hispanic students (Jimerson et al., 2006; Tingle et al., 2012).

Furthermore, research suggests that there are significant limitations to realizing the positive effects that retention sets out to achieve (Tingle et al., 2012). For example, 86% of studies in the review by Holmes (1989) showed negative achievement outcomes, and all reported that any benefits diminished rapidly over time (as cited in Tingle et al., 2012). Any of the small, positive effects that have been seen in students who have been retained are not maintained beyond a few years (Roderick, 1995). Additionally, in Jimerson's review (2001), 95% of 169 achievement comparisons indicated statistically significant differences favoring promoted students and 47% favored comparison groups of low-achieving peers. Jimerson and colleagues (2006) reported, "results of the meta-analyses comprising nearly 700 analyses of achievement, from over 80 studies during the past 75 years, do not support the use of grade retention as an early intervention to enhance academic achievement" (p. 88).

These studies also indicate that retaining students can have harmful effects on socio-emotional and behavioral adjustment (Tingle et al., 2012). Students have also ranked grade retention among the top three of stressful events (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2005; Yamamoto & Byrnes, 1987). Students who are retained generally have difficulty with their peers and display poorer social adjustment, more negative attitudes toward school, less frequent attendance, and more problem behaviors (Byrnes, 1989; Holmes, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1990). Finally, while few studies have examined long-term follow up of retained students, those studies that do exist indicate that students who are retained have poorer long-term outcomes and drop out more frequently than their matched low achieving, but socially promoted peers (Jimerson et al., 2002; Martin 2009; Stearns et al., 2007; Tingle et al., 2012).

Research has found that grade retention has increased due to the No Child Left Behind Act, further impacting outcomes of at-risk youth (Jimerson, 2001). With the increased emphasis on high stakes testing as a demonstration of academic success brought on by NCLB, standardized assessments have been used to make educational decisions. "States increasingly use performance on these tests to evaluate schools and to reach decisions about promotion of children to the next grade level" (Wu et al., 2008, p. 727). Grade retention under high stakes testing often assumes that the problem lies within the student and disregards other factors, like life circumstance and school engagement, that may be undermining the student's success. Employing an ecological systems framework to examine the intricacies of out-of-placement, particularly as it relates to Black youth, sheds light on the interconnection between a student's environment and grade retention. The environment, in other words, is central to understanding educational outcomes, namely in a way that takes seriously key environmental circumstances that give meaning to students' educational experience. School engagement is another front upon which these dynamics are made manifest.

School Engagement

School engagement is a multidimensional construct that is made up of three components: behavior, emotion, and cognition (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Behavioral engagement represents the actions and practices that students direct toward school and learning. It can include students' conduct, like attending class and completing schoolwork, as well as students' involvement in learning and academic tasks and participation in extracurricular activities. Emotional engagement refers to a student's affective reactions and sense of belonging to school (Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Finn, 1989). Cognitive engagement refers to a student's self-regulated approach to learning and the strategies she or he employs. This includes

metacognitive skills such as students' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own cognition (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Zimmerman, 1989).

Behavioral Engagement

Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between behavioral engagement and achievement outcomes, such as standardized test scores and grades, for elementary, middle, and high school students (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Marks, 2000; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Discipline problems have been associated with lower school performance across grade levels (Finn & Rock, 1997). Finn and Rock (1997) found significant differences in behavioral engagement among high school students classified as resilient (still in school and academically successful), non-resilient completers (still in school and not academically successful) and non-completers (dropped out). Additionally, the Beginning School Study (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993; Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997) showed that behavioral engagement (as rated by teachers) in the first grade were related to achievement test score gains, grades over the first 4 years, and decisions to drop out of high school.

Chavous and colleagues (2003) however, did not find a significant relationship between GPA, their measure of behavioral engagement, and racial identity in their study. This calls into question whether or not GPA is a good measure of behavioral engagement, considering how other variables may confound the measure of GPA, for instance, student ability, academic instruction received, or variance in teacher expectations and grading. Chistle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007) have argued that attendance is a stronger indicator of behavioral engagement, because it has been found to be significantly correlated with feelings of belonging in school, which is an indicator of affective engagement.

Attendance has been described as a behavioral outcome related to feelings of school belonging and support (Chistle et al., 2007). As such, poor school attendance has been believed to be an important indicator of whether or not a student is engaged in school. For students in out-of-home placement, attendance is potentially more difficult because of placement changes and may directly influence their overall level of engagement. Furthermore, for Black students in particular, attendance can indicate whether they are behaviorally engaged in school and would more likely have a relationship with factors of affective engagement, such as school connectedness and perceived support.

Emotional/Affective Engagement

There is limited research on the relationship between emotional engagement and achievement. Some studies have shown a correlation between achievement and a combined measure of emotional and behavioral engagement (Connell et al., 1994; Skinner et al., 1990). These studies do not, however, allow for an examination of the unique contribution of emotional engagement to academic outcomes. One study examined the unique relationship between emotional engagement and academic outcomes. Voelkl (1997) found that school identification, when measured by value and school belonging, was significantly correlated with achievement test scores for fourth and seventh grade White students, but not for African American students.

Lewis, Sullivan, and Bybee (2006) examined how Black students affectively engage in school by measuring their feelings of whether or not they felt they belonged in school. They studied whether increased communalism for Black middle-school students within the context of an African-centered pedagogy would increase reports of belongingness, motivation to achieve, and participation in activities that promote social change. For their study, students in eighth grade attending a predominantly Black middle-school were randomly assigned to a life skills

course (control group) or a Black social justice and leadership course (Lewis et al., 2006). The leadership course was an intervention that focused on fostering positive racial identity (i.e., the feeling one has towards one's race), which they argued would lead to increased feelings of belongingness in school (Lewis et al., 2006). According to the authors, students in the intervention group reported higher rates of belonging than those students in the control group. Students did not differ in rates of belonging before being assigned to their groups. Furthermore, reports of motivation to achieve and interest in being an agent for social change increased for the intervention group, but not for the control group. Although this study only measured one indicator of affective engagement (i.e., feelings of belongingness), findings further support that racial identity is a factor that needs to be considered when measuring school engagement for students of color, since there appeared to be a relationship between racial identity and increased reports of affective engagement.

Studies have also examined the correlational relationships between affective engagement and behavioral engagement (e.g., school completion and GPA) (Chavous et al., 2003; Harper & Tuckman, 2006). These studies consistently demonstrated that different racial identity profiles were related to feelings of belonging in school. Specifically, Chavous and others (2003) found that Black students who endorsed positive attitudes about their race also rated more positive feelings about their belongingness in school and had stronger beliefs in their ability to complete high school. This was associated with high school completion and enrolling in college or other higher education programs. In this case, it appeared that the attitudes one had about his or her race had a significant relationship with affective engagement. Understanding attitudes and beliefs of Black students could help educators effectively engage Black students in school via prevention and intervention programs targeted at racial identity and its relationship to students'

feelings about school.

Sociocultural Influences on Engagement

Previous research has shown that family, community, and cultural context directly influence school engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Mehan et al., 1996; Ogbu, 2003). In a study investigating the sociocultural factors (discrimination, racial socialization, and ethnic identity) that may be related to school engagement among African American youth, Dotterer, McHale, and Crouter (2009), found that discrimination was negatively related to school self-esteem and school bonding. More specifically, they found that for boys ethnic identity contributed significantly to school bonding, but for girls ethnic identity moderated the relationship between discrimination and school bonding. Added to this, they found that when girls experienced more discrimination and identified less with their ethnic identities, they also reported lower school bonding. It is important to note that discrimination, racial socialization, and ethnic identity were not related to school grades (Dotterer et al., 2009).

Wang, Willett, and Eccles (2010) examined students' levels of cognitive, psychological, and behavioral engagement, gender, and ethnicity. In seeking to determine whether discrepancies in students' ratings of engagement were related to error or inconsistency in measurement or due to students' gender and ethnicity, the researchers found evidence that such differences may be explained by gender and cultural background. Among the students sampled, girls reported higher levels of behavioral and psychological engagement than boys, while African American students endorsed less behavioral engagement but greater emotional engagement than White students. These findings indicate that gender and ethnicity may influence the type of engagement experienced by students, rather than merely its presence or absence among particular populations.

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Johnson, Crosnoe, and Elder (2001) found that African American students reported lower levels of school attachment (described as sense of belonging), but were more likely to pay attention and complete homework (indicative of behavioral engagement) than their White and Hispanic counterparts. Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff (2003), in their study of ethnic discrimination and school adjustment in African American youth, found that perceived discrimination by teachers and peers was negatively correlated with academic motivation, but was not significantly related to academic achievement as measured by school grades. Chavous et al., (2003) examined the relationship between racial identity (often contingent upon family beliefs and values), academic beliefs, and academic performance. They found positive associations between racial identity and academic beliefs, including school attachment and school efficacy. These findings underscore the ways in which culture, family and community influence how students engage with the school environment.

A child's ability to align herself with a peer group, succeed academically, and be motivated to participate and achieve in the school context are important to school engagement (Alexander, Entwisle, Blyth & McAdoo, 1988). Additionally, school engagement has been found to be a necessary precursor for academic success (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Finn, 1989). Researchers found that students who are more engaged in school perform better academically (Newmann, et al., 1992). Students who have regular school attendance, concentrate on learning, and adhere to school rules, generally receive higher grades and perform better on standardized tests (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprar, & Pastorelli, 1996; Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). In contrast, lack of school engagement can have serious effects on student outcomes, including academic underachievement, deviant behavior, and greater risk of school dropout (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Rationale

Present Study

Research indicates that children's exposure to maltreatment during development often results in multiple and varied impairments. Children in the child welfare system have disproportionately high rates of emotional and behavioral problems (Landsverk, Garland, & Leslie, 2002; McAlpine, Marshall, & Doran, 2001). Yet, research suggests that only 25- 50% of children in child welfare receive necessary mental health services; the statistics for other services are not significantly better (Burns, et al., 2004; Hurlburt, et al., 2004). Untreated behavioral health problems also have a detrimental effect on child development, and are associated with academic difficulties, increased high school drop-out rates, and increased risk of homelessness and/or involvement with the criminal justice system in later life (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; Taussig, 2002; Zima, et al., 2000).

As such, an investigation into the relationship between out-of-home placement and educational outcomes for this vulnerable population can provide invaluable insights that could influence the ways in which services are provided to this particular population. It may also provide educators with a new way of understanding and interacting with this population. As children enter school environments, their home and community environments directly impact their performance. Because the extent to which these environments are negative is often unknown by educators, working with these particular students is often more difficult. Various other factors (e.g., constant changes in placement, lack of teacher knowledge of traumatic responses, etc.) further impede the success of these students.

This study aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature on out-of-home placement of children and its impacts on educational outcomes, while also contributing indirectly to research on the effects of maltreatment. By studying the relationship between the two, this project sought to

provide insight into new forms of intervention and new modes of thinking about the experiences of children within the school environment. Previous research has focused primarily on younger children. As such, an investigation of how out-of-home placement impacts education and academic achievement of adolescents will address current gaps in the literature. Additionally, the limited amount of research on outcomes for this population has focused on foster care. However, because children who are maltreated often experience different types of placements, this study targets youth who are also in kinship care and other settings, seeking to move toward a more representative sample.

The present study was designed to address limitations of the previous research and achieve two primary goals. The primary goal of this study was to examine the experiences of Black adolescents in out-of-home placements. That is to say, this study investigated the ways in which out-of-home placement impacts educational well-being of this particular population. Additionally, this study sought to provide insights into the educational trajectories for this population. The present study addressed five specific research questions:

1) Are there significant differences in level of school engagement between Black adolescents in out-of-home placement and those receiving in-home services?

2) Are there significant differences in level of school engagement for Black adolescents in the three types of out-of-home placements—foster care, kinship care, and other (group home, shelter, etc.)?

3) Are there significant differences in academic achievement for Black adolescents placed in the three types of out-of-home settings—foster care, kinship care, and other (group home, shelter, etc.)?

4) Is there a significant relationship between IEP status and grade progression for

Black adolescents receiving child welfare services?

5) When controlling for other variables (age, gender, SES), does the type of out-of-home placement significantly predict: (a) school engagement, (b) academic achievement (c) grade progress, and (d) special education involvement for Black adolescents involved in investigations of child maltreatment by child protective services?

Hypothesized outcomes are as follows:

1. Significant differences in level of school engagement exist between Black adolescents receiving services in home and those in out of home placements.

2. Significant differences exist in level of school engagement of Black adolescents in the three different types of out-of-home placement.

3. Significant differences exist in academic achievement of Black adolescents in the three different types of out-of-home placement.

4. Current IEP status is independent of grade progression for Black adolescents receiving child welfare services.

5. The type of out-of-home placement significantly contributes to academic achievement, school engagement, special education involvement, and grade progression for Black adolescents.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Data Source

This dissertation study involved secondary data analysis of the second National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II). The NSCAW II is a longitudinal study intended to address a range of questions about the functioning, service needs, and service use of children who come in contact with the child welfare system. The study was sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). It examined the well-being of children involved with child welfare agencies; captures information about the investigation of abuse or neglect that brought the child into the study; collects information about the child's family; provides information about child welfare interventions and other services; and describes key characteristics of child development. Of particular interest to the original study were children's health, mental health, and developmental risks, especially for those children who experienced the most severe abuse and exposure to violence (Dolan, Smith, Casanueva, & Ringeisen, 2011).

The original NSCAW II study included 5,872 children who range in age from birth to 17.5 years old at the time of sampling. Children were sampled from child welfare investigations closed between February 2008 and April 2009, from 81 counties in 30 states. Of those children in the original sample, 2, 237 children were in out-of-home placements and 3, 636 were receiving in home services. It is important to note that in the original study, infants and children

in out-of-home placement were oversampled to ensure adequate representation of high-risk

groups (Casanueva, Tueller, Smith, Dolan, and Ringesein, 2014). Face-to-face interviews or

assessments were conducted with children, parents and nonparent adult caregivers (e.g., foster

parents, kin caregivers, group home caregivers), and investigative caseworkers.

Baseline data collection began in March 2008 and was completed in September 2009.

The overall weighted response rate at NSCAW II baseline was 55.8%. At Wave 2, children and

families were re-interviewed approximately 18 months after the close of the NSCAW II index

investigation. The NSCAW II cohort of children who were approximately 2 months to 17.5

years old at baseline ranged in age from 16 months to 19 years old at Wave 2. Data collection

for the second wave of the study began in October 2009 and was completed in January 2011. At

Wave 3, children and families were re-interviewed approximately 36 months after the close of

the NSCAW II index investigation. In the original Wave 3 sample, there were 5,872 children

ranging from 2 to 20 years old. The racial, age, and setting distributions are presented in Tables

1, 2, and 3.

Table 1*. Race Description for All NSCAW-II Wave 3 Participants (Weighted Percent)*

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Missing	3,750	63.9	63.9
Refused	7	.1	.1
Don't know	395	6.7	6.7
Native Indian/Alaskan	125	2.1	2.1
Black	579	9.9	9.9
White	954	16.2	16.2
Other	62	1.1	1.1
Total	5,872	100.0	100.0

Table 2. *Age Description for All Wave Three Participants*

Age	Frequency	Percent
Missing	803	13.7
2	17	.3
3	1,477	25.2
4	437	7.4
5	229	3.9
6	212	3.6
7	215	3.7
8	180	3.1
9	178	3.0
10	194	3.3
11	187	3.2
12	141	2.4
13	145	2.5
14	124	2.1
15	136	2.3
16	123	2.1
17	119	2.0
18	149	2.5
19	125	2.1
20	59	1.0
21	1	.0
Total Cases	5,872	100.0

Table 3. *Setting (Service Type) Description for All NSCAW-II Wave 3 Participants*

	Frequency	Percent
Missing Data	1,757	29.8
In-Home: Bio Parent	2,599	44.3
In-Home: Adoptive Parent	655	11.2
Formal Kin Care	193	3.3
Informal Kin Care	369	6.3
Foster Care	228	3.9
Group Home/Res Program	42	.7
Other OOH Arrangement	29	.5
Total Cases	5,872	100.0

The NSCAW II cohort of children who were approximately 2 months to 17.5 years old at baseline ranged in age from 34 months to 20 years old at Wave 3. Data collection for the third wave of the study began in June 2011and was completed in December 2012. Wave 3 interviews were completed with 4,143 children and 3,942 caregivers. On average, interviews with children and caregivers were conducted 38 months (range 34 to 58 months) after the investigation end date. Approximately 26% of children and families had received services since the baseline interview and, thus, required a services caseworker interview. Wave 3 interviews were completed with 1,300 caseworkers. On average, services caseworker interviews were conducted 39 months after the investigation end date (range 35 to 54 months). Wave 3 weighted response rates were 80.2% for children, 82.6% for caregivers, and 93.7% for caseworkers. The current study is primarily interested in the experiences of adolescents; as such, it focuses on Wave 3 data, collected approximately 36 months after baseline or Wave 1. At Wave 3, more of the original sample had reached adolescents, providing more cases to examine.

Participants

This study drew on Wave 3 of the NSCAW II and focused on examining educational

outcomes for Black adolescents between 11 and 17 years of age. Therefore, after selecting

relevant cases using age and race variables, there was a final sample size of 284. The

descriptive statistics for the sample of selected cases are shown in Table 4. As Table 4

demonstrates, most adolescents received in-home services (68.6%). Among those who received

out-of-home services, 17.6% received kinship care (8.8% informal and 8.8% formal), 9.9%

received foster care, and 3.9% received other types of services (3.5% Group Home/Residential

and 0.4% other OOH arrangements).

Table 4. *Demographic Characteristics of Wave 3 Black Adolescents Age 11 to 17*

	N	Percent
Race/ethnicity		
Black	284	100
Setting		
In Home	195	68.6
Formal Kin Care	25	8.8
Informal Kin Care	25	8.8
Foster Care	28	9.9
Group Home/Res Program	10	3.5
Other OOH Arrangement	1	0.4
Age (years)		
11	52	18.3
12	41	14.4
13	49	17.3
14	35	12.3
15	42	14.8
16	35	12.3
17	30	10.6

Assessment and Measures

The primary independent variable was out-of-home placement, which included five levels: formal kin care, informal kin care, foster care, group home/residential program, and other out-of-home arrangements. Formal kin care includes situations where the primary caregiver has a kin relationship to the child and where the caregiver is receiving payments from the Child Welfare System. Informal kin care indicates that the primary caregiver has a kin relationship to the child, but is not receiving payments from the Child Welfare System. Foster care indicates that the child's primary caregiver was identified as a foster parent. Group home/residential program indicates that a child was currently living in a group home or residential facility. Other out-of-home placement includes situations where the primary caregiver was identified as "other nonrelative" and where the primary caregiver was not receiving foster parent payments. These five levels were then recoded into three levels: foster care (OH1), kinship care—combining formal and informal kin care (OH2), and other—combining group homes/residential facilities and other out-of-home arrangements (OH3).

Two of the main outcomes of interest were school engagement and special education involvement. These concepts were operationalized using items from the child, caseworker, and/or caregiver interview. School engagement was assessed using an eleven-item survey, which inquired about the child's feelings and experiences at school. Each of the eleven items were measured on an ordinal scale, indicating willingness to be involved in school, ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (almost always). Items from the school engagement survey were listed in Table 5. In order to ensure that the overall school engagement score represented positive engagement, three items were excluded from analyses because of the negative nature of the required response.

Table 5. *School engagement items*

Scale	Questions	1 2 3 4
Emotional engagement	How often do you enjoy being in school?	
	How often do you hate being in school?	
	How often do you find the schoolwork hard to understand?*	
	How often do you find your classes interesting?	
Cognitive Engagement	How often do you try to do your best work in school?	
	How often do you get your homework done?	
	How often do you listen carefully or pay attention in school?	
	How often do you fail to complete or turn in your assignments?*	
Behavioral engagement	How often do you get sent to the office, or have to stay after school because of misbehavior?*	
	How often do you get along with your teachers?	
	How often do you get along with other students?	

*items excluded from the school engagement analyses

The special education variable is a dichotomous variable, with children being divided into two groups (current IEP vs. no IEP); current IEP was coded 1 for Yes and 0 for No. For Grade Progression measures, the repeated grade variable was coded as 1 for those who reported to have repeated a grade and 0 for those who had not. By coding this way, it was assumed that those without an explicit response to repeated grade did not repeat a grade. Academic Achievement is comprised of standard scores obtained on two subtests of the Woodcock Johnson III - Tests of Achievement: Applied Problems and Letter-Word Identification. In total, there were 272 valid cases with complete responses and 12 cases with missing data. The 272 cases with complete responses were retained and the other 12 were removed for final analysis.

Table 6 outlines the descriptive statistics for all study variables.

Table 6. *Variables and Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	M	SD	Range	N%
Special education (current IEP)				
Yes=1				Yes=28%
No=0				No=72%
School Engagement (positive)	25.8	3.82	11 – 44	
Academic Achievement				
WJ III Applied Problems	84.89	16.18	37-120	
WJ III Letter-Word Identification	90.52	22.36	71-116	
Youth Age in years	13.7		11-17	
Grade Progression (repeated grade)				
Yes=1				Yes= 98.8%
No=0				No= 1.2%

Statistical Analysis

A quantitative approach was used to evaluate the intersection of out-of-home placement and education outcomes. Data were analyzed using SPSS 23 software, with appropriate weighting.

Differences in level of school engagement between adolescents in out-of-home placements and those receiving in home services (Hypothesis 1) were evaluated using a t-test. Differences between the three types of placements as they relate to school engagement (Hypothesis 2) were tested through a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), with foster care, kinship care, and other being the independent variables and educational outcomes as the dependent variable. Differences between the three types of placements as they relate to academic achievement (Hypothesis 3) were tested through two separate one-way analysis of variances (ANOVA). Foster care, kinship care, and other were the independent variables and educational outcome was the dependent variable. The relationship between IEP status and grade progression (Hypothesis 4) was assessed using a chi-square. Multiple regression analyses were used to evaluate the ways in which type of out-of-home placement contributes to school engagement and academic achievement when controlling for other

child characteristics (Hypothesis 5). Logistic regression analyses were used to evaluate the ways in which out-of-home placement contributes to grade progression and special education involvement (Hypothesis 5).

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. All electronic files from the National Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect were de-identified prior to receipt.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II (Wave 3), this study aimed to investigate the relationship between out-of-home placement and educational outcomes for Black adolescents, focusing primarily on school engagement and special education involvement. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 23, and a p-value of less than .05 was required for significance.

Question 1:

Are there significant differences in levels of school engagement between Black adolescents in out-of-home placement and those receiving in-home services?

In the original dataset, in-home services included in-home biological parents and in-home adoptive parents. Out-of-home services included formal kin care, informal kin care, foster care, and other services. Steps were taken to consolidate the data. More specifically, this study set out to determine whether or not differences existed between those receiving in-home services and those receiving out-of-of home services. First, the five different types of out-of-home placements were regrouped into one category: out-of-home service. Next, the two types of in-home services were regrouped into one category: in-home services. The results are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7. *Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for School Engagement*

	Service Type								
	In-home			Out-of-home					
	M	SD	N	M	SD	n	t	df	p
School Engagement	25.83	3.85	184	25.74	3.79	88	.187	27	.850

An independent samples t-test was used to compare the mean level of school engagement of children receiving in-home services (*M* = 25.83, *SD* = 3.85) and children receiving out-of-home services *(M = 25.74, SD = 3.79)*. Using an alpha level of 0.05, this test was found to be not statistically significant, *t* = 0.187, *p* >0.05. Thus, there are no significant differences in level of school engagement between Black adolescents in out-of-home placement and those receiving in-home services.

Question 2:

Are there significant differences in level of school engagement for Black adolescents placed in the three types of out-of-home placement—foster care, kinship care, and other (group home, shelter, etc.)?

To determine whether or not differences existed in level of school engagement based on type of out-of-home placement, the independent variable (out-of-home placement type) was regrouped into three categories: foster care, kinship care (formal kin care and informal kin care) and other (group home and other OOH arrangements). The results are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8. *Descriptive Statistics for School Engagement Based on Placement Type*

	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Foster care	25.85	4.37	.842	24.121	27.582	17.00	32.00
Kinship care	25.60	3.59	.508	24.579	26.621	17.00	32.00
Other	26.09	3.45	1.040	23.774	28.408	20.00	32.00
Total	25.74	3.79	.404	24.935	26.542	17.00	32.00

A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare the mean level of school engagement of children receiving foster care services ($M = 25.85$, $SD =4.37$), kinship care services ($M = 25.60$, $SD = 3.59$), and other out-of-home services ($M = 26.09$, $SD = 3.45$). Using an alpha level of 0.05, this test was found to be not statistically significant, $F(2, 85) = 0.091$, *p>0.05*. Thus, there are no significant differences in school engagement for Black adolescents placed in the three types of out-of-home placement—foster care, kinship care, and other types of out-of-home services. Table 9 further outlines the results for the ANOVA.

Table 9. *ANOVA Statistic for School Engagement Based on Placement Type*

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.672	2	1.336	.091	.913
Within Groups	1248.316	85	14.686		
Total	1250.989	87			

Question 3:

Are there significant differences in academic achievement for Black adolescents placed in the three types of out-of-home settings—foster care, kinship care, and other (group home, shelter, etc.)?

To answer question 3, two separate one-way analysis of variance were used to compare the mean standard score on the WJ III Applied Problems subtest and the mean standard score on the WJ III Letter-Word Identification subtest for children receiving foster care services, kinship care services, and other out-of-home services.

A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare the mean standard score on the WJ III Applied Problems subtest for children receiving foster care services ($M = 83.85$, $SD = 18.63$), kinship care services ($M = 86.73$, $SD = 15.33$), and other out-of-home services ($M = 79.18$, $SD = 12.92$). Using an alpha level of 0.05, this test was found to be not statistically significant, $F (2, 84) = 1.06$, $p>0.05$ (See Tables 10 and 11). Thus, there were no significant differences in performance on the WJ III Applied Problems subtest for Black adolescents placed in the three types of out-of-home placement—foster care, kinship care, and other types of out-of-home services.

Table 10. *Descriptive Statistics for Applied Problems by Placement Type*

	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Foster care	27	83.85	18.625	3.584	76.48	91.22	38	115
Kinship care	49	86.73	15.327	2.190	82.33	91.14	37	120
Other	11	79.18	12.921	3.896	70.50	87.86	53	95
Total	87	84.89	16.182	1.735	81.44	88.33	37	120

Table 11. *ANOVA Statistic for Applied Problems Scores Based on Placement Type*

	Sum of Squares	d*f*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	554.256	2	277.128	1.060	.351
Within Groups	21964.595	84	261.483		
Total	22518.851	86			

A second one-way analysis of variance was used to compare the mean standard scores from the WJ III Letter-Word Identification subtest for children receiving foster care services (*M* = 89.04, *SD* =24.90), kinship care services (*M* = 91.20, *SD* = 22.68), and other out-of-home services (*M* = 91.09, *SD* = 14.49). Tables 12 and 13 outline the results of the analysis. Using an alpha level of 0.05, this test was found to be not statistically significant, $F(2, 84) = 0.084$, *p>0.05*. Thus, there were no significant differences in academic achievement outcomes for Black adolescents placed in the three types of out-of-home placement.

Table 12. *Descriptive Statistics for Letter-Word Identification Scores by Placement Type*

	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Foster care	89.04	24.904	4.793	79.19	98.89	1	116
Kinship care	91.20	22.679	3.240	84.69	97.72	1	144
Other	91.09	14.488	4.368	81.36	100.82	71	116
Total	90.52	22.360	2.397	85.75	95.28	1	144

Table 13. *ANOVA Statistic for Letter-Word Identification Scores Based on Placement Type*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	85.893	2	42.946	.084	.919
Within Groups	42911.831	84	510.855		
Total	42997.724	86			

Based on the aforementioned scores on the WJ III Applied Problems and Letter-Word Identification subtests, it appears that there were no significant differences related to academic achievement among Black adolescents in the three out-of-home placement settings.

Question 4:

Is there a significant relationship between IEP status and grade progression for Black adolescents receiving child welfare services?

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between current IEP status and grade repetition. The test of association results indicated that Black adolescents' IEP status did not appear to be statistically associated with grade retention. The results showed no statistically significant difference between those students with an IEP and those without a current IEP (see Table 14). These results, furthermore, suggest that Black adolescents receiving in-home and out-of-home services repeat grades at similar rates. These findings also highlight the fact that grade repetition occurs often within this population; out of the 272 cases within this sample, 195 Black adolescents repeated at least one grade. Additionally, a significant number of them were involved in special education programs.

Table 14. *Results of Chi-square Test for Grade Retention by IEP Status*

Repeated Grade	IEP Status	
	Current IEP	No IEP
Yes	187	8
No	71	6

Note. $\chi^2 = 1.539$, df = 1 p = .230

Question 5:

When controlling for other variables (age, gender, SES) does the type of out-of-home placement significantly predict: (a) school engagement, (b) academic achievement, (c) grade progress, and (d) special education involvement for Black adolescents involved in investigations of child maltreatment by child protective services?

To answer question 5, regression analyses were performed to investigate the role of out-of-home placements in predicting the various educational outcomes for Black adolescents receiving child welfare services. To this end, effects were examined separately for adolescents in the three types of out-of-home placement in order to determine whether such placement histories would predict level of school engagement, academic achievement, grade repetition, and special education involvement. The demographic variables of age, gender, and socioeconomic status were considered as possible confounding variables.

In order to facilitate the analysis, two new dummy coded variables, OH1 and OH2, were also created in the models. OH1 equals "1" when a child belongs to the foster care group or "0" otherwise. OH2 equals "1" when a child belongs to formal or informal kinship care groups or "0" otherwise. The other out-of-home placement group was set as the reference group. Household income was used as an indicator for social economic status. There were four categories of income level, and the few missing responses were coded into the lowest level.

For each question, the dependent variable was chosen before running regression analyses. More specifically, for 5a, school engagement was chosen as the dependent variable,

5b was further divided into 5b1, with Applied Problems as the dependent variable, and 5b2 used

WJ III Letter Word Identification as the dependent variable. For question c, repeated grade

information reported by caregivers was used as the dependent variable. For question d, Current

IEP status was used as the dependent variable. The dependent variables in questions 5d and 5e

were binary variables (0 versus 1); therefore, a logistic regression model was used for the two

models.

School Engagement: First, regression analysis was run to investigate the contribution of the

three out-of-home placement types to school engagement, controlling for selected demographic

variables. Table 15 outlines the results of this first analysis.

Table 15. *Summary of School Engagement Regression Analysis*

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				1.323	0.024
Age	-0.270	0.119	0.024*		
Gender	-0.059	0.467	0.214		
SES	-0.288	0.231	0.899		
Foster Care (OH1)	-0.244	0.812	0.764		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-0.351	0.613	0.567		

*p < .05

The model was not statistically significant, and it appears that age accounts for much of the

variance in school engagement. As such, the out-of-home placement type did not significantly

predict the level of school engagement reported by Black adolescents.

Academic Achievement: Two regression analyses were run to examine the predictive value of

out-of-home placement on academic achievement. The first model investigated the contribution

of the three out-of-home placement types to standard scores on the Applied Problems subtest of

the WJ III, while controlling for selected demographic variables (see Table 16).

Table 16. *Summary of Applied Problems Regression Analysis*

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				3.405	0.060
Age	-0.871	0.472	0.066		
Gender	5.388	1.854	0.085		
SES	1.584	0.915	0.004*		
Foster Care (OH1)	-3.483	3.218	0.280		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-.290	2.445	0.906		

*p < .05

The model was not statistically significant, and it appears that socioeconomic status accounts for

much of the variance in students' performance on the Applied Problems subtest.

A second regression analysis was run to investigate the contribution of the three out-of-

home placement types to standard scores on the Letter-Word Identification subtest of the WJ III,

while controlling for selected demographic variables. The results of this analysis are outlined in

Table 17.

Table 17. *Summary of Letter-Word Identification Regression Analysis*

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				0.967	0.018
Age	-1.295	0.631	0.041*		
Gender	0.612	2.480	0.663		
SES	0.533	1.222	0.805		
Foster Care (OH1)	-1.007	4.298	0.815		
Kinship Care (OH2)	1.353	3.267	0.679		

*p < .05

The model was also found to not be statistically significant. As such, it appears that based on Black adolescents' scores on the Applied Problems and Letter-Word Identification subtest, the type of out-of-home placement does not significantly predict academic achievement for these particular students.

Grade Progression: Additionally, a logistic regression model was used to analyze the contribution of the three out-of-home placement types to grade progression (see Table 18). This model was not statistically significant and indicates that out-of-home placement type does not predict whether or not a student repeats a grade.

Table 18 *Summary of Grade Progression Regression Analysis*

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R²
				0.967	0.092
Age	-0.733	0.569	0.109		
Gender	-17.928	4985.94	0.126		
SES	-0.331	1.148	0.467		
Foster Care (OH1)	-0.111	12162.3	0.341		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-17.724	10350.876	0.212		

Special Education Involvement: Lastly, a logistic regression model was used to analyze the contribution of the three out-of-home placement types to special education involvement (see Table 19). Again, this model was found to not be statistically significant. As such, it appears that the type of out-of-home service received by Black adolescents did not predict special education involvement for these particular students.

Table 19. *Summary of Special Education Involvement Regression Analysis*

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R²
				0.967	0.112
Age	0.14	0.134	0.261		
Gender	0.668	0.526	0.383		
SES	-0.203	0.256	0.565		
Foster Care (OH1)	0.254	0.837	0.059		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-1.239	0.773	0.109		

Question 5 was designed to determine the influence of type of out-of-home placement on educational outcomes, specifically school engagement, academic achievement, grade

progression, and special education involvement, while controlling for children's age, gender and SES. The education related variables—school engagement, academic achievement, grade progression, and special education involvement—were regressed separately based on participants' age, gender, SES, and type of out-of-home placement.

The results suggested that none of the coefficients were statistically significant, indicating that when controlling for age, gender, and SES, types of out-of-home services did not significantly predict overall school engagement, academic achievement, grade progress, and special education involvement for Black adolescents involved in investigations of child maltreatment by child protective services.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study aimed to evaluate educational outcomes for Black adolescents in different out-of-home care arrangements. Using ecological systems theory as the primary theoretical framework, this study explored the ways in which overall education outcome—defined specifically by school engagement and special education involvement—is impacted by environmental factors. The person-in-environment is a central tenet of the ecological systems perspective. This observation affords an important critical framework for studying the dynamics that animate and shape the experience of students in out-of-home placement. Previous research has indicated that children in out-of-home placements—the environment upon which this study focused—experience greater risk for overall poor outcomes. Taking these findings as a point of departure, this study: (1) compared school engagement of Black adolescents receiving in-home and out-of-home services through child welfare; (2) explored differences in school engagement for this group of adolescents across the three types of out-of-home placements; (3) explored differences in academic achievement across the three types of out-of-home placements; (4) examined students' IEP status in relation to grade progression; and (5) determined the unique impact of out-of-home placement on various educational outcomes, controlling for age, gender, and SES.

In-home Services *v.* Out-of-home Services

The findings of this study indicated that there were no significant differences in level of school engagement for Black adolescents receiving in-home services and those receiving out-of-

home care. This finding is not consistent with previous research, which indicated that children

receiving out-of-home placement services, as a result of child abuse and neglect, experience

poorer outcomes when compared to children who remain in the home environment (Fantuzzo &

Perlman, 2007; Zima et al., 2000; Mitic & Rimer, 2002). This discrepancy may be explained in

part by pre-existing factors—like race, poverty status, maltreatment type and severity—that

impact all children entering the child welfare system.

Stone (2007) argues that children who enter the child welfare system are a highly

vulnerable group and represent a small subset of maltreated children. Their circumstances were

judged, at some point, to have met sufficient thresholds of both harm and risk of harm.

Demographics play a central role in influencing which children suffer from neglect and

subsequently have a greater chance of being selected into child welfare. More specifically,

while children in general often experience neglect, those who are ultimately routed to out-of-

home placement are disproportionately African-American and poor (Kortnenkamp & Ehrle,

2001). These pre-existing factors, the degree to which these factors interact with system entry,

and placement characteristics likely have a significant impact on the educational outcomes of

these youth (Stone, 2007).

Additionally, exosystem level contexts, such as involvement with child welfare services,

may directly influence outcomes for these particular students. Past research has found that

being involved in the child welfare system, in whatever capacity, was related to a greater risk of

substance use among adolescents (Aarons et al., 2008). In fact, regardless of whether children

are removed from the home or not, involvement with child welfare services has been shown in a

number of studies to be related to greater risk of behavioral and psychological difficulties (e.g.,

Burns et al., 2004; Clausen, Landsverk, Ganger, Chadwick, & Litrownik,1998; Pilowsky,1995).

Taken together, the impact or preexisting factors and exosystem level contexts for students

receiving child welfare services may directly influence these students ability to engage with and

navigate the school environment.

School Engagement Differences by Placement Type

Results indicated that there were no significant differences in level of school

engagement among Black adolescents in foster care, kinship care, and other out-of-home

placements. Typically, research has indicated that when compared to other out-of-home

placements, children in kinship care experience greater overall well-being but poorer academic

achievement, and children in group homes/group residential settings experience worse outcomes

than other out-of-home placement types (Shore, et.al, 2002; Dubowitz & Sawyer, 1994).

Whereas children in foster care experience poor educational outcomes when compared to

children not removed from the home, they realize better outcomes when compared to other out-

of-home placements (Leone &Weinberg, 2010; Healey & Fisher, 2011).

In this particular study and sample, despite the kind of out-of-home placement group in

which youth found themselves, they experienced similar outcomes. More specifically, Black

adolescents with out-of-home placement histories did not appear to differ in terms of school

engagement. As such, the out-of-home placement experience itself (regardless of type) may be

enough to impact school engagement at similar rates for Black adolescents.

Furthermore, from an ecological systems perspective, maltreatment often occurs at the

most influential microsystem level. The microsystem is that system that is closest to the student

and the one with which she has direct contact (e.g., home and school). Relationships in a

microsystem are bi-directional. In other words, students' relationships with family, peers, and caregivers (for example) who fit within their microsystem will affect how she is treated in return. Children who become involved in the child welfare system often suffer disruptions in caregiver-child relationships, specifically within the context of the family environment as well the attachments that exists between the caregiver and the child. Additionally, children who have been separated from their biological parents frequently deal with emotional trauma regardless of whether they were abused or not (Jantz et al. 2002). According to ecological systems theory, if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, children are unable to forge the necessary connections to their environments and subsequently other systems (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2013). Taking these findings into consideration helps to elucidate how the environment bears upon school engagement and, thereby, informs how students maintain connections to and within the school environment.

Academic Achievement by Placement Type

Results indicated that there were no significant differences in academic achievement for Black adolescents as a function of foster care, kinship care, and other out-of-home placements. These findings are also not consistent with previous research that suggests that children in kinship care experience poorer academic outcomes, while children in foster care experience greater academic achievement when compared to children in other out-of-home placements (Shore, et.al, 2002; Dubowitz & Sawyer, 1994). Recent evidence suggests that children are academically vulnerable (below average for grade and perform poorly on standardized tests) prior to formal placement (Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, Goerge, & Courtney, 2004). That is to say that upon entry to the child welfare system, children are often already at risk for academic difficulties. Based on these results, it appears that the out-of-home placement experience, in and

of itself, may be enough to impact academic achievement.

Additionally, as a group, children in out-of-home care face many barriers and disruptions in relationships and social environments (Schwartz, 2010). According to Tate (2001), factors that affect academic success for Black students in out-of-home placement include "poor ecological conditions in the home and neighborhood, feelings of inferiority, lack of compatibility between preferred learning styles and teacher instructional method, and ambiguous teacher posturing" (p. 36). Given the academic, social, and cultural struggles Black students already encounter as they attempt to find a sense of self in the classroom, any additional factors that act as stressors and barriers in the schooling experience may add to the widening achievement gap (Emdin, 2012). As such, the experience of being removed from the home and subsequently placed in an out-of-home care may further confound the academic success for these particular students.

IEP and Grade Progression

Results indicated that IEP status was not independent of grade repetition. For this particular sample, it appears that Black adolescents receiving in-home and out-of-home services, with and without current IEPs, repeat grades at similar rates. These findings are consistent with previous research that indicates that students receiving child welfare services are significantly more likely to repeat a grade and receive special education services (Zetlin et al., 2010; Solomon & Marx, 1995).

Recent research suggests that more than half of students in foster care have been retained at least one grade level (Zetlin et al., 2010), and students in kinship care arrangements are more likely to have been retained compared to children reared in two-parent homes (Solomon & Marx, 1995). Additionally, approximately 25-52% of children in foster care receive special

education services, compared to 11.5% of the general student population (Zetlin et al., 2010). Similar rates were observed for the current study with approximately 72% of Black adolescents in the sample repeating a grade.

It is important to note that although those receiving in-home and out-of-home services with and without an IEP repeated grades at similar rates, these rates were elevated and indicate the significant difficulties experienced by these students. School stability is also an issue for many students in out-of-home care (Berliner & Lezin, 2010; Hope, 2009). As these students transition into the child welfare system, at the same time they often change schools and thus lose academic continuity. Such transitions directly influence students' ability to maintain academic progress.

Additionally, grade retention has been shown to disproportionately impact disadvantaged students (Bali, Anagnostopoulos, & Roberts, 2005), and students with learning disabilities make up a large portion of the retained population (Owings and Magliaro, 1998). Grade retention has been identified as having a negative effect on all areas of achievement and social and emotional adjustment (Jimerson, Pletcher and Kerr, 2005). The high incidence of grade retention for this particular population highlights the importance of consistent intervention for these students.

Out-of-home Placement as a Predictor of Educational Outcomes

This research study was designed to determine the influence of type of out-of-home placement on educational outcomes, while controlling for children's age, gender, and SES. In an attempt to determine the impact of out-of-home placement, independent of socio-demographic factors, the study demonstrated that out-of-home placement did not significantly predict academic outcomes. Ultimately, the results indicated that when controlling for age, gender, and

SES, types of out-of-home services did not significantly predict the educational outcomes of school engagement, academic achievement, grade progression, and special education involvement for Black adolescents.

These results are similar to those reported by Stacks, et.al, (2011) obtained with data from the NSCAW, which found no significant difference between placement types for the developmental trajectories (specifically related to language) of children ages 0 to 6 (Stacks, et al., 2011). The authors argued that because all children in their study had experienced maltreatment, it was not possible to determine whether children's dampened language scores reflected the effects of maltreatment per se or the presence of familial socio-demographic risk factors (Stacks, et.at, 2011). Furthermore, Stone (2007) argued that race, poverty status, maltreatment type, and severity may account for the educational outcomes among youth in out-of-home placement. The importance of socio-demographic factors in student outcomes is made more evident through the current study, and further supports the notion that childhood development is significantly influenced by environmental factors.

Poverty, for example, is multilayered and affects a child's development across all settings and system levels. At the mesosystem level, poverty or low SES can indicate living in an impoverished neighborhood and attending an academically-poor school. A child who is socioeconomically disadvantaged in the exosystem is restricted in her or his ability to access professional and economic opportunity. The macrosystem prescribes socially-accepted behavior to impoverished children by associating them with a specific social class, ethnicity, and single-parent household. Additionally, ecological systems theory has been used to understand the development of children with disabilities. Algood, Hong, Gourdine and Williams (2011) conducted a literature review on the maltreatment of children with

developmental disabilities. They found that sociodemographic characteristics (e.g, gender, and special education), microsystems (e.g. the parent-child relationship), exosystems (e.g. area of residence), and macrosystems (e.g. culturally defined parenting practices) influenced or inhibited maltreatment of children with disabilities. This suggests that ecological factors such as poverty can directly impact children's educational outcomes.

Limitations

This study contributes to the current body of research on educational outcomes for students in out-of-home placements. However, the findings from this study must be considered in light of several limitations. Missing data significantly impacted data available for analysis and subsequent results. Data for the NSCAW II were collected through face-to-face interviews. The poor response rates to several of the items may be related to many factors, including interview mode, length of questionnaire, language used, and cultural sensitivity of content. In the literature, there is much discussion about the factors that affect response rates across different races and ethnicities. Researchers commonly acknowledge that it is essential to use culturally sensitive terms and material when designing surveys (or interviews) for ethnic groups. In the case of the NSCAW II, the face-to-face format may have impacted the rate at which Black families participated. For example, Doyle (2010) argues that face-to-face surveys are often hindered by individual and community factors, such as situations in which some populations are difficult to reach in person, access to their home or apartment being restricted, or traveling in their neighborhood placing interviewers at risk. There is also evidence that questions of a personal nature are less likely to be answered fully and honestly in a face-to-face survey. This is likely due in part to a lack of anonymity often associated with face-to-face interviews (Doyle, 2010).

Additionally, this study focused on a homogenous group. More specifically, individuals contained in the sample had substantiated cases of abuse and neglect that resulted in their removal from the home environment. All of the preexisting differences between the children in each type of placement have the potential to bias estimates of the effect of placement type. A number of individual, family, or community level factors—ranging from genetic predispositions to psychopathology, family support symptoms and resources, and access to community resources including education, healthcare, and mental health services—may have had an impact on outcomes among these particular students.

Additionally, national reports on children receiving child welfare indicate that the majority receive services within their homes; the same was true for this particular sample. As such, this study was limited by sample size. The majority of the research questions focused solely on the Black adolescents receiving out-of-home services. The small number of participants that met the criteria for inclusion further limited the comparison groups across the three types of placements.

With regard to generalizability, this study excluded children under the age of 11, and the effect of out-of-home placements may differ for younger children. More specifically, given that younger children are more vulnerable to the effects of poverty and material disadvantage, there may be a stronger effect on outcomes for younger children in out-of-home placements. Lastly, because the nature of this study is descriptive, findings are not indicative of a causal effect. It is important to note that this study did not compare the experiences of the population of interest to the general population of Black adolescents without maltreatment histories. Therefore, no determination can be made about the how these student outcomes compare to the general population.

Future Directions

       Future research should continue to explore the differential impact of out-of-home placements on educational outcomes for Black students. As the current study did not compare outcomes for these particular students to those of non-referred/non-maltreated Black students, it may be especially important to determine whether or not the outcomes of interest in the current study—school engagement, academic achievement, and special education involvement—are better or worse than their non-referred/non-maltreated peers.

       Additionally, this study highlights the high incidence of grade retention for this particular child welfare involved population. Future research could expand this particular component of the study. Students in the US are retained for several reasons, including academic failure, difficulty reading, poor attendance and poor behavior. Therefore, a study that examines the reasons why this particular population was retained could provide valuable insights into the ways in which intervention could be leveraged more effectively to improve outcomes.

       Lastly, using ecological systems theory as a point of reference, future research could explore the impact of chronosystem factors on educational outcomes. Chronosystem factors center on the timing of events, number of events in a given time, the length of time of events, and perceptions of time over time. The adolescents in this particular study have witnessed and will witness several major historical events in their lifetime. It may be of interest to explore the ways in which these events and their timing influence students' perceptions and outcomes. Not only do chronosystem factors influence students indirectly, they often impact the ways in which services are delivered both in schools and in the child welfare system. Pertinent research questions related to chronosystem factors for Black students receiving child welfare service must explore the timing of events and outcome expectations. For example, are these students

experiencing similar events at the same time or are events impacting similar students in the same way? What effects does the timing of a specific event have on development? On education? On overall well-being? Meaningful questions about the timing of events and the effects on students' lives are integral to gather information that can guide practice. In addition, systems and context are not fixed, but always changing. Thus, longitudinal research at the chronosystem level can explore the ways in which system level changes influence outcomes for these students over time.

Conclusions and Implications

This study was designed to explore the educational outcomes of Black adolescents in out-of-home placements. It was hypothesized that significant differences existed between groups based on the type of placement. However, no significant results were found across the defined research questions, and out-of-home placement was found not to be predictive of educational outcomes when controlling for socio-demographic factors. Although the hypothesized effects were not confirmed, the current study provides valuable insights into the experiences of Black adolescents in out-of-home placements and opens the door for continued research of their experiences. In particular, very few studies have focused on the educational experiences of Black adolescents in out-of-home placements. Moreover, the results contrast with years of research indicating differences among children in the different types of out-of-home placements, prompting the need for additional research on outcomes for this particular population.

As an exploratory study, the current project highlights the importance of understanding the impact of out-of-home placement experiences of Black adolescent students. By definition, the study sample had experienced some form of abuse or neglect that led to the out-of-home

placement experience. Having such an experience makes these particular students unique to schools and communities at large. As such, from an applied perspective, the study provides insights into areas of potential intervention for this population of adolescent students. The most noteworthy finding highlighted the significant level of grade retention experienced by these students. Individual practitioners—such as foster care or other social services case workers and court-related personnel who come in contact with these students—would likely benefit from this information, as it may guide the development of service plans to meet these particular students' needs.

In the school setting, school psychologists are individuals who help children succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. As such, having the knowledge base to work with students with out-of-home placement histories is integral to building successful relationships with these particular students and their unique circumstances. The school psychologist is in a unique position to mediate the communication necessary for multiple systems and contexts to work collaboratively to maximize students' success. Students' needs typically surface through problem-solving teams and teacher assistance teams at both the secondary and tertiary levels of intervention. The school psychologist, typically having been trained in both interventions and learning/educational processes, is a natural champion for these students. Ultimately, school psychologists must operate from a trauma-informed framework that takes into account not only the out-of-home placement experience but also the socio-demographic factors that often come along with it (e.g., poverty, race, and maltreatment type).

Schools, especially, would benefit from an understanding of the experiences of students in out-of-home placements. Because academic success does not occur in isolation, it is critical that school-based personnel be aware of and use these findings to support the development of

interventions tailored to these students and their families. From an ecological perspective, it is also important to consider possible interventions in light of students' particular environmental contexts, as contexts outside of the school system are related to important measures of student success, such as academic skills, within the school system.

Whether placed in foster care or group homes, children in out-of-home placement experience confounding risk factors that should be closely monitored by educators in order to decrease some of the challenges they face, which include, for example, school failure, homelessness (Williams, 2011), and mental health (Scott et.al., 2007). These issues foster palpable challenges for Black students in out-of-home placements, namely because they are dually experiencing poor educational outcomes in general (based on the achievement gap) as well as being overrepresented in the child welfare system. Additionally, these particular students have to navigate, on the one hand, the environmental/ecological system interruption that goes along with being separated from their biological family situations, as well as the process of integrating into a new placement and system. Therefore, it is imperative that school psychologists, schools, and other support personnel understand the nature of these students' experiences in order to promote educational outcomes for them.

Table 1. Race Description for All NSCAW-II Wave 3 Participants (Weighted Percent)

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Missing	3,750	63.9	63.9
Refused	7	.1	.1
Don't know	395	6.7	6.7
Native Indian/Alaskan	125	2.1	2.1
Black	579	9.9	9.9
White	954	16.2	16.2
Other	62	1.1	1.1
Total	5,872	100.0	100.0

Table 2. Age Description for All Wave Three Participants

Age	Frequency	Percent
Missing	803	13.7
2	17	.3
3	1,477	25.2
4	437	7.4
5	229	3.9
6	212	3.6
7	215	3.7
8	180	3.1
9	178	3.0
10	194	3.3
11	187	3.2
12	141	2.4
13	145	2.5
14	124	2.1
15	136	2.3
16	123	2.1
17	119	2.0
18	149	2.5
19	125	2.1
20	59	1.0
21	1	.0
Total Cases	5,872	100.0

Table 3. Setting (Service Type) Description for All NSCAW-II Wave 3 Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Missing Data	1,757	29.8
In-Home: Bio Parent	2,599	44.3
In-Home: Adoptive Parent	655	11.2
Formal Kin Care	193	3.3
Informal Kin Care	369	6.3
Foster Care	228	3.9
Group Home/Res Program	42	.7
Other OOH Arrangement	29	.5
Total Cases	5,872	100.0

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics of Wave 3 Black Adolescents Age 11 to 17

	N	Percent
Race/ethnicity		
Black	284	100
Setting		
In Home	195	68.6
Formal Kin Care	25	8.8
Informal Kin Care	25	8.8
Foster Care	28	9.9
Group Home/Res Program	10	3.5
Other OOH Arrangement	1	0.4
Age (years)		
11	52	18.3
12	41	14.4
13	49	17.3
14	35	12.3
15	42	14.8
16	35	12.3
17	30	10.6

Table 5. School engagement items

Scale	Questions	1 2 3 4
Emotional engagement	How often do you enjoy being in school?	
	How often do you hate being in school?	
	How often do you find the schoolwork hard to understand?*	
	How often do you find your classes interesting?	
Cognitive Engagement	How often do you try to do your best work in school?	
	How often do you get your homework done?	
	How often do you listen carefully or pay attention in school?	
	How often do you fail to complete or turn in your assignments?*	
Behavioral engagement	How often do you get sent to the office, or have to stay after school because of misbehavior?*	
	How often do you get along with your teachers?	
	How often do you get along with other students?	

*items excluded from the school engagement analyses

Table 6. Variables and Descriptive Statistics

Variables	M	SD	Range	N%
Special education (current IEP)				
Yes=1				Yes=28%
No=0				No=72%
School Engagement (positive)	25.8	3.82	11 – 44	
Academic Achievement				
WJ III Applied Problems	84.89	16.18	37-120	
WJ III Letter-Word Identification	90.52	22.36	71-116	
Youth Age in years	13.7		11-17	
Grade Progression (repeated grade)				
Yes=1				Yes= 98.8%
No=0				No= 1.2%

Table 7. Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for School Engagement

	Service Type								
	In-home			Out-of-home					
	M	SD	N	M	SD	n	t	df	p
School Engagement	25.83	3.85	184	25.74	3.79	88	.187	27	.850

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics for School Engagement Based on Placement Type

	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Foster care	25.85	4.37	.842	24.121	27.582	17.00	32.00
Kinship care	25.60	3.59	.508	24.579	26.621	17.00	32.00
Other	26.09	3.45	1.040	23.774	28.408	20.00	32.00
Total	25.74	3.79	.404	24.935	26.542	17.00	32.00

Table 9 ANOVA Statistic for School Engagement Based on Placement Type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.672	2	1.336	.091	.913
Within Groups	1248.316	85	14.686		
Total	1250.989	87			

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics for Applied Problems by Placement Type

	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Foster care	27	83.85	18.625	3.584	76.48	91.22	38	115
Kinship care	49	86.73	15.327	2.190	82.33	91.14	37	120
Other	11	79.18	12.921	3.896	70.50	87.86	53	95
Total	87	84.89	16.182	1.735	81.44	88.33	37	120

Table 11 ANOVA Statistic for Applied Problems Scores Based on Placement Type

	Sum of Squares	d*f*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	554.256	2	277.128	1.060	.351
Within Groups	21964.595	84	261.483		
Total	22518.851	86			

Table 12 Descriptive Statistics for Letter-Word Identification Scores by Placement Type

	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
Foster care	89.04	24.904	4.793	79.19	98.89	1	116
Kinship care	91.20	22.679	3.240	84.69	97.72	1	144
Other	91.09	14.488	4.368	81.36	100.82	71	116
Total	90.52	22.360	2.397	85.75	95.28	1	144

Table 13 ANOVA Statistic for Letter-Word Identification Scores Based on Placement Type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	85.893	2	42.946	.084	.919
Within Groups	42911.831	84	510.855		
Total	42997.724	86			

Table 14 Results of Chi-square Test for Grade Retention by IEP Status

Repeated Grade	IEP Status	
	Current IEP	No IEP
Yes	187	8
No	71	6

Note. $\chi^2 = 1.539$, df = 1 p = .230

Table 15: Summary of School Engagement Regression Analysis

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				1.323	0.024
Age	-0.270	0.119	0.024*		
Gender	-0.059	0.467	0.214		
SES	-0.288	0.231	0.899		
Foster Care (OH1)	-0.244	0.812	0.764		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-0.351	0.613	0.567		

*$p < .05$

Table 16: Summary of Applied Problems Regression Analysis

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				3.405	0.060
Age	-0.871	0.472	0.066		
Gender	5.388	1.854	0.085		
SES	1.584	0.915	0.004*		
Foster Care (OH1)	-3.483	3.218	0.280		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-.290	2.445	0.906		

*$p < .05$

Table 17: Summary of Letter-Word Identification Regression Analysis

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				0.967	0.018
Age	-1.295	0.631	0.041*		
Gender	0.612	2.480	0.663		
SES	0.533	1.222	0.805		
Foster Care (OH1)	-1.007	4.298	0.815		
Kinship Care (OH2)	1.353	3.267	0.679		

*$p < .05$

Table 18: Summary of Grade Progression Regression Analysis

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				0.967	0.092
Age	-0.733	0.569	0.109		
Gender	-17.928	4985.94	0.126		
SES	-0.331	1.148	0.467		
Foster Care (OH1)	-0.111	12162.3	0.341		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-17.724	10350.876	0.212		

Table 19: Summary of Special Education Involvement Regression Analysis

Variables	B	SE β	p	F	R^2
				0.967	0.112
Age	0.14	0.134	0.261		
Gender	0.668	0.526	0.383		
SES	-0.203	0.256	0.565		
Foster Care (OH1)	0.254	0.837	0.059		
Kinship Care (OH2)	-1.239	0.773	0.109		

Appendix 1B: Figures

Figure 1: Ecological Model of Interaction Among Persons and Environments

Macrosystem
Includes norms and values of cultures and subcultures (belief systems, ideologies, societal structure, gender role socialization, national and international resources, etc.).

Exosystem
Distal systems that influence the individual indirectly through their impact on meso- and Microsystems (e.g., education policies, program components).

Mesosystem
Interconnections among two or more Microsystems (e.g., interactions among family members and teachers). Expands as individual enters new settings over time. Impacts individual indirectly through his/her interactions within the microsystem.

Microsystem
Activities, roles, relations in a defined setting where the individual interacts directly with others (family, peers, etc.).

Individual

Chronosystem- Changes in systems over time via a process of mutual accommodation.

Source: Based on Bronfenbrenner, 1989, 2006; as cited by McEathron & Beuhring, 2011.

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