

THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF HOPE AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTEDNESS  
AND THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED MATERNAL FIGURE SUPPORT AND  
ADOLESCENTS' DISCIPLINE AT SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated the importance of family, peer, and community relationships as they relate to adolescents' development (Crockett et al., 2012; Mann, Kristjansson, Sigfusdottir, & Smith, 2015; Piquero, 2017; Piquero & Brame, 2008; Wallace et al., 2008). This study investigated adolescents' perception of support and if their level of support influenced their behavior at school. In particular, this study investigated if adolescents' perceived maternal figure support predicted their levels of discipline infractions at school. Additionally, variables such as hope, neighborhood connectedness, and gender was investigated to determine if such variables could influence the potential relationship between adolescents' perception of maternal figure support and their level of discipline infractions at school.

The sample size for this study consisted of 800 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated in the Mobile Youth Survey from 2006-2009. Two sources of data were used in the present study: Mobile Youth Survey (MYS) was used to identify adolescents' support systems and the MYS discipline data from the Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) school records was used to determine adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. Results from the study showed that there was no significant relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline at school. However, results indicate that maternal figure support was a significant predictor of hope and hope significantly predict adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. Furthermore, findings also reveal that maternal figure support significantly predict neighborhood connectedness. Conversely, neighborhood connectedness did not significantly

predict adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. When addressing potential gender differences within the mediating effects of hope, neighborhood connectedness, and the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions, results conclude that gender did not significantly influence the moderated interaction models for hope and neighborhood connectedness.

## DEDICATION

I thank God of all He has done and will do for me. There were many times I wanted to give up and walk away, but Your grace and mercy sustained me through this process. I dedicate my dissertation to all those who have helped guide me through the trials and tribulations of creating and completing this manuscript. I, also, give thanks to God for blessing me with supportive family and friends. To my bundle of joy, Torin, thank you for giving me the strength to continue this journey. Mommy loves you so much. To my husband Tamir, thank for supporting me and encouraging me to see this journey through. To the matriarchs of my family and support from the maternal figures of my life, thank you for molding me into a woman with ambition, goals, and dreams.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Research has demonstrated the importance of family, peer, and community relationships as they relate to positive adolescent development (Berlin et al., 2007; Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2001; Mann et al., 2015; Ravindran et al., 2018). These relationships are vital as they provide support systems for adolescents during times of stress (Berlin et al., 2007; Mann et al., 2015; Sampson, 2004). The absence or access to support systems has shown to influence adolescents' psychological and behavioral development (Bond et al., 2007; Christens & Peterson, 2012). Research has highlighted when adolescents have positive support systems, they tend to display more self-confidence, autonomy, and optimism about their future (Lamborn & Nguyen, 2004; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Maryse, Nussbaum, & Tinsley, 2007). Conversely, when adolescents lack positive support systems, they tend to be less confident, more depressed, and often engaged in problematic behaviors (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2015; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005).

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Though lack of support could adversely influence individuals at any age, the correlation of no support and adverse outcomes of not having support tend to unfavorably influence adolescents the most (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Moore, Whitney, & Kinukawa, 2009; Newman et al., 2007; Raws, 2016). For instance, researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC, 2014) analyzed data from the National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (2015) between 2005 and 2014 (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015). The CDC researchers examined adolescents and young adults to determine their levels of support and levels of depression. Overall, 176,245 adolescents aged 12 to 17 participated in the annual studies between 2005 and 2014. Adolescents were asked to report their level of support and internalizing symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, and so forth.) based on their perceived support. From 2005 to 2014, adolescents with no support reported internalizing concerns such as depression that grew from 11.7% to 37 % (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015).

Additionally, literature has shown that when adolescents are depressed they often times tend to be less hopeful and demonstrate negative behaviors at school than adolescents who are not depressed (Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006; Hinton-Nelson, Roberts, & Snyder, 1996; Kashdan et al., 2002; Michael & Snyder, 2005; Shorey, Snyder, Yang, & Lewin, 2003). For instance, Gilman, Dooley, and Florell (2006) investigated if the relationships among adolescents' levels of depression influenced their levels of hope and school adjustment. The Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) was used to rate adolescents' level of hope. Adolescents' levels of school adjustment were measured by the Interpersonal Competence Scale-Teacher (ICS-T) (Cairns, Leung, Gest, & Cairns, 1995). Components of the ICS-T measures adolescents' social acceptance, antisocial behavior, academic performance, and internalizing problems at school. Results from the study found that adolescents whose teachers recorded them as having low levels of social acceptance, academic performance, and high levels of antisocial behaviors and

internalizing problems also rated themselves as having low levels of hope as measured by the Children's Hope Scale.

Likewise, Cakar and Karatas (2012) conducted a study on 257 adolescents attending various high schools in the Burdur City Center in Turkey. The purpose of the study was to demonstrate the relationship between adolescents' levels of support and hope. Cakar and Karatas (2012) noted that when adolescents did not perceive support from family or friends, they exhibited low levels of hope. Similarly, Niehaus et al. (2012) showed that adolescents who reported little or no support from a support system displayed a decline in school connectedness, which caused an increased numbers of discipline sanctions from school administrators. To add, African American males were at a greater risk to exhibit negative outcomes such as more office discipline referrals, and higher risks of dropping out of school than African American females and European males (Niehaus et al., 2012).

In another study, Ofonedu, Percy, Harris-Britt and Belcher (2012) studied 352 European and African American adolescents, ages 13 - 17. Adolescents were asked to complete a survey that described their levels of support and internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Adolescents' survey findings indicated male and female European adolescents who described themselves as not having a support system reported high levels of irritability and depression. Similarly, male and female African American adolescents perceived their lack of support systems as a source of irritability exhibited through aggressive behaviors, which led to high levels of hopelessness. Such findings indicate that adolescents who do not have a strong support system from their family, peers, or community may demonstrate a greater risk of displaying adverse outcomes (Ofonedu et al., 2012; Orkibi et al., 2018; Sterrett-Hong et al., 2018). These findings also

suggested that regardless of adolescents' gender or race, their overall development without a support system may be adversely effected (Ofonedu et al., 2012).

Seminal articles have shown that adolescents who lack support systems from family members, peers, and communities tend to: (a) drop out of school; (b) demonstrate higher levels of aggression, hyperactivity, and conduct problems (i.e., behaving in socially unacceptable or age inappropriate ways); and, (c) display high levels of hopelessness—all of which adversely affect their school performance (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Anderson, 2012; Umlauf et al., 2015; Stoddard, Henly, Sieving, & Bolland 2011; Bond et al., 2007; Hamilton et al., 2015; Sampson et al., 2005; Stockdale et al., 2007; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Additionally, research has indicated that adolescents who lack support systems often times demonstrate negative behavioral outcomes at school (e.g., frequent office referrals and suspensions) (Hamre et al., 2008; Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Wallace et al., 2008).

### **Theoretical Influences on Behavior**

Understanding adolescents' environment is vital to recognize how and why they behave in certain ways. National reports have concluded that families and their economic status influence adolescents' emotions and behaviors (U.S. Institute of Medicine (US) and U.S. National Research Council Committee on the Science of Adolescence, 2011). Other studies have reflected these findings, as well. For instance, literature published by Crockett, Deutsch, Russell, and Wolff (2012) emphasized two major influences and causes of adolescents' behavior outcomes: (a) the level of parental support, and (b) the level connections/relationships with their community. As suggested in the literature, these two influences are the strongest predictors of behavior among research pertaining to adolescents' behavioral outcomes at home and at school

(Crockett et al., 2012; Piquart, 2017; Piquero & Brame, 2008; Rudasill, et al., 2014; Wallace et al., 2008). These predictors imply that individuals' environments, in particular their immediate environment, are the foundation of standards of behavior that regulate life in the cultural group in which children are raised (Wallace et al., 2008; Pettit et al., 2001; Fredrickson & Tugade, 2004). To understand the behaviors of individuals, one must become knowledgeable about individuals multi-faceted dynamics and influences of their environments.

### **Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Research has stated that children learn how to behave and interact with other people by observing behaviors from their caregivers and individuals within their environment (Demaray et al., 2005; Howard, Budge, & McKay, 2010; Sincero, 2012). Several studies have linked family and environmental connectedness to adolescents' developmental outcomes, psychological well-being, and levels of positive and negative behavioral outcomes (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Dishion, Kavanagh, & Spoth, 2002; Hooper et al., 2007; Howard, Budge, & McKay, 2010; Rivera et al., 2008). One theory has explained how people and surroundings from an individual's environment affects one another (i.e., Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which will be further discussed in Chapter 2, emphasized how adolescents' environment impacted their growth and development (Bentley & Huston, 2010; Christens & Peterson, 2012; Lunkenheimer, Shields, & Cortina, 2007).

### **Literature Results for Support and Adolescents**

As previously highlighted, there are two major influences and causes of adolescents' behavior outcomes: (a) level of parental support, and (b) the level connections/relationships with

their community (Crockett et al., 2012; Piquart, 2017; Piquero & Brame, 2008; Rudasill, et al., 2014; Wallace et al., 2008). When researching the literature with keywords *adolescents and support, effects of parent support and adolescents, family structure support and adolescents, and environment support and adolescents*, the literature emphasized negative effects of lack of maternal support, community involvement, and adolescents' outcomes, which are all discussed in forthcoming sections. Results from the literature search generated outcomes such as *lack of support from maternal figures in impoverished communities* and *negative behavioral outcomes for adolescents and lack of support from a maternal figure*. Furthermore, it was noted that support from a maternal figure was vastly highlighted within the literature search. Based on the results from the literature search, a question was posed: Though support from fathers or grandparents can be recognized as parent support, could the lack of support from a maternal figure be more influential to adolescents' behavioral outcomes? To maintain consistency within this research study, adolescents' perception of support from a maternal figure was investigated.

### **Purpose of Study**

After reviewing existing research articles and literature reviews on support and behavioral effects in adolescents, it was revealed that adolescents' level of perceived support from their environment will directly and indirectly influence their development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Foley, 2004; Gerard & Booth, 2015). Thus, the overarching goal for this study was to determine if hope or neighborhood connectedness mediated any relationship between adolescents' perceived maternal figure support and their level of discipline infractions at school. Additionally, this study's intent was to determine if adolescents' level of maternal figure support potentially influenced adolescents' level of discipline infractions incurred while at school. In

addition, this study also used mediating variables to determine if hope and/or neighborhood connectedness influenced the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school.

### **Research Questions**

To further investigate maternal figure support, hope, neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions, this study examined if maternal figure support predicted adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. This study also explored if hope and neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) altered any potential relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. If so, are there any gender differences within any of these potential relationships. The investigator examined the following questions:

1. Does support from a maternal figure affect adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
2. Does hope regarding the future mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
3. Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) levels mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and their discipline infractions at school?
4. Does gender explain or influence the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness (sense of community)?

To continue to expound on the literature of adolescents' perceived levels of support and behavior, the investigator also noted potential gender differences to determine the prevalence of

differential outcomes among males and females as it relates to maternal figure support, hope, neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school.

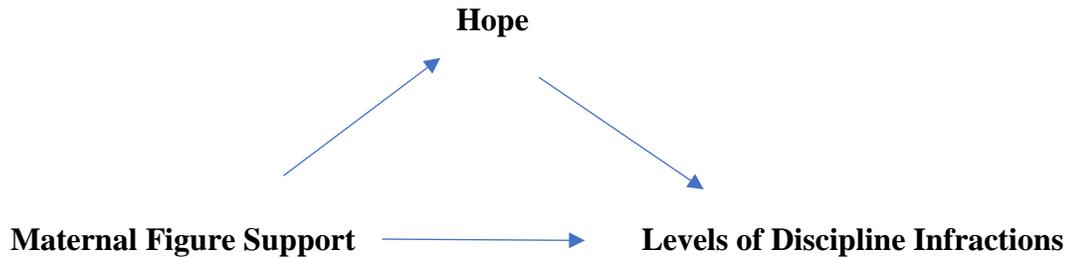


Figure 1. Mediation effect of maternal figure support, hope, and levels of discipline infractions.

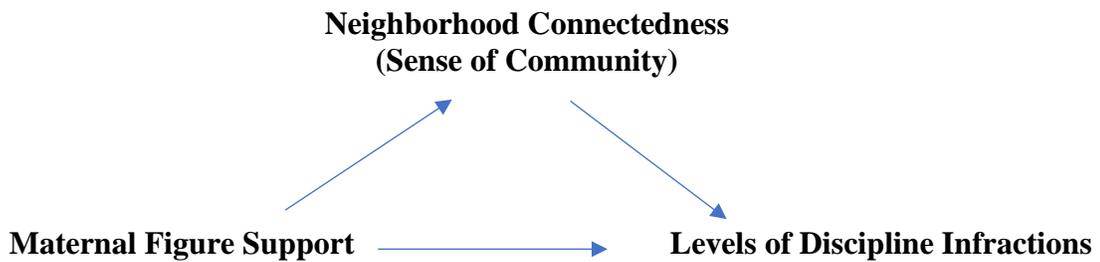


Figure 2. Mediation effect of maternal figure support, neighborhood connectedness (sense of community), and levels of discipline infractions.

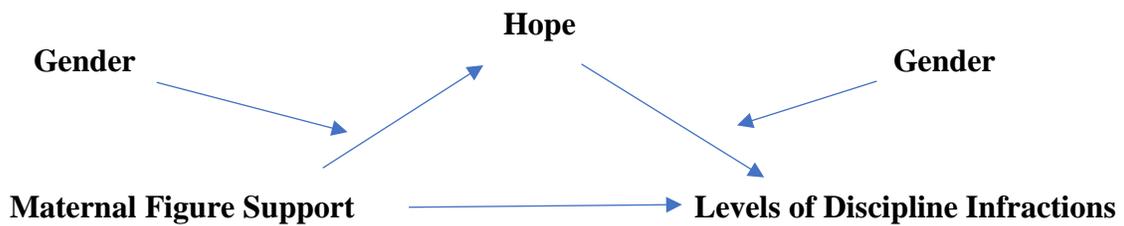


Figure 3. Mediation effects of hope and gender moderator effects.

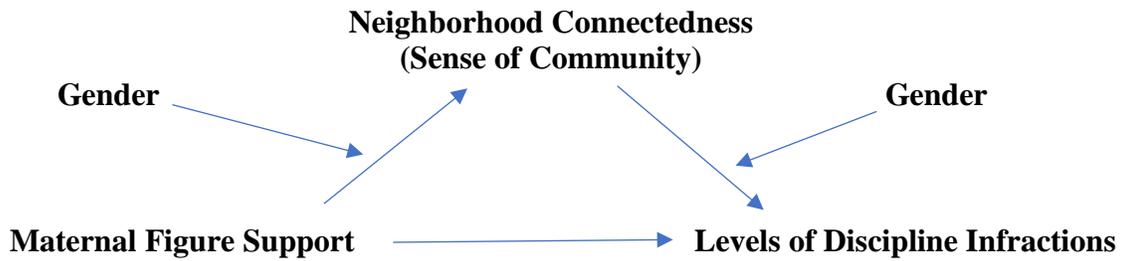


Figure 4. Mediation effects of neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) and gender moderator effects.

### Maternal Figure Support and Behavioral Outcomes

Somers et al. (2011) conducted a study to investigate adolescents' household structure and their social and behavioral success in poverty-stricken areas. Findings from this study showed that adolescents who reported not having maternal figure support displayed lower levels of social-emotional success (i.e., self-esteem, identity, resilience) and higher levels of problematic behaviors as compared to their peers who reported living in two-parent households (Somers et al., 2011). In another study with similar findings, Serbin, Stack, and Kingdon (2013) revealed that adolescents with little or no support were often from households that did not have support from a maternal support. These findings showed that adolescents who did not receive support from their mother demonstrated higher occurrences of skipping school, exhibited higher levels of discipline referrals from school, and were more susceptible to violating county/city laws.

In addition, other research studies reported that children and adolescents who were deprived of maternal support were at a greater risk of developing and displaying hostile and aggressive behaviors (Greder, et al., 2017; Kazdin, 2007; Kiernan & Huerta, 2008; Purvis et al., 2007). Likewise, Bruyn, Dekovic, and Meijnen (2003) conducted a study to investigate the

relationship between adolescents' perceived parent support and adolescents' behavior at school. This study included 372 adolescents who reported living with their mother. Adolescents were selected from 23 classrooms in four middle schools. Researchers of the study used the Parental Dimensions Inventory (PDI; Slater & Power, 1987) to assess dimensions of students' perceptions of their parents' behaviors and level of support. Additionally, teachers completed the Pupil Behavior Pattern Scale (Friedman, 1994) to gather information about their behavior in the classroom. Results from the study showed that adolescents who rated their mothers as being non-supportive, based on their teacher's ratings, exhibited high occurrences of office referral, were more aggressive, and easily distracted as compared to adolescents who rated their mothers as being supportive.

Additionally, Berger and Magnuson (2009) examined the relationship of family structural support and adolescents' behavioral trajectories. Berger and Magnuson utilized data from the Maternal and Child Supplement of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY; Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 1979) to obtain adolescents' level of structural support and behavioral outcomes. The adolescents of the study were between the ages 14 - 21. NLSY's database included adolescents' household demographics and behavioral scores from the Behavioral Problems Index (BPI; Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 1979). Adolescents' biological mothers completed the BPI to rate the frequency, range, and type of childhood behavior problems their child displayed at home. Results from the study showed that adolescents residing in households that did not have maternal support were associated with increased levels of behavior problems, which led to discipline referrals at school.

## **Rationale for Mediation**

Research has shown that when adolescents have lacked a support system, they tend to demonstrate negative outcomes, especially in school (Elmore & Huebner, 2010; Harter, Low, & Whitesell, 2003; Morris and Fry-McComish, 2012). Additionally, the literature has noted that adolescents who lack maternal figure support systems usually live in low-income, poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Church et al., 2012; Donkers et al., 2003; Raizada & Kishiyama, 2010; Serbin et al., 2013). While investigating maternal support, neighborhoods, and the overall effect on adolescents' outcomes, a few thoughts and questions surfaced while thinking through the literature. The questions were: (a) What variables potentially counteract the negative correlations between lack of support and adverse behavioral outcomes?; (b) Could individuals have hope and demonstrate positive outcomes though they may not have support from family or friends?; (c) If so, do positive outcomes look different in males and females? (d) Though individuals may reside in underprivileged neighborhoods, could their neighborhood influence them in positive ways?; and, (5) Rather than demonstrating a direct relationship among support and behavior, could hope or a persons' view of their environment impact the nature of the relationship between support variables and behavioral variables?

### **What is Hope?**

With the fourth question in mind, it is vital to define hope and to highlight the importance of a positive attitude in adolescents. Hope has been defined as an "optimistic attitude of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes...positively influences individuals' quality of life and mental health well-being" that occurs during early childhood (Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman & Liberta, 2016; Dunkel & Harbke, 2017, p. 75). In another study, Valle, Huebner, and Suldo

(2004) suggested that without hope adolescents from underprivileged environments are less likely to be concerned about making choices that may adversely affect their future and are more likely to be involved in violent behaviors and other aggressive behaviors that can negatively influence their behavior and emotional outcomes.

In fact, research conducted by McMorris, Sieving, and Stoddard (2011) examined the relationships between social ability, hope, and behavior outcomes among 171 students in grades 6 – 8 from impoverished, urban neighborhoods. The findings of the study showed that lower levels of connections with people and low levels of hope were related to higher levels of violent connections, interactions, and outcomes. In an international study, Taysi, Curun, and Orcan (2015) examined 352 Turkish students, ages 9 to 11. They measured the relationship between their levels of hope, anger, and social behavior. To obtain levels of hope, anger, and behavior, adolescents of the study completed the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997), the Beck Anger Inventory for Youth (Beck, 1990), the Social Behavior Questionnaire (Hartman et al. 2006), and the Children's Depression Inventory (Saylor, Finch, Spirito, & Bennett 1984) self-reporting surveys. Findings from the study indicated that students who demonstrated lower levels of hope were associated with higher levels of negative outcomes such as anger, depression, and antisocial behaviors.

Additionally, in a study conducted in 20 high schools representing eight Pacific Northwest urban and suburban school districts, Grades 9 – 12, Snedker and Hooven (2013) explored the role of perceived neighborhood connectedness and support in relation to adolescents' behavioral outcomes. Findings of the study revealed that greater perceptions of non-supportive, unsafe conditions, and economic hardships were positively associated with poor

emotional outcomes and low levels of hope. The findings suggested that lower SES neighborhoods produced prominent levels of depressive, hopeless, and aggressive behaviors (Snedker & Hooven, 2013).

Another study looked at adolescents' behavioral outcomes at school. The authors of the study noted that aggression, inattention, or hyperactive behaviors were negatively influencing adolescents' discipline outcomes at school (Hamre et al., 2008). Studies have also shown that when children's adjustment to school and behavior problems are continuous, that is from childhood through adolescence, they tend to demonstrate an inability to adjust to new conditions, are less resilient and hopeful, and display social and emotional failure in school as well as within their family dynamics and society (Bentley & Huston, 2010; Collins, Hawkins, & Nabors, 2016, Lansford et al., 2002; Marmorstein, 2007).

Based on the literature that has been presented thus far, many dynamics from adolescents' environment (e.g., maternal support, neighborhood support) are influential to their development. The most prevalent question for this study is to what extent are those variables most influential to adolescents.

### **Neighborhood Connectedness and Behavioral Outcomes**

When researching adolescents' social and emotional outcomes, it has been important to highlight neighborhood factors and the effects on the youth who reside within the community. As previously stated, research has highlighted consistent findings that adolescents who lack support systems usually come from homes that lacked maternal support; moreover, current literature has also noted that families often reside in low-income, poverty-stricken areas and neighborhoods (Donkers, Pong, & Thompson, 2003; Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2000; Raizada &

Kishiyama, 2010). Furthermore, current literature on households that lack maternal figure support and adolescents' behavioral outcomes has suggested that neighborhood-level economic stressors and lower socioeconomic classes are associated with higher levels of stress in adults, which in turn, negatively affect adolescents' behavioral outcomes in school and within society (Hackman & Farah, 2009; Katz, Esparza, Carter, Grant, & Meyerson, 2012; Latkin & Curry, 2003). Such effects highlight how influential neighborhood characteristics and norms are on adolescents' development.

Furthermore, literature has suggested that adolescents who live in poverty are at risk of being affected by neighborhood conditions such as crime, lack of access to resources, and other environmental risks, which unfavorably impact their overall development and well-being (Kim, Mazza, Zwanziger, & Henry, 2014). Consequently, it is important for researchers to, also, investigate familial and non-familial structures and their perceptions of family and non-family dynamics to effectively understand adolescent development and outcomes.

Similar to lack of parental support, authors have noted that adolescents who live in urban environments have higher levels of dropout rates and higher rates of discipline referrals at school, as compared to adolescents who live in suburban and rural environments (Jordan, Kostandini, & Mykerezi, 2012; Rocque, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Vartanian & Gleason, 1999). Chung and Steinberg (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of adolescents' delinquent trajectories of their behavior. Behavioral outcomes from the study showed that peer and neighborhood influences during adolescence demonstrated a significant projection of delinquent and criminal behaviors. Thus, adolescents begin to develop boundaries, norms, and autonomy based on behaviors and aspects in their own neighborhoods (Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2000

Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). These thoughtless behaviors often continue to be influential from childhood through adolescences.

A study conducted by Moren-Cross, LaGory, Lanzi, and Wright (2006) suggested that individuals who reside in poor neighborhoods often do not obtain socially supportive resources like middle-class neighborhoods (i.e., role models, job networks, etc.). Moren-Cross et al. (2008)'s study utilized survey data from adolescents from 15 sites across the United States. Results showed that adolescents who resided in poverty-stricken areas exhibited higher levels of student dropout rates in high school and a greater probability of adolescents committing crimes than adolescents from middle-class neighborhoods. Crowder and South (2003) examined if adolescents' socioeconomic characteristics within their neighborhoods made adolescents more inclined to drop out of school. To investigate potential influential characteristics of neighborhoods, researchers of the study utilized data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1968) (McGonagle, Schoeni, Sastry, & Freedman, 2012). Crowder and South (2003) found that the impact of neighborhoods' socioeconomic characteristics on school dropout rates significantly impacted African American youth who resided in poverty-stricken urban neighborhoods and households that lack maternal figure support.

Likewise, researchers have noted that adolescents who live in impoverished neighborhoods are more likely to experience greater levels of behavioral problems and even higher levels of hopelessness than adolescents who live in neighborhoods with social stability and higher incomes (Andreias et al., 2010; Landis et al., 2007; Latkin & Curry, 2003; Wickrama & Bryant, 2003). Further, a number of authors have posited that underprivileged community circumstances may intensify the negative behaviors that adolescents may already exhibit

(Auerbach et al., 2011; Gracia et al., 2012; Hurd, Stoddard, & Zimmerman, 2012; Katz et al., 2012; Schonberg & Shaw, 2007).

### **Effects of Support and Behavioral Outcomes at School**

Research studies have suggested that when adolescents lack support from support systems they can yield negative behaviors at school which can ultimately cause adverse outcomes in early adulthood as well (Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2011; Henry & Thornberry, 2010; Michael, Nardo, Peterson, & Skiba, 2002). For instance, Henry, Knight, and Thornberry (2011) investigated if adolescents' lack of support predicted dropout rates and other problem behaviors during middle adolescence, late adolescence, and early adulthood. Data from the Rochester Youth Development Study—a longitudinal sample of predominantly minority youth (RYDS; Thornberry, Krohn, & Lizotte, 1996) were used to examine the effects of a school disengagement from 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade school records. Adolescents' records also included dropout rates, as well as serious delinquency and problem substance use during middle adolescence, late adolescence, and early adulthood. Results indicated that adolescents of this study who recorded low levels of support from their caretaker or social support system demonstrated high levels of office discipline referrals and school disengagement. Furthermore, adolescents' levels of school disengagement were strongly related to their dropout rates as well as serious problem behaviors across the three developmental stages. These results indicated that high school dropout mediated the effect of RYDS's warning index on serious problem behaviors in early adulthood.

In another study conducted by Henry and Thornberry (2010), the Rochester Youth Development Study (RYDS; Thornberry, Krohn, & Lizotte, 1996) was used to investigate the

relationship between family support and truancy at school among adolescents. Data were collected every 6 months from 1988 to 1990 which included adolescents whose ages ranged from 14–16. Findings from the study indicated that adolescents who lacked support from their caregivers and/or family members demonstrated a higher level of incidences of externalizing behaviors at school. Furthermore, higher incidences of externalizing behaviors lead to increased truancy rates which also lead to heightened rates of substance use among adolescents. Additionally, the effects of elevated rates of truancy increased the levels of substance use which was mediated by unsupervised time spent with peers.

Additionally, racial differences have been noted within the pattern of outcomes for adolescents who have no support. When comparing European American and African American adolescents with similar life circumstances, such as adolescents who live in households that lack maternal figure support, African American male adolescents have been shown to be more likely to be suspended from school and receive longer days of suspension from school (in-school or out-of-school suspensions) (Michael et al., 2002; Loveless, 2017; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Moreover, some researchers have noted that African Americans, particularly males, are more susceptible to encountering harsh consequences from school due to a lack of cultural awareness and cultural stereotypes, and experiences between European middle-class teachers and African American adolescents (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Goosby, & Walsemann, 2011; McCabe, 2009; Morris, 2005). In fact, Foley (2004) explained potential negative consequences. He noted that differences in cultures exhibited by teachers and/or educators could cause a “domino effect” or “chain reaction” between adolescents’ views on

school and potential foundation and overall expectations for adults (Foley, 2004). With these subsequent findings in mind, the purpose and rationale for this study will be discussed.

### **Summary**

This chapter addressed the underlying research and areas of concern regarding adolescents' levels of support and their behavioral outcomes. Throughout this chapter, researchers have demonstrated when adolescents lack support systems from family members, neighborhood role models, or other influential individual(s), they tend to demonstrate high dropout rates and elevated levels of delinquent behaviors. In addition, this chapter addressed the purpose of this study, research questions, and limitations that were presented throughout the study.

In summary, of the remaining chapters, Chapter 2 offered an in-depth review of the literature to demonstrate how support systems counteract behavioral outcomes. Chapter 3 offered the methodology of this study including the adolescents, instrumentation, and procedures. While Chapter 4 presented the results of this study, Chapter 5 compared the findings of this current study to the literature and offers future implications and conclusions.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It has been shown in the literature that primary caregivers promote social learning for children (i.e., by shaping children's emotions to help them resolve negative emotions and to assist them with developing positive emotions) (Foster, Lambert, Abbott-Shim, McCarty, & Franze, 2005; Loughheed et al., 2016). With this ideology, children have been shown to develop positive, social, and emotional well-being characteristics that will be demonstrated during adolescence and throughout adulthood. Hazel (2016) posited that "behavior is a function of a person and his or her environment; the state of the person and the state of the environment dependently and instantaneously affect each other" (p. 42). This viewpoint of Hazel (2016) has defined the concept of social learning as it relates to adolescence. Further, this philosophy has suggested that a single person's behavior may be different in distinctive situations.

Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 1, an individuals' home environment and community allow for the foundation of strong positive relationships between adolescents and adults as they begin to develop self-awareness (Bandura, 1977; Berlin et al., 2007; Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Collins, Hawkins, & Nabors, 2016; Sampson, 2004). Moreover, family, friendship, and neighborhood connections have been shown to represent a few of the most relevant influences on early adolescents' physical, social, and cognitive development (Ahmed et al.,

2010; Spoth, Greenberg, Bierman, & Redmond, 2004; Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Involvement and support from emotional connections with individuals are important. For example, emotional connections in children's overall development have served as barriers against a range of dangerous behaviors such as being involved in delinquent activities and committing crimes (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Maryse et al., 2007; Reese et al., 2000; Wisdom, Clarke, & Green, 2006). For instance, supportive barriers have promoted positive interactions with family and non-family members with whom connections have not yet been established (Ahmed et al., 2010; Lamborn & Nguyen, 2004; Maryse et al., 2007; Wisdom, Clarke, & Green, 2006). To further investigate the effects of positive interactions from emotional connections, it is important to research how, where, and from whom can a person obtain emotional connections. Three questions were posed: (1) Do emotional connections come from only family members?; (2) Can emotional connections also come from non-family members?; and, (3) Can emotional connections be made from influential people from a person's neighborhood? In order to explore these three questions, it is vital to understand an individual's development and relationships within communities and within society. Furthermore, researchers should explore theoretical frameworks that emphasize how an individual's environment can influence their overall development whether directly or indirectly.

### **Defining Support**

Tardy's (1985) model of social support was also important to this current study. Tardy's model defined social support as an "individual's perceptions of supportive behaviors from people in their social network" (Malecki & Demaray, 2003, p. 233). Tardy's (1985) functional domains

of social support consisted of emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental types (Kenigsberg, Winston, Gibson, & Brady, 2016). Tardy's (1985) work requires further explanation; therefore, each domain of support will be discussed subsequently. Functional domains have been defined as emotional (i.e., warmth/nurture and reassurance), instrumental (i.e., tangible support—receiving money, gifts, etc.), appraisal (i.e., esteem support, providing evaluative feedback), and informational (i.e., providing resources/information to a person to help resolve situations) domains with people they consider supportive (Chu, Saucier, Hafner, 2010; Kenigsberg et al., 2016; Taylor, 2011; Tennant et al., 2015).

### **Hope**

Hope has been important because it affords people the opportunity to develop a positive mindset to set and obtain specific goals (Chang & Banks, 2007). Nonetheless, people who do not demonstrate hope often times do not challenge themselves or allow themselves opportunities to grow due to environmental circumstances (Webb, 2013; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). In fact, there are research articles that have supported and demonstrated that exposure to violence and crime are linked to hopelessness and negative behavioral outcomes among children and adolescents (Koffman et al., 2009). Children who have been exposed to negative home and neighborhood contexts, posed a greater possibility of demonstrating and feeling hopeless, aggression, the inability to foresee optimism for future success, and the inability to demonstrate resiliency when faced with negative circumstances (Cole et al., 2005; Jain & Cohen, 2013).

#### **Theoretical Framework of Hope: Definition of Hope**

Theorists have defined hope as "an anticipation of a future which is good, based on support, a sense of personal competence, coping ability, psychological well-being, purpose and

meaning in life, and a sense of possibility” (Miller & Powers, 1988, p. 6). Additionally, hope theory plays a significant role in the context of the relation between the development of individuals and their environment. Though many historical, developmental theories have highlighted the positive effects of hope, Charles Snyder’s developmental ideologies on human development highlights individuals, developmental process and ability to obtain hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Snyder’s theory will be described subsequently.

### **Snyder’s Developmental Philosophy of Hope**

Ritschel (2005) defined hope as “a complex system of thoughts and perceptions involving one’s personally valued goals, perceived ability to generate strategies to achieve the desired goals, and motivation to carry out the strategies” (p. 74). Snyder et al. (1991) theorized hope as a “cognitive motivational construct with reciprocally related elements of goals, pathways or strategies, and agency or motivation to achieve goals” (p. 572). Moreover, Snyder et al. (1991) and Snyder (2000a) described hope as a “bi-dimensional phenomenon, a thinking process that involves two fundamental goal-directed components: agency and pathways” (Snyder et al., 2001, p. 579).

Experts have suggested that in order for individuals to demonstrate hope, they must have motivation (agency) and strategies (pathways) to achieve goals they have set for themselves (Otis, Huebner, & Hill, 2016; Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Thus, Otis et al.’s (2016) ideology has supported Snyder’s (2000a) view on hope. Researchers have suggested that “agency” is the “belief (motivation) that one can begin and sustain movement along the envisioned pathways toward a given goal” (Snyder et al., 2000, p. 749). Snyder (2000b) described “pathways” as a way of thinking that reflected “a person’s perceived ability to generate

plausible routes to goals” or their ability to make reasonable goals for themselves (Snyder, 2000b, p. 13). “Pathways” has also been described as discovering or establishing diverse ways (strategies) to achieve goals through self-regulation or through supportive networks of people (Snyder, 2002; Webb, 2013).

For this study, hope was considered as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) goal-directed energy (agency) and (b) planning to meet goals (pathways)” (Snyder, 2000b, p.12). Furthermore, this study adhered to Snyder’s theoretical ideology suggests that hopeful thoughts are an active process that is learned from one’s environment and is vital for survival and thriving in life (Grewal & Porter, 2007). In short, Snyder’s Hope Theory highlights the ability for one to purposely set positive, self-regulatory skills such as goal setting and self-management regardless of positive or negative environmental contexts (Callina, Johnson, Buckingham, & Lerner, 2014; Webb, 2013). If this philosophy can positively influence individuals even when they are faced with adverse situations, understanding what age do individuals begin to actively think about the benefits of setting goals would be helpful.

### **When Does Hope Begin?**

Snyder’s Hope Theory noted that hopeful thoughts emerge and develop in early childhood stages (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). From interactions with caregivers, family, peers, and so forth, individuals begin to develop an understanding of events; and one event can lead to other events, whether events are encouraging or harmful (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Research on hope is promising. Studies have shown that hope serves as a motivational and preventive force to behavioral problems even when support at home and/or environment is

lacking (Jain & Cohen, 2013). Thus, theorists have discovered that individuals who have elevated levels of hope and low levels of support still can demonstrate positive behavioral outcomes and resiliency despite their lack of support within their family structure or community (Gerard & Booth, 2015).

### **Benefits of Hope**

According to Snyder (2000a), individuals who have hope are able to set and obtain goals despite adversities that they may encounter: This philosophy has supported goal attainment behaviors (i.e. goal setting, goal clarification, etc.) that promote future success (Carver & Scheier, 2002; Chang & Banks, 2007; Snyder, 2000a) for individuals. Snyder also (2000b) noted that the ability to fulfill set goals have been found to be associated with individuals' positive emotions. From this framework, when individuals are faced with adverse circumstances (i.e., lacking support system(s), residing in violent neighborhoods, and so forth), individuals who are hopeful tend to respond differently to barriers than individuals who exhibit low levels of hope. For instance, Snyder's (1994) research suggested that individuals who have hope are more likely to yield positive perspectives on adverse situations. Further, hope can lead to elevated levels of resiliency and the attainment of goals. Snyder's (2000b) emphasized that "hopeful individuals view barriers as challenges to overcome and use their pathway thoughts to plan an alternative route to their goals" (p. 18). On the other hand, it has been shown that individuals who lack hope or demonstrate low levels of hope tend submit to barriers displayed within their environment (Lamia, 2011).

A meta-analysis authored by Snyder et al. (2002) found that individuals with high hope were correlated with positive outcomes including lower levels of depression and higher levels of

social-emotional success. In contrast, individuals with low hope were associated with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and overall negative aspects of individual's psychological well-being (Karademas, 2007; Kelberer, Kraines, & Wells, 2011; Krafft, Martin-Krumm, & Fenouillet, 2015). Furthermore, individuals with low levels of hope possessed a greater risk of exhibiting depression, self-esteem concerns, and the inability to sustain and establish developmental skills such as building interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Krafft et al., 2015).

## **Theoretical Framework of Development**

### **Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory**

It is essential to highlight ecological perspectives that focus on how influential environmental dynamics are to children's development (Bentley & Huston, 2010; Christens & Peterson, 2012). As mentioned in Chapter 1, one theoretical framework that has emphasized the development of individuals and their environments is the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems (1979) framework. This ecological systems framework was created by Urie Bronfenbrenner to emphasize the importance of adolescents' developmental trends as they relate to systems of relationships within their environment (i.e., family, community, school, etc.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1992, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Espelage, 2014; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011).

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) framework was created in 1977 and then revised in 1979. His theory continued to clearly highlight ecological "person-in-context interrelatedness" throughout each phase of his ecological framework (Darling, 2007; Swick & Williams, 2006; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). For consistency within this research paper and consistency

with current literature regarding Bronfenbrenner's framework, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework and its direct and indirect environmental effects on children's development will be discussed.

Researchers have noted that Bronfenbrenner's framework provided an overview of multifaceted layers of environmental factors that impact individuals and their level of development (Berk, 2000; Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011; Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner's theory employed a universal framework by which the overall ecological environment was theorized as a set of embedded structures of sub-environments in which one sub-environment influences the next sub-environment Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Espelage, 2014; Swick & Williams, 2006). As noted in Table 4, the child was placed in the center of the diagram, surrounded by sub-environments in which each environment explained the role and influences it has on childhood development.

Researchers have described Bronfenbrenner's sub-environments as: (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Espelage, 2014; Lau & Ng, 2014). The interconnectedness of the sub-environments should be noted. For example, when a change is presented in one system, the system change has the potential to influence other systems which alters children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Eamon, 2001; Lane, 2013). Each of Bronfenbrenner's sub-environments will be further explained in the forthcoming sections.

***Microsystem.*** The microsystem has been defined as the layer closest to the child and serves as the child's immediate environment in which they live. Environments in this system

have been described as having a focus on personal relationships and interactions a child has with their family members, friends, neighborhood, school teachers, and church members, just to name a few (Berk, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011). Experts have suggested that starting at the microsystems level, relationships become bi-directional within levels of their sub-environment (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015; Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009). Thus, a child's microsystem will have an affect on their beliefs and behavior and/or the child could also influence the behavior and beliefs of their microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Eamon, 2001).

From an ecological outlook, it has been shown that children benefit most when all systems of development are aligned (Spoth et al., 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Eamon, 2001; Lane, 2013). Theorists have believed that the bi-directional microsystem level has the strongest and most influential impact on the development of an individual (Bronfenbrenner, & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Swick & Williams, 2006). As previously mentioned, when changes are presented in one system, other systems are at risk of altering children's development, whether positive or negative (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Eamon, 2001; Lane, 2013).

***Mesosystem.*** The mesosystem has been shown to follow the microsystem and is strongly linked to the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, 1994; Bronfenbrenner, & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). The mesosystem was described as the interaction between two microsystems that are separate from their distinctive relationships with an individual (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Farineau, 2016; Leonard,

2011). In addition, the mesosystem was further defined as a set of links between two or more settings, in which the developing individual becomes an active participant across multiple settings opposed to one setting like the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011). The mesosystem has been described as involved in building and sustaining relationships between an individual's home and school life, peers and family relationships, or family and church connections—two or more settings (Bronfenbrenner, & Ceci, 1994; Lau & Ng, 2014; Psychology Notes HQ, 2013).

An example of a child's mesosystems would be if a child has felt abandoned or has been mistreated by their parents, they may struggle with developing positive attitudes toward their teachers and peers at school (Farineau, 2016; Sincero, 2012). Consequently, children may feel uncomfortable in the presence of their peers and may succumb to withdrawing themselves from their teachers or and friends at school (Farineau, 2016; Sincero, 2012). This example offered a concrete scenario of when changes in a system influence or alter other systems. Due to the bi-directional characteristics within the microsystem's level, the mesosystem sub-environment has been altered because of changes within children's microsystem (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015; Eamon, 2001; Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009).

In summary, the cultural system, in which an individual resides is where each microsystem, mesosystem, and remaining systems will affect one another. Understanding mesosystems of youths' environments are critically important when assessing and treating behavioral concerns. By fully understanding children's cultural systems and how those systems influence their development, others can better understand why children or even adults, for that

matter, respond to certain situations in certain ways (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Lau & Ng, 2014).

**Exosystem.** Exosystem within the Bronfenbrenner's framework is defined as "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p. 237). An exosystem does not have a direct impact on an individual; however, it could influence the microsystem and mesosystem's sub-environments (Berk, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011). This system has been described as having an influence on the child; however, the child does not directly participate in the settings (Lane, 2013). For example, when a child experiences death in the family or when a parent is laid off, the child's exosystem is influenced (Paquette & Ryan, 2001.).

**Macrosystem.** The macrosystem has been described as one of the outermost layers of the ecological framework. It highlights a person's cultural values, customs, and unique characteristics (Berk, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011). In a nutshell, the macrosystem has the actual culture of an individual. This system has been described as including cultural contexts such as a family's socioeconomic status, ethnicity/race, and their political viewpoints (Farineau, 2016; Lau & Ng, 2014; Psychology Notes HQ, 2013; Tudge et al., 2009).

**Chronosystem.** The chronosystem has been described as the outermost and last layer of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System (Darling, 2007; Santrock, 2007; Tudge et al., 2009). It is defined as the system that "encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environments...which demonstrates the influence of both change and constancy in the child's environment" (Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Sincero, 2012). The chronosystem has been described in

the following way. As children grow in age, they may begin to react differently to environmental changes and may be able to determine how such changes can or will influence their behavior (Darling, 2007; Katz et al., 2012; Santrock, 2007; Snedker & Hooven, 2013). An example of this system would be if a person who is abused at home becomes an abuser to other—the ideology that hurt people hurt other people or people who are abused, abuse other people (Psychology Notes HQ, 2013). This example demonstrated that behavior in one setting influenced connections across other settings (Psychology Notes HQ, 2013; Santrock, 2007).

### **Bronfenbrenner's Focal Points**

Literature has emphasized that a person's immediate, direct relationship with family, friends, and community environment influences their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Darling, 2007; Espelage, 2014; Lau & Ng, 2014; McMorris, Sieving, & Stoddard, 2011). As earlier stated, to effectively study individuals' development, researchers must study the person and their interactions with their immediate environment. Furthermore, this current study will focus on the microsystem (i.e. family, friends, and neighborhood) framework of adolescents when discussing who they deem as a positive, supportive figure among adolescents.

Because adolescence has been described as a period when children search for autonomy and self-regulation, this study focused on adolescents as adolescents (Baskin, Quintana, & Slaten, 2014; Latkin & Curry, 2003; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Thompson, Herting, Mazza, Randell, & Eggert, 2005;). The literature has suggested that when adolescents do not establish basic foundations of how to appropriately regulate independence from their support system(s), they are more likely to demonstrate maladaptive behaviors, particularly when they are

dealing with stressful events in non-supportive family and social environments (Latkin & Curry, 2003; McMahon, Coker, & Parnes, 2013; Thompson et al., 2005; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Thus, targeting adolescents and measuring their perceptions of support allows researchers to investigate how influential family and peer support impact their development, especially their behavioral development (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2003; McMorris, Sieving, & Stoddard, 2011).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to determine if the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) influence the potential relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline outcomes at school. For consistency throughout this paper, Tardy's (1985) framework for the emotional domain of support (i.e. warmth/nurture and reassurance) were addressed as levels of support. Furthermore, individuals' emotional domain of support was utilized throughout this current study to introduce a comparison regarding how adolescents' perception of nurturing, caring relationships from their microsystem influenced their behavior and development.

### **Positive Support and Behavioral Outcomes**

Studies have shown that when families provide a supportive and encouraging environment, the likelihood that their children will become engaged in antisocial behaviors are reduced (Hagen, Myers, & Mackintosh, 2005; Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000; Jagers et al., 2015; Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, 2008; Warren, Jackson, & Sifers, 2009). Further, adolescents' perceived family support and family values for learning were associated with adolescents' engagement in social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Côté, Bouffard, & Vezeau, 2014; Ozer, 2005; Malecki & Demaray 2003). As earlier stated, there has been strong evidence that family support and social support from peers and neighbors may serve as a barrier

against stressors of one's environment to promote hope, positive social outcomes, and positive academic outcomes (Bolland et al., 2011; Gerard & Booth, 2015; Maryse et al., 2007; Ozer, 2005; Tennant et al., 2015). For example, individuals who feel connected with family, peers, and/or community have been shown to be better able to adjust to change; are less vulnerable to exhibit anxiety and depression; more motivated to be successful; and have better overall behavioral outcomes (McMahon, Coker, & Parnes, 2013; Palamaro-Munsell, Kilmer, Cook, & Reeve, 2012; Stoddard, Zimmerman, Bauermeister, 2011).

Additionally, experts have also suggested that supportive social relationships may influence adolescents' behavioral outcomes indirectly through motivational and emotional stable environments (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009; Bracke & Cortis, 2012; Huebner et al., 2015; Shulman, 2016). For example, McMahon et al. (2013) proposed that when adolescents are a part of social support networks that provide a sense of stability through adversity within their home or community, they are more prone to creating positive reactions to adverse situations. Similarly, Barshinger, Rocha, and Schaller (2007) demonstrated that when parents and families have positive attitudes despite their economic adversities, children exhibited positive attitudes and demonstrated positive behaviors, which promoted self-confidence and positive behavioral outcomes. Henceforth, research has underlined that social support generally has a positive effect on people, regardless of stress levels (Bowen & Lee, 2006; Kretschmer et al., 2016; Swick & Williams, 2006).

Literature has also highlighted that males and females demonstrate similar outcomes when they are provided with support (Buist et al., 2004; Devaney, Canavan & Landy, 2016; Levitas, 2012; Long et al., 2012; MacLeod, 2011). For example, Warren, Jackson, and Sifers

(2009) conducted a study on 103 inner-city youth ages 11–14 in a large metropolitan city. Adolescents of the study were adolescents who demonstrated negative behaviors at school. Negative behaviors were measured by the amount of office referrals a student received in a 4 - 6-week period. Additionally, the researchers investigated adolescents' levels of social support provisions in relation to adaptive skills and hope while living in stressful environments. Findings of the study revealed that females and males exhibited similar findings. Females who felt they had a strong, positive, support system from people they could count on if they needed help exhibited higher levels of adaptive skills and lower levels of maladaptive behaviors. Additionally, males who felt more emotionally linked to their support system reported higher levels of hope. In addition, the study also demonstrated that social support acted as a protective factor promoting high levels hope and low levels of dysfunctional, non-productive behaviors. In short, regardless of gender differences family and community support has shown to serve as a defensive measure for children at home as preparation for establishing relationships with peers and non-family members throughout adolescence (Palamaro-Munsell et al., 2012).

Moreover, when adolescents had positive and supportive relationships with their family, their emotional and behavioral outcomes increased (Devaney, Canavan & Landy, 2016; Levitas, 2012; MacLeod, 2011). For instance, Gutman & Midgley (2000) found that individuals who perceived a higher level of emotional support from persons they considered family had the greatest contribution to their overall school success than adolescents who reported little or no support. Though support from a close friend from school or their neighborhood was perceived most frequently by adolescents, supportive behaviors from parents and/or caregivers, in particular support from a maternal figure, had the strongest correlations with their

overall emotional and behavioral outcomes (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Kerpelman, Eryigit-Madzwamuse, & Stephens, 2007; Kazdin, 2007).

### **Positive Effects of Maternal Figure Support**

Maternal support has been found to be important. According to one study, family influences, specifically maternal figure support, were more influential with adolescents' overall social, emotional well-being than other sources of support from neighbors, teachers, or peers (Ahmed et al., 2010; Brody, 2003; McMahon, Coker, & Parnes, 2013; Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000; Laible & Carlo, 2004). Moreover, research conducted by Duchesne and Larose (2007) demonstrated that adolescents who perceive their mothers as a source of security were more hopeful towards their future; highly motivated for their future; and better adjusted to social stress circumstances than adolescents who did not perceive their caregivers as positive and supportive.

As earlier stated, during adolescence, individuals begin to develop their own self-regulation skills through repeated interactions with their caregivers, but interpersonal regulation and socialization of emotion continues through adulthood as adolescents begin to have more interactions with peers and non-family members (Baskin, Quintana, & Slaten, 2014; Loughheed et al., 2016; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Thompson et al., 2005). Because adolescence is a period where young children experience physical, social, and emotional change, it is vital to highlight how influential this time period of psychological development is to young children (Baskin, Quintana, & Slaten, 2014; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). For example, Ahmed, Kuyper, Minnaert, and van der Werf (2010) stated that during early adolescence perceived maternal figure support was associated with higher levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal

relationships allowing adolescents to interact with others properly and to develop emotional intelligence—the ability to know, understand, and manage their own emotions. This type of development and sense of awareness allows adolescents to begin to make decisions that can affect their confidence in the ability to make future decisions (Palamaro-Munsell et al., 2012; Loughheed et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2005).

Research has indicated that the perceived effects of maternal support has been associated with adolescents' development of interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviors (Palamaro-Munsell et al., 2012; Stoddard & Pierce, 2015). For example, Yuan, Weiser, and Fischer (2016) have demonstrated that the quality of caregiver-child emotional relationships were interconnected with a child's self-perception of competence and overall quality of emotional and behavioral outcomes. Similarly, Lee and Jonson-Reid (2016) showed the impact of quality relationships between primary caregivers (mothers) and adolescents' self-esteem. The study revealed that when adolescents perceived their support systems as positive and influential, they demonstrated positive attitudes and hope towards their future orientation and exhibit positive relationships with peers.

### **Positive Effects of Neighborhood Support**

Similar to maternal support, receiving emotional support from non-family members such as a neighbor or a friend has also shown in research to influence individuals' behavioral outcomes (Brody et al., 2001; Maryse et al., 2007; Maurizi et al., 2013). Some researchers have argued that the differences among social supports can either provide resources and risks depending on the community context (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Duncan & Raudenbush, 1999; Gracia et al., 2012; Snedker & Hooven, 2013). However, adolescents' level of positive

attachment to their neighborhood and their overall level of social support from their neighborhood has been associated with having positive developmental outcomes and serves as prevention from behaviors linked to violence and crime (Stockdale et al., 2007; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009; Zeldin 2004). When support has been demonstrated from the community via neighbors and friends, children exhibit less anti-social or delinquent behaviors, even when they grow up in poverty-stricken areas that are plagued by crime and violence (Hughes & Witherspoon, 2014; Saathoff, 2015; Schonberg & Shaw, 2007; Stockdale et al., 2007).

Neighborhood disorganization (or lack of connectedness) can be damaging to the psychosocial development of adolescents (Brevard, Maxwell, Hood, & Belgrave, 2013; National Criminal Justice Reference Service [NCJRS], 2003; Sampson, 2004). However, research has continued to support the notion that through positive connections with neighbors within the community, adolescents could still demonstrate positive developmental outcomes (Belgrave et al., 2013; Lippold, Davis, Lawson, & McHale, 2016; Stoddard & Pierce, 2015). For instance, Brevard et al. (2013) examined the relationship between urban and rural neighborhoods and perception of neighborhood disorganization among African American elementary, middle, and high school students. The adolescents were 564 African American students in grades 5, 8, and 12. They were selected from a longitudinal study that examined cultural, family, and contextual factors. To measure neighborhood connectedness, the adolescents were asked to complete a modified version of the Neighborhood Disorganization subscale of the Communities that Care Youth Survey (Community Youth Development Study, 2010).

Findings from the Brevard et al. (2013) study showed that perceptions of connections were linked to the perception of higher levels neighborhood connectedness for African American

youth residing within urban neighborhoods. The authors' research showed that even though the adolescents were from urban, impoverished communities and that they were exposed to crime, violence, and drugs, through their supportive network of neighborhoods, the adolescents were less likely to engage in behaviors that were exhibited by community members and peers within their community. In short, the findings of the study demonstrated that neighborhoods with high connections and organization had lower rates of youth violence due to positive interactions and monitoring, collectivism of their community.

To highlight the effects of community support and children's developmental outcomes, Maurizi, Ceballo, Epstein-Ngo and Cortina (2013) examined Latino adolescents' sense of belongingness from their neighborhood and its effects regarding adolescents' psychological well-being. Data were collected for 202 Latino students from three schools in low-income, urban neighborhoods in the northeastern United States. Adolescents were provided with self-report rating scales to measure neighborhood belongingness, neighborhood peer support, and psychological well-being scales. Results from the study indicated that neighborhood peer support influenced students' perceptions neighborhood support and levels of cohesiveness. Researchers of the study noted that neighborhood peer support correlated to neighborhood belonging, thus supporting greater psychological well-being reducing the likelihood of adolescents' participation in delinquent behaviors as seen within their communities and at school.

Likewise, Brody et al. (2001) investigated the characteristics of neighborhood disadvantage, collective socialization—the process of taking a group of people who were facing a similar circumstances and experiences—and adolescents' perceived level of support within

their community. The researchers utilized The Family and Community Health Study (FACHS, Hutson, & Conyers, 2007)—a longitudinal investigation of African-American families that investigates family and community characteristics that influences child development. A total of 867 African American families from Georgia and Iowa with children ranging in age from 10 - 12 participated in the study. Parents/ caregivers and their “pre-teens” completed rating scales to measure neighborhood conditions, nurturing and harsh parental styles and relationships, and children’s level of association with their peers who have displayed deviant behaviors. Results from the study showed caregivers in Georgia reported higher levels of collective socialization in their neighborhoods than did caregivers from Iowa. Though adolescents’ reports of community deviance did not vary across state-sites, adolescents in Georgia reported receiving more nurturing, supportive relationships from their communities and higher levels community socialization than adolescents who resided in Iowa.

Across previously mentioned studies, results emphasized adolescents’ outcomes when their community supported them (Mann et al., 2015; Maryse et al., 2007; van Roekel, 2008). Findings also indicated that adolescents’ outcomes were notably positive despite family and community hardships. Two questions were posed while investigating the results from each study: (1) What other variables could have potentially influenced adolescents’ perception of their communities’ support? (2) Did adolescents’ hope for a better future influence them in anyway? As a result, hope was further explored to determine if it could have influence on adolescents.

### **School Outcomes and Hope**

Adolescents who lack supportive adult figures are at a greater risk of displaying negative behaviors at school and within society (Bond et al., 2007; Christens & Peterson, 2012; Elmore &

Huebner, 2010). On the contrary, hopefulness can act as a barrier and a strong mediator in the relationship between perceived social support and general, overall behavioral outcomes of adolescents (Gilman et al., 2006; Hagen, Myers, & Mackintosh, 2005; Harter, Low, & Whitesell, 2003; Purvis et al., 2007).

A number of studies have highlighted the effects of support and adolescents' behavioral outcomes at school (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Bruyn, Dekovic, & Meijnen, 2003; Gopalan, Cavaleri, Bannon, & McKay, 2010). For example, Morris and Fry-McComish (2012) explored the relationship of hope and support from students who demonstrated elevated levels of behavioral occurrences at school. This study also supported the importance of hope in adolescents. Adolescents who had more than 10 office referrals for one year participated in the study. To determine if support positively influenced adolescents' outcomes, the researchers provided support by implementing interventions that promoted health and behavioral well-being (i.e., non-judgmental listening, age-specific support groups, and offering strategies for achieving life goals).

Adolescents from Morris and Fry-McComish's (2012) study were adolescents from a charter school located in an urban, Midwestern city in poverty-stricken gang-related neighborhoods. The study showed that adolescents who were 12 years old and younger expressed hope for a good education, a family, and the ability to help family members and close friends in the neighborhood. Adolescents who were 13 years of age or older expressed the hope that there was sufficient opportunities and time for them to make something of themselves. In conclusion, the study showed that adolescents could become motivated enough to create desired

goals and carry out their desired goals, despite their lack of support and negative circumstances within their neighborhood.

These findings conclude that adolescents' judgements of their future outcomes were an independent predictor of their school behaviors and future ventures, regardless of their relationships with parents or peers. Additionally, goal-orientated behaviors displayed by the students (i.e., working through hardships of circumstances to obtain good results) offered hope for future endeavors (van Ryzin, 2011). These benefits were most important because adolescents' who reported elevated levels of hope reported higher levels of the ability to acclimate to conditions within their community and family (Gilman et al., 2006).

### **Summary**

In summary, researchers have shown that levels of support influence adolescents' behavioral outcomes. Studies included in this literature review highlighted how support or lack thereof, can negatively or positively influence adolescents. This study focused on whether hope and/or neighborhood connectedness mediated any potential relationship between levels of maternal figure support and adolescents' behavioral outcomes.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Overview**

Chapter 3 provides information about the methodology of the study, including the study's setting, adolescents, and instruments the researcher used to investigate maternal figure support, hope, neighborhood connectedness, and adolescents' levels of discipline at school. Furthermore, this chapter specifically provides information about procedures, research questions, and data analyses used to explore if hope and neighborhood connectedness impact the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline at school.

#### **Rationale for Research Questions**

Previous literature reviews have documented that adolescents' level of perceived support, hope, and adolescents' levels of discipline are correlated to one another (e.g., positive support, high hope, low negative discipline outcomes at school and vice versa). Literature has highlighted that when individuals lack support, individuals are at an elevated risk of demonstrating negative behaviors at school and in society (Ak & Sayil, 2006; Anderson, 2012; Bolland et al., 2011; Bond et al., 2007; Hamilton et al., 2015; Sampson et al., 2005; Serbin et al., 2013; Stockdale et al., 2007). However, not all individuals demonstrate negative outcomes when individuals lack support systems. When considering adolescents who do not have positive support systems, but yield elevated levels of positive discipline outcomes at school the researcher of this study considered individuals' intrinsic motivation or potential level of hope and/or

connections to their neighborhood as being potential rationales of such a reversal effect. Could adolescents' level of neighborhood connectedness and/or level of hope influence these otherwise relationships?

As discussed in Chapter 2 of the text, Snyder's (2000b) hope ideology of adolescents' development suggest that hope is an active process that is learned from their environment and highlights the ability for one to purposely set positive goals for themselves regardless of positive or negative environmental contexts (Callina, Johnson, Buckingham, & Lerner, 2014; Grewal & Porter, 2007; Webb, 2013). In addition to Snyder's (2000b) ideology, van Hooft (2014) define hope as "the ability for an individual to conceptualize goals, find pathways to these goals, and have the motivation to use those pathways to obtain goals despite any adversities they encounter" (van Hooft, 2014, p. 12). If hope is cannot offer positive outcomes for adolescents, could someone from their community be equally influential to their development. In short, whether support comes from a maternal figure or individuals from their community adolescents make an active choice to either succumb to their environmental norms or do things differently from their environmental norms leading changes to positive or negative outcomes for their future.

I examined if adolescents' levels of support predict adolescents' levels of discipline at school. It is documented that individuals who have support yielded elevated levels of hope and low levels of problematic behaviors; nevertheless, it is also documented that not all individuals demonstrate negative outcomes when individuals lack support systems. Consequently, I explored if adolescents could have hope or neighborhood connectedness and yield positive levels of discipline despite adverse environmental backgrounds such as poverty, low support from caregiver, community, peers, etc.? Based on research findings from seminal articles, male and

female adolescents reported levels of support from maternal figures were correlated to their overall social-emotional well-being (e.g. how they adjust and react to new situations, etc.) (Laible & Carlo, 2004; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016; Nie, Chua, Yeung, Ryan, & Chan, 2015). Furthermore, I examined if hope and/or neighborhood connectedness mediated the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' discipline outcomes at school. The research questions are as follows:

1. Does support from a maternal figure affect adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
2. Does hope regarding the future mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
3. Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness levels mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and their discipline infractions at school?
4. Does gender explain or influence the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness?

As earlier stated within Chapter 1, previous research highlights behavioral changes among female and male adolescents when support and/or hope is present (Ofonedu et al., 2012; Palamaro-Munsell et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2008;). Furthermore, researchers within noted articles of this text measured the overall, combined level of support (e.g. caregivers, family members, neighbors, peers, etc.) and adolescents' behavioral changes without highlighting gender differences among the adolescents.

## **Secondary Data Analysis**

Data were collected previously through the Mobile Youth Survey (MYS) (2017) from 1998-2011. The researcher of this study did not collect additional information to conduct this study. Furthermore, a cross-sectional research design was used to facilitate data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Cross-sectional designs allow the researcher to analyze data from a population at a specific point in time that are descriptive and quantitative in nature (Levin, 2006). In addition, cross-sectional designs allow for the research to determine the pervasiveness of the topic of interest (Levin, 2006). Two sources of data were used in the present study: discipline data from the Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) school records and the Mobile Youth Survey (MYS) school report MCPSS records were used to identify discipline infractions of adolescents who participated in MYS.

### **Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS)**

The Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) currently serves all areas of Mobile County, excluding surrounding cities such as Saraland, Satsuma and Chickasaw (Library of Congress, n.d.). The MCPSS serves urban, suburban, and rural areas with approximately 89 elementary, middle, and high schools yielding an enrollment total of approximately 62,000 students (Mobile County Public Schools, 2017; Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). MCPSS is the largest school system in Alabama and the 65<sup>th</sup> largest school system in the United States (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). MCPSS' database consisted of adolescents' academic assessment information such as statewide assessments and behavior records at school (i.e. office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, etc.). For the purpose of this study, MCPSS' records were

used to identify discipline infractions of adolescents who participated in MYS from 2006-2009 and could be matched to adolescents' information from MYS.

### **Mobile Youth Survey**

**Background of study.** The other source of data used in this study came from the MYS, a 14-year multiple cohort longitudinal study of adolescents (aged 9.75 to 19.25) who lived in the most impoverished neighborhoods in the Mobile, Alabama Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which included neighborhoods in surrounding towns of Prichard, AL (see Bolland et al., 2016 and Church et al., 2012 for more details). The MYS was conducted to examine risk and protective factors associated with the engagement in risky behaviors such as substance use and abuse, violence and aggression, and sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents.

Additionally, the MYS included constructs measuring support, connectedness, and psychological well-being, to name a few. The full MYS survey consisted of 294 items about attitudes, behaviors, and opinions, with an increase to 406 items in 2006 (Bolland et al., 2017). The study began in 1998 with 1,774 adolescents with new cohorts added yearly (Bolland, 2007). Since 1998, MYS has yielded results from adolescent samples encompassing more than 12,000 adolescents contributing to more than 36,000 annual data points (Mobile Youth Survey, 2017).

**Setting and procedure of study.** The MYS was administered annually to adolescents in impoverished neighborhoods in the Mobile, Alabama between 1998 and 2011 (Bolland et al., 2016; Church et al., 2012). According to the 1990 Census, Mobile, Alabama's total population in 1998 was over 540,000 with a median household income of \$5000 when the study began in 1998 (Bolland et al., 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). When MYS researchers initiated the study in 1998, they identified the 13 most impoverished neighborhoods in the Mobile, Alabama

MSA to recruit adolescents for the MYS: seven of the neighborhoods were public housing developments and six were nonpublic housing recruitment neighborhoods (Bolland et al., 2016; Umlauf et al., 2015). Annually, during summer months, from 1998 to 2011, student interns actively recruited adolescents within these communities using random sampling procedures (Bolland et al., 2016).

Additionally, adolescents in other households passively recruited adolescents by posting fliers at community centers (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs) and by word of mouth (Bolland et al., 2016). Each adolescent was initially paid \$10 after completing the survey (Bolland et al., 2016). Over the years, new cohorts continued to be actively and passively recruited, in which, adolescents who completed the survey received an incentive that increased from \$10 to \$15 in 2005 (Bolland et al., 2016; Mobile Youth Survey, 2017).

### **Background Information of Study**

To explore research questions created for this study, the MYS database was used as a secondary data analysis to examine the relationship between variables. Subsets of MYS items such as maternal figure support, neighborhood connectedness, hope, and levels of discipline were investigated. The key principle of the study was to explore if adolescents' level of hope and neighborhood connectedness mediated the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. Based on previous information and theoretical frameworks about levels of support, hope, and its correlation to adolescents' behavior, literature suggests that when individuals have any type of support they are hopeful and tend adopt positive, optimistic views on life. However, I am most interested in determining how

hope and neighborhood connectedness mediated the relationship, that may have existed, between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school.

To target all research questions that were posed earlier, I am interested in determining how correlated maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school if any. Most importantly, does hope or neighborhood connectedness mediate and impact any relationship that may have existed within the correlation? If correlations between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline exist within the sample, are there gender differences that were demonstrated in the data?

### **Procedures of MYS Demographic Variables**

As previously mentioned, MYS has produced over 36,000 data points over the years of collecting data. However, variables of interest such as maternal figure, maternal figure warmth, hope, and neighborhood connectedness was analyzed. Though MYS data were collected from 1998-2011, data from 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 waves were not available to be analyzed for this study. Not all proposed variables of the study were analyzed. As a result, data for this study were limited to MYS waves 2006-2009.

### **Procedures of Sample**

As earlier stated in Chapter 2, adolescence is a time where children begin to develop autonomy and self-regulation skills. During adolescence, young children start to detach from their parents and become aware their own personality (Baskin, Quintana, & Slaten, 2014; Baskin, Wampold, Quintana, & Enright, 2010; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Thompson et al., 2005). In many instances during this stage, individuals may encounter conflict with their parents, families, and friends (Lougheed et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2005). Thus, it was

important to highlight how these rapid changes can influence children's behavior and perceptions of support or lack thereof. Therefore, waves from 2006-2009 only included eighth grade adolescents which included 3,239 adolescents. Data were matched from the MYS to the MCPSS by MYPS researchers using individual's birthdates, addresses, gender, and in some cases parental consent name and in-case-of-emergency contact information.

In order to be included in the analysis for this study, adolescents had to (a) have both MYS data and MCPSS data for the wave/academic year of eighth grade; (b) be consistent in their identification of being in eighth grade through their self-report on the MYS as well as in the MCPSS records (165 adolescents were inconsistent in their reporting and were removed from analysis); (c) have self-report gender; and, (d) be of an expected age of eighth grade according to the State of Alabama<sup>1</sup> (three adolescents who were younger than twelve-years-old and thirteen adolescents who reported themselves as being older than fifteen-years-old). There were ninety-one adolescents with no violation data, sixteen adolescents with no overall maternal figure support scale scores, two adolescents with no sense of community scores, six adolescents with no hope score, and one adolescent with no positively worded hope score. Subsequently, adolescents who did not meet the study's inclusion requirements were removed from the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The Alabama Department of Education (2011) states in order to attend kindergarten, a child must have turned five years of age on or before September 1 of that same school year. Thus, the required school age for children for children to start school in Alabama is 6 years old (Alabama Department of Education (2011)). According to the guidelines from the Alabama Department of Education's (2011), kindergarten mandatory enrollment age, when calculating students' age from kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, adolescents aged from 13 to 14 should be in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. To account for early or late birthdays, adolescents who were younger than 12 or older than 15 were excluded from analysis.

Because this study explores how support predicts behavioral problems, those with no or very minor behavioral problems (see Measures section) were excluded from analysis. As result of the requirements of inclusion for this study, a total of 2,439 adolescents were excluded. Lastly, the resulting final sample size for this study is 800 eighth graders with both MYS and MCPSS corresponding data, 236 adolescents had MCPSS corresponding data for the 2006-2007 school year; 314 adolescents had MCPSS corresponding data for the 2007-2008 school year; and 250 adolescents had MCPSS corresponding data for the 2008-2009 school year.

**Reliability Check for Variables**

To ensure an accurate sample size for the study, the examiner checked all adolescents’ information to ensure all adolescents had MYS data variables (i.e., maternal figure support, neighborhood connected, sense of community, and hope). As earlier stated, if adolescents did not meet the study’s inclusion requirements, adolescents were excluded. Furthermore, reliability checks of discipline data were conducted on 20% of randomly selected adolescents. Moreover, no incorrect codes or removal of adolescents’ data were required (Refer to Table 1 for more information).

Table 1

*Reliability Table*

<u>Waves</u>	<u>Total Sample</u>	<u>Number Checked</u>	<u>Codes Incorrect</u>	<u>Codes Removed</u>
2006-2007	236	47	0	0
2007-2008	314	68	0	0
2008-2009	250	50	0	0
Total:	800	100	0	0

**Final demographics of sample.** The sampled population included students aged 12-15. As previously reviewed, adolescents who were younger than 12-years-old and older than 15-

years-old were excluded. The total sample size for this study is 800 adolescents from 2006-2009. Refer to Table 2 for more information.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Revised Sample Size*

<u>Waves</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
2006-2007	236	29.5
2007-2008	314	39.3
2008-2009	250	31.3
Total:	800	100

*Age, gender, and race descriptive statistics.* Data show that the vast majority of adolescents were 13-year-old ( $n = 387, 48.4\%$ ) and 14-year-old ( $n = 304, 38.0\%$ ) eighth graders (Refer to Table 3). When combined together, 13-year-old and 14-year-old adolescents represent 86.4% of the sampled population. Data showed a closely equivalent number of male ( $n = 389, 48.6\%$ ) and female ( $n = 411, 51.4\%$ ) participation and completion of the study (Refer to Table 3 for more information). Of note, gender will be used as a moderating variable in this study (0 = boy, 1 = girl). Though other races/ ethnicities such as Asian American/Asian ( $n = 2, .3\%$ ) and European American/White ( $n = 6, 0.8\%$ ) were recorded, African Americans/ Black adolescents ( $n = 792, 99.0\%$ ) represent much of the sample size. (Refer to Table 3 for more information).

Table 3

*Adolescent Demographics*

<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Asian	2	0.2
Black	792	99.0
White	6	0.8
Total	800	100
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	389	48.6
Female	411	51.4

Total	800	100
<u>Age</u>		
12	58	7.2
13	387	48.4
14	304	38.0
15	51	6.4
Total	800	100

***Income descriptive statistics.*** To gather information regarding families' income level, adolescents were asked questions to record their free/ reduced status. Adolescents recorded if they received free/reduced lunch. Responses for this item included options such as *I receive free/reduced lunch, I pay for lunch, and I do not know if I receive free/reduced lunch.*

Descriptive statistics for lunch demographics show that most adolescents recorded themselves as receiving free lunch ( $n = 709, 88.6\%$ ). While remaining adolescents recorded themselves as adolescents recorded themselves as receiving reduced lunch ( $n = 29, 3.6\%$ ), fewer adolescents recorded as paying for lunch ( $n = 50, 6.3\%$ ) and not knowing if they receive free/reduced lunch ( $n = 12, 1.5\%$ ) (Refer to Table 4 for more information).

Table 4

*Lunch Descriptive Statistics*

<u>Lunch Type</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Free	709	88.6
Reduced	29	3.6
Paid	50	6.3
Don't know	12	1.5
Total:	800	100

***Maternal figure.*** Studies have concluded that maternal support is among the parenting practices that have been shown to be influential in behaviors for adolescents (Church et al., 2012; Deutsch, Crockett, Wolff, & Russell, 2012). To determine who adolescents identify as a

maternal figure, the survey asked adolescents to identify the person *most like a mother*. This question was used to determine exactly who they consider a supportive figure (i.e. parent(s), aunts, grandparent(s), etc.). For this study, biological mothers and non-biological maternal figures were analyzed.

The majority of adolescents ( $n = 626, 78.3\%$ ) recorded their mother as their maternal figure. Conversely, other adolescents ( $n = 174, 21.8\%$ ) recorded non-biological mothers (i.e. grandmother, aunt, sister, etc.) as their caregiver/maternal support. Refer to Table 5 for descriptive statistics on the frequency of biological mothers who were caregivers versus non-biological maternal figures.

Table 5

*Maternal Figure Descriptive Statistics*

<u>Prompt</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
My mother	626	78.3
Non-biological maternal figure	174	21.8
Total:	800	100

**Measures of the Study**

**Independent Variable Measure**

To measure maternal figure support, the maternal figure support construct from MYS was used as the independent. The adolescent self-report survey was utilized to collect information from adolescents who identify their biological mothers as a maternal figure.

**Maternal figure support (Lamborn et al., 1991).** On the MYS, adolescents were asked to respond to six items while keeping in mind the person who they considered to be a mother figure. Adolescents were asked to agree or disagree with statements such as *she helps me to do*

*my best* and *she spends time with me*. These responses were summed to obtain an overall maternal figure support score, ranging from 0 to 6, where higher scores indicate higher levels of maternal figure support. This variable serves as the independent variable in this study. Overall, adolescents indicated high levels of maternal figure support. In fact, the majority of adolescents (80.5%) reported very high levels of maternal support (scores of 5 or 6).

### **Mediating Effect Measures**

Support, hope, and its correlation to behavioral outcomes of adolescents suggests that when individuals have support they are hopeful and tend to adopt positive views on life. For this study, I am most interested in determining how hope and neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) mediated the relationship that may have existed, between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions. The researcher first investigated correlations between adolescents' levels of maternal figure support and their levels of discipline infractions at school outcomes. Secondly, did hope mediate and impact any relationship that may have existed within the correlation? Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness levels impact any relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school? Lastly, if correlations between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school existed within the sample, what are the differences in gender, if any?

**Hope (Kazdin et al., 1983).** The construct of hope was derived from the adolescents' responses on the MYS. Adolescents were asked to agree or disagree with eight items that measured hope by answering statements such as *When I think about the future, I feel hopeful and optimistic, When things don't go my way, I remind myself of positive things in my life.*

Adolescents' responses were summed resulting in a score ranging between zero and eight with higher scores reflecting more hope for the future. Generally, adolescents had moderately to relatively high levels of hope for the future, with 70.4% of adolescents with scores of five or above on this scale.

**Neighborhood connectedness (Glynn, 1981; Perkins et al., 1990).** Five statements on the MYS were used to measure adolescents' overall level of community connectedness or sense of community. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements such as *Very few of my neighbors know me, I do not like living in my neighborhood,* and *If you don't look out for yourself in my neighborhood, no one else will.* Scores for these items were summed, resulting in a scale ranging from zero to five where higher scores indicate higher levels of community connectedness. In this sample, adolescents generally had moderately to relatively high levels of community connectedness, with 47.4% of adolescents having scores of four or five on this scale, and 68.9% of adolescents having a score of three or higher on this scale.

### **Moderator**

Gender was used as a moderator within this study. A moderated mediation was used to determine whether the influences strength of relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. Ranges of possible scores for gender are 0-1: male = 0 and female = 1.

### **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)**

For the purposes of this study, an additional framework was used to classify behavior. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework used to develop positive behaviors and positive climates in which appropriate behaviors are always demonstrated (OSEP

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2017). Three tiers are designated to identify levels of intervention services to struggling students to address inappropriate behaviors (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 2007; U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 2015). Tier 1 also known as School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (PBIS) is where students with minimal concerns fall; Tier 2 supports students with identified needs who would receive additional or targeted instruction/assistance; and Tier 3 is designated for students with the most severe needs who receive rigorous, personalized behavioral support (Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project, 2008; Mobile County Public Schools, 2017; U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 2007; U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 2015). In short, Tier 1 is for students who demonstrate low levels of inappropriate behavior, Tier 2 is for students who demonstrate moderate levels of inappropriate behaviors, and Tier 3 is for students who demonstrate elevated levels of inappropriate behaviors.

### **Dependent Variable Measure**

Behavior, as measured by MCPSS records, served as the dependent variable in this study. MYPS researchers identified the number of days that a student had an office referral through the behavior records recorded by the MCPSS. The MCPSS recorded the type of offense as well, using discipline codes (A through E with E being the most severe) as identified by the school's code of conduct.

**Types of behavioral infractions in MCPSS.** According to the MCPSS Code of Conduct, Class A offenses are the most minor (e.g., being improperly dressed/out of approved uniform, excessive talking). Class B offenses are more severe, but remain relatively minor (e.g.,

cutting/ skipping class, acts of willful disobedience, leaving the classroom or campus without permission). Class C offenses are more serious (e.g., arson, theft of property, receiving and concealing stolen property, criminal mischief). Class D offenses are even more severe and are described as students “possessing, selling, furnishing, giving away, distributing, transferring, obtaining, using, consuming, or admitting to any of the same, the use of alcoholic beverages and/or drugs” (Mobile County Public Schools, 2005). Lastly, Class E offenses are designated as weapons violations, where students are caught possessing weapons, explosives, or students are using non-weapons as weapons.

**Coding of behavior infractions.** For this study, discipline offenses were divided into tiers according to the PBIS framework (Table 6). Because Tier 1 is for individuals who demonstrate minimal behavioral concerns, adolescents who have Class A discipline infractions were excluded from analysis. Furthermore, adolescents who had between zero and two B violations and no C, D, or E violations are low-level (Tier 1) and are coded as zero for analysis, Adolescents who have between three and five B violations and no C, D, or E violations are moderate-level (Tier 2) and are coded as one for analysis. Lastly, adolescents who have six or more B violations and/or any C, D, or E violations are high-level (Tier 3) and will be coded as two for data analysis.

Table 6

*Discipline Levels*

<u>Score</u>	<u>PBIS Tier</u>	<u>Discipline Level</u>	<u>Violation Description</u>
0	1	Low	0-2 B violations and no C, D, or E violations
1	2	Moderate	3-5 B violations and no C, D, or E violations
2	3	High	6+ B violations or any number of C, D, or E level violations

In this data, moderate ( $n = 124$ , 15.5%) and high ( $n = 219$ , 27.4%) levels of discipline infractions represent 42.9% of the sample; however, most adolescents ( $n = 457$ , 57.1%) were sent to the office for B violations (Table 7). Furthermore, when investigating types of offense based on adolescents' offense totals, Class B (3-5 offenses), Class C, Class D, and Class E offense totals accounted for 438 of 846 (Class B/C/D/E) behavioral occurrences. Additionally, low-level (zero to two) infractions were reported 457 (57.1%) times by MCPSS records. Adolescents demonstrated moderate-level infractions (between three and five B violations) 124 (15.5%) times. Lastly, adolescents demonstrated high-level infractions (6 or more B violations or any C, D, and E violations) 219 (27.4%) times (Table 8).

Table 7

*Frequency of Risk Scores*

<u>Risk Level</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Low	457	57.1
Moderate	124	15.5
High	219	27.4
Total:	800	100

Table 8

*Offense Totals*

<u>Amount</u>	<u>Offense B</u>	<u>Offense C</u>	<u>Offense D</u>	<u>Offense E</u>
0-2	408	0	0	0
3-5	168	0	0	0
6 or more or any C, D, or E	134	109	18	9

**Data Analysis Plan**

A secondary data analysis using a cross-section of longitudinal data were used in this study. Performing a cross-sectional design allowed for the researcher to observe and study the

population at a specific point in time (i.e. eighth grade adolescents from 2006-2009). To investigate each research question, analyses of the data were performed using the Statistical Package Software for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.0. The analyses that are used in this study was ordinal regression and mediation/moderation using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) in SPSS (Appendix A).

### **Research Question 1**

Does support from a maternal figure affect adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school?

To answer this question, an ordinal regression analysis was employed. This type of analysis is used to predict an ordinal variable which is used to predict an ordinal dependent variable. More specifically, it determines whether independent variables have a statistically significant effect on a dependent variable. It also determines how well the ordinal regression model predicts the dependent variable.

### **Research Question 2**

Does hope regarding the future mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school?

To answer this question, mediation analysis (using the process macro) is employed. This process estimates direct and indirect effects in single and multiple mediator models. The mediation analysis (using the process macro) will determine if hope alters the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline at school.

### **Research Question 3**

Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness levels mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and their discipline infractions at school?

To answer this question, a mediation analysis (using the process macro) is employed. It estimates direct and indirect effects in single and multiple mediator models. The mediation analysis (using the process macro) will determine whether neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) alters the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions.

### **Research Question 4**

Does gender explain the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness?

To answer this question, a moderated mediation analysis (using the process macro) is employed. A moderated mediation effect occurs when the effect of one predictor is changed by a second predictor (Miles et al., 2015). This type of analysis allows the observation of whether gender differences influence the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided information about the research design, adolescents, measures, and data analysis for this study. It also identifies the research questions used to guide this study. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

A cross-sectional study was conducted to determine if the relationship between eighth graders' perception of maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school were altered by hope and/or neighborhood connectedness. A mediation analysis was performed to determine if hope and neighborhood connectedness mediated the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. In addition, a moderated mediation analysis was completed to examine if there were gender differences within the mediating effect of hope and neighborhood connectedness between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions exists. Variables from the MYS (2010) and MCPSS (2005) were used to examine the following research questions:

1. Does support from a maternal figure affect adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
2. Does hope regarding the future mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
3. Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness levels mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and their discipline infractions at school?
4. Does gender explain or influence the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness?

## Demographic Variables

### Independent Variable: Maternal Figure Support

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare adolescents' levels of maternal figure support in non-biological mothers and maternal figure support in biological mothers. Results showed there was no significant difference in mean scores for non-biological maternal figures ( $M = 5.11, SD = 1.33$ ) and biological maternal figures ( $M = 5.31, SD = 1.12; t(785) = -1.941, p = 0.053$ ). These results suggest that there is no difference relative to the variation of maternal figure support from a non-biological mother or biological mother.

Table 9

Group Statistics (Maternal Figure Support)						
T-tests Statistics			Levene's Test of Variances			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		Sig.	t-value	Mean Diff.
Some other person	5.1127	1.33024	Equal variances assumed	.053	-1.941	-0.19837
My mother	5.3111	1.12008				

### Dependent Variable: Levels of Discipline Infractions

Adolescents' levels of behavior were measured by the type of discipline offense (i.e., Class A, B, C, D, E based on MCPSS code of conduct) during specified waves (years) of adolescents' eighth grade year. Descriptive statistics indicate that most adolescents ( $n = 457, 57.1%$ ) were sent to the office based on low-level behaviors (zero to two Class B violations), which were least severe. However, adolescents' offense totals for moderate-level (three to five Class B violations) and high-level behaviors (six or more Class B violations, and any number of Class C, Class D, and Class E violation) accounted for 438 of 846 behavioral incidences.

Adolescents demonstrated moderate-level infractions (three to five B violations and no C, D, or E violations) 124 (15.5%) times. Additionally, adolescents demonstrated high-level infractions (six or more B violations and any C, D, and E violations) 219 (27.4%) times. Refer to Table 10 and Table 11 for more information. Results from the analysis indicated that moderate-level ( $n = 124$ , 15.5%) and high-level ( $n = 219$ , 27.4%) levels of discipline infractions represent 42.9% of the sampled population, adolescents displayed low-level infractions 457 (57.1%) times. Overall, adolescents' frequencies for low-level infractions ( $n = 457$ , 57.1%) versus combined frequencies for moderate and high-level infractions ( $n = 343$ , 42.9%) were lower as compared to the other groups.

Table 10

*Frequency and Descriptions of Discipline Levels*

<u>Discipline Level</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Low: 0-2 B violations and no C, D, or E violations	457	57.1
Moderate: 3-5 B violations and no C, D, or E violations	124	15.5
High: 6+ B violations or any number of C, D, or E level violations	219	27.4
Total:	800	100

Table 11

*Offense Totals*

<u>Amount</u>	<u>Offense B</u>	<u>Offense C</u>	<u>Offense D</u>	<u>Offense E</u>
0-2	408	0	0	0
3-5	168	0	0	0
6 or more plus any C, D, or E	134	109	18	9

**Mediating Variables**

The mediating constructs of hope and neighborhood connectedness were employed as a mediating variable to determine if either variable alters the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school.

**Hope.** The results of the adolescents' responses indicate a moderate mean for score hope ( $M = 5.5, SD = 1.63$ ). Adolescents' scores were summed and ranged from zero to eight. Scores closer to zero indicate low levels of hope, while scores closer to eight indicate higher levels of hope.

**Neighborhood connectedness.** Scores were summed and overall scores closer to zero indicate low levels of neighborhood connectedness, while scores closer to five indicate higher levels of neighborhood connectedness. The results of the adolescents' responses indicate the mean score for neighborhood connectedness was  $M = 3.17, SD = 1.52$ , which was classified as a moderated level.

### **Moderator**

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, gender was used as a moderator within this study. Data showed an almost equivalent number of male ( $n = 389, 48.6\%$ ) and female ( $n = 411, 51.4\%$ ) participation and completion of the study (Refer to Table 3 for more information).

### **Correlations between Variables**

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between maternal figure support, hope, neighborhood connectedness, and gender. Refer to Table 12 for more information. There was a significant correlation between maternal figure support, hope, and neighborhood connectedness. Furthermore, Table 12 shows that there was a small, positive correlation between maternal figure support and hope ( $r = .144, p < .001$ ) and maternal figure support and neighborhood connectedness ( $r = .095, p = .008$ ). Furthermore, hope and neighborhood connectedness also were positively correlated ( $r = .222, p < .001$ ). These

correlations indicated that increases in maternal figure support were correlated with increases in hope and neighborhood connectedness.

Table 12

*Correlations for Variables*

		Maternal Figure Support	Hope	Neighborhood Connectedness
Maternal Figure Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.144**	.095**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.008
Hope	Pearson Correlation	.144**	1	.222**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
Neighborhood Connectedness	Pearson Correlation	.095**	.222**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.000	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01

**Research Question 1**

Does support from a maternal figure affect adolescents’ level of discipline infractions at school? This question was answered by conducting an ordinal regression analysis. To determine if maternal figure support affected adolescents’ levels of discipline infractions at school, the model fitting information output was reviewed to determine whether maternal figure support significantly improved adolescents’ discipline levels. Refer to Table 13 for more information. Based on findings from the analysis, the effects between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions were not statically significant ( $p = .134$ , CI [-.205, .024]). These findings suggest that maternal figure support did not predict adolescents’ levels of discipline infractions at school. As a result, the analysis suggests the model does not fit very well. Moreover, the

analysis' Nagelkerke's pseudo r-square ( $R^2 = .003$ ) indicates that 0.3% of adolescents' levels of discipline were explained by maternal figure support.

Table 13

<i>Goodness-of-fit and Pseudo R-Square Results</i>					
<u>Goodness-of-fit</u>			<u>Pseudo R-Square</u>		
	Chi-Square	df	Sig	Cox and Snell	.003
Pearson	22.080	23	.515	Nagelkerke	.003
Deviance	26.127	23	.295	McFadden	.001
Final	2.242	1	.134		

## Research Question 2

Does hope regarding the future mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school? PROCESS macro (model 4) (Hayes, 2013) estimated the relationship between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions and the indirect effects of hope on this relationship.

Results from the analysis showed that maternal figure support was a significant predictor of hope (path a),  $b = .1993$ ,  $t(781) = 4.06$ ,  $p < .001$  and hope significantly predicted adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school (path b),  $b = -.0692$ ,  $t(781) = -3.59$ ,  $p = .003$ . These results support the mediational hypothesis that hope mediates the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. After controlling for hope, the relationship between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions (path c') was not statistically significant ( $b = -.0297$ ,  $t(781) = -1.11$ ,  $p = .2653$ ). Moreover, results indicated that the indirect effect of this mediation analysis was significant,  $b = -.0138$ , 95% CI [-.0266, -.0056] which suggest that hope changed the relationship between

maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions. As maternal figure support increased, adolescents' levels of hope increased and adolescents' level of discipline decreased. Henceforth, when hope served as a mediator between maternal figure support and levels of discipline infractions at school, adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school improved by approximately 1.3%. Refer to Figure 5 for more information).

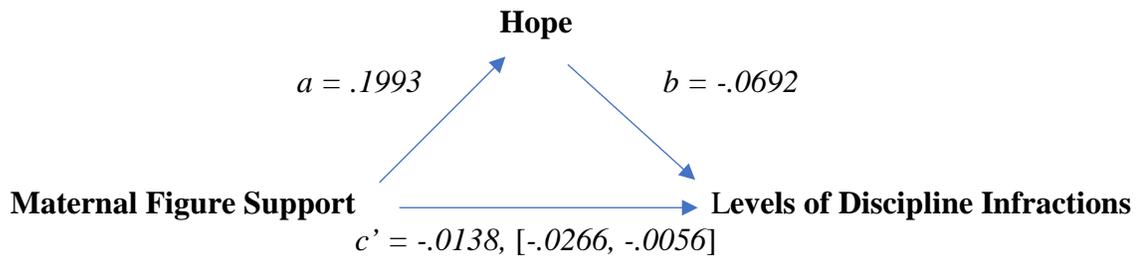


Figure 5. Statistical values of maternal figure support, hope, and level of discipline infractions

### Research Question 3

Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness levels mediate the relationship between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions at school? Like Research Question 2, the PROCESS macro (model 4) (Hayes, 2013) estimated the relationship between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions. In addition, neighborhood connectedness was used as a mediator to examine the relationship between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions.

Results from the analysis showed that maternal figure support was a significant predictor of neighborhood connectedness (path a),  $b = 0.1967, t(784) = 2.66, p = 0.008$ . This suggests that maternal figure support positively predict neighborhood connectedness. As maternal figure support increased, adolescents' level of neighborhood connectedness increased as well. On the other hand, neighborhood connectedness did not significantly predicted or influence adolescents'

level of discipline infractions (path b),  $b = -.0127$ ,  $t(784) = -1.01$ ,  $p = .3136$ . After controlling for neighborhood connectedness, the relationship between maternal figure support and level of discipline infractions (path c') was not statistically significant ( $b = -.0423$ ,  $t(784) = -1.59$ ,  $p = .1118$ ). These results indicated the indirect effect of this mediation analysis was not significant,  $b = -.0025$ , 95% CI [-.0099, .0016], which suggests that maternal figure support had no effect on adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school as mediated by neighborhood connectedness. (Refer to Figure 6 for more information).

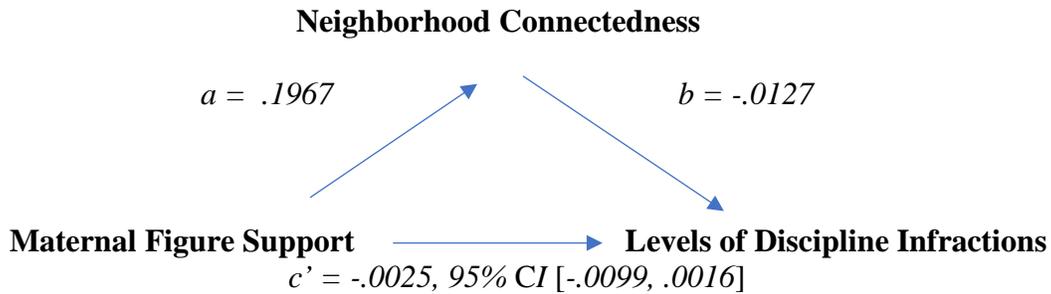


Figure 6. Statistical values of maternal figure support, neighborhood connectedness, and levels of discipline infractions.

#### Research Question 4

Does gender explain or influence the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness? A moderated mediation analysis (using the PROCESS macro (model 58) (Hayes, 2013) was performed. Results from the analysis concluded that gender did not influence the maternal figure support and hope (path a),  $b = -.0618$ , 95% CI [-.2547, .1311]. Additionally, gender did not influence hope and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions (path b),  $b = -.0473$ , 95% CI [-.0271, .1271]. The direct effect of maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions was not significant,  $b = -.0257$ , 95% CI [-.0776, .0261]. These

findings suggest that gender did not moderate or affect the relationships between maternal figure support, hope, and/or levels of discipline infractions at school. (Refer to Figure 7 for more information).

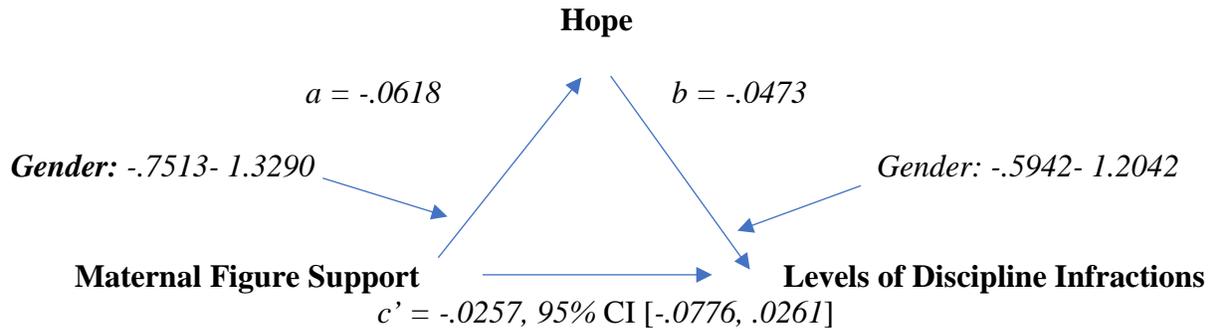


Figure 7. Statistical values of hope and gender moderator effects.

Furthermore, gender did not influence the mediating effects of maternal figure support and neighborhood connectedness (path a),  $b = -.0285, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.3182, .2613]$ , and neighborhood connectedness and level of discipline infractions (path b),  $b = .0136, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.0363, 0.0634]$ . (Refer to Figure 8 for more information). Consequently, the moderation effect results,  $b = -.0144, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.0354, .0643]$  and the direct effect of maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions were not significant,  $b = -.0385, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.0903, .0134]$ . The moderated mediations effects of neighborhood connectedness and level of discipline infractions indicated that the mediating relationship for males,  $95\% \text{ CI } [-.0099, .0009]$ , and females,  $95\% \text{ CI } [-.0075, .0038]$  are similar. Refer to Figure 8 for more information.

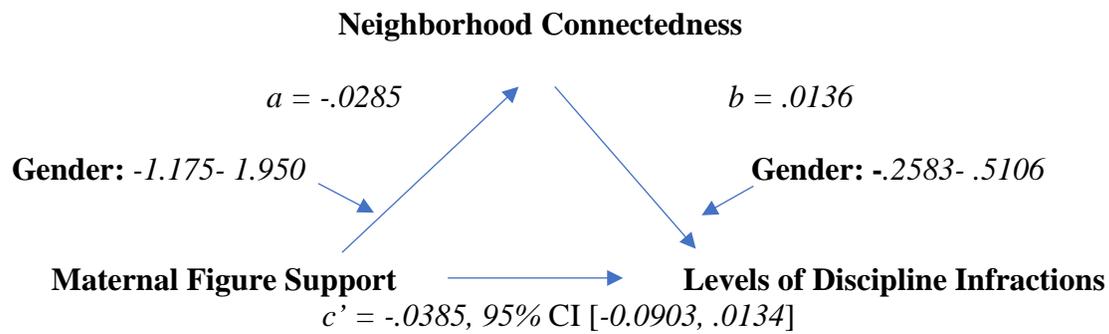


Figure 8. Statistical values of neighborhood connectedness and gender moderator effects.

### Summary of Findings

This chapter reviewed the results of the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline infractions; the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness; and the moderated mediation effects of gender within each mediation model.

Findings from the study determined that adolescents' perception of support did not directly influence their behavior at school. However, hope significantly influenced the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. Hope was a causal chain in which maternal figure support affected hope, which in turn, positively influenced adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. Thus, suggesting that hope mediated the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. Though adolescents' perceived support from a maternal figure influenced their perception of support from their neighborhood, adolescents' perception of support from their neighborhood did not influence their levels of discipline at school. Furthermore, research findings determined that gender did not alter or influenced the moderated mediation model for the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness for maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results are discussed, as well as the limitations, implications, and recommendations, and future direction of practice in the field of School Psychology. The purpose of this study was to determine if adolescents' perceived maternal figure support predicts their levels of discipline infractions at school. Additionally, this study attempted to determine if other variables, such as hope and/or neighborhood connections altered any potential relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline at school. To further investigate the theme of this study, four research questions were outlined in the previous chapters.

#### **Research Question 1**

The relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' adolescents' level of discipline at school was explored to answer Research Question 1. No significant relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline were found. These findings are contrary to this study's hypothesis: adolescents who report high levels of maternal figure support will yield low levels of behavioral occurrences (whether low, moderate, or high-level behaviors). This hypothesis was formulated based on previous literature findings, which concluded that support from a maternal figure is significantly associated with lower rates of adolescents exhibiting internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Abela et al., 2005; Burchinal, Follmer, & Bryant, 1996; Gaylord-Harden, Taylor, Campbell, Kesselring, & Grant, 2009;

Lougheed et al., 2016). However, this analysis found a non-significant relationship between maternal figure support and levels of discipline at school. These results do not support previous literature findings, which suggests that maternal figure support positively influences adolescents' behaviors. The results of this study were contrary to the literature that highlight positive support systems (Palamaro Munsell et al., 2012; Gutman & Midgley (2000) and positive outcomes (McMahon, Coker, & Parnes, 2013; Palamaro Munsell et al., 2012; Ozer, 2005), warranting a discussion.

### **Research Question 2**

Hope was used as a mediator to determine if any relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline were altered. Results from Research Question 2 showed that as maternal figure support increased, adolescents' levels of hope increased and adolescents' level of discipline decreased. Further, when hope served as a mediator between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school, adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school decreased. The findings from Research Question 1 indicated that there was no relationship between maternal figure support and levels of discipline at school. Conversely, the mediator of hope, which was included in Research Questions 2, demonstrated that hope altered the relationship between maternal figure and levels of discipline at school. These significant findings are similar to previous research (Hagen, Myers, & Mackintosh, 2005; Davis-Maye & Perry, 2007; Morris and Fry-McComish (2012); van Ryzin, 2011; Tan, Low, & Viapude, 2018) thus, indicating a relationship between maternal figure support and hope and hope and behavior.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 2, hope has been linked to social support which in turn can be attributed to one's capabilities (Snyder, 2000b; Snyder et al., 2002). Adolescents of this study have demonstrated that though they reported high levels of maternal figure support, hope was the variable that changed the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. These findings imply that adolescents of this study have the ability to actively establish positive goals (agency) and plan strategies (pathways) to meet their goals (Snyder, 2000b; Snyder, 2002; Webb, 2013). Furthermore, this sense of motivation to strive for better outcomes could potentially be generalized across circumstances adolescents may face (Snyder, 2000a).

### **Research Question 3**

Similar to the mediation analysis used to answer Research Question 2, neighborhood connectedness was used as a mediator to determine if any relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline was altered. Findings from Research Question 3 revealed that maternal figure support significantly predicted neighborhood connectedness. However, neighborhood connectedness did not significantly predict adolescents' level of discipline. Moreover, the results also indicated the indirect effect of this mediation analysis was not significant. In fact, adolescents' levels of neighborhood connectedness and adolescents' level of discipline were inconsistent. This lack of significance is contrary to previous research (Brevard et al., 2013; Lewin-Bizan et al., 2009; Hughes & Witherspoon, 2014; Saathoff, 2015) indicating that support from one's neighborhood decreases problematic behaviors. Furthermore, the finding from Research Question 3 is not consistent with this study's hypothesis which

proposed that neighborhood connectedness would alter the outcomes of adolescents' level of discipline.

The results from Research Question 3 which indicated that maternal figure support significantly predicted neighborhood connectedness was shown to be cohesive with the literature that suggest that the effects of neighborhood poverty influence parenting styles and how adolescents perceive their parent's way of childrearing (Byrnes & Miller, 2012; Pachter et al., 2006; Pinderhughes et al., 2007; Wilson, 1989; Wilson, 1991a; Wilson, 1991b). In addition, neighborhood instability may influence low levels of positive parenting warmth resulting in adolescents becoming socially secluded and demonstrating negative behaviors: all which are consistent with the insignificant findings of the mediating effects between neighborhood connectedness and adolescents' levels of discipline (Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1994; Goodrum, Jones, Kincaid, Cuellar, & Parent., 2012; Hale, Engels, & Meeus, 2006).

#### **Research Question 4**

Research Question 4 addressed observation of potential gender differences within the mediating effects of hope, neighborhood connectedness, and the relationship between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions. Results from the analysis concluded that gender did not significantly influence the moderated interaction models for hope and neighborhood connectedness. To fully understand the results from Research Question 4, it is vital to understand how social roles of adolescents' communities may play a role in the question's results. As mentioned in Chapter 1, low-income communities are characterized by poverty, violence, and low levels of parental practices which concluded that adolescents will either directly experience or observe mistreatment from a personal level or community level

(Donkers, Pong, & Thompson, 2003; Raizada & Kishiyama, 2010; Serbin et al., 2013).

Consequently, parents begin to (consciously or unconsciously) encourage their daughters and sons to express emotions differently in which gender roles are learned (Berkowitz, 1993; Morris et al., 2007). Furthermore, the concept of social roles is grounded on a foundation that people behave in an expected way, based on social situations and circumstances (Brown, 2002; Hindin, 2008). Consequently, specific behaviors based on individuals' environments should be further investigated to understand societal gender roles.

### **Limitations**

There were limitations associated with this study. This study was a secondary analysis. Therefore, we cannot manipulate or add to existing data. Additionally, this study was a cross-sectional study, in which, the findings from the study was a representation of a subset at a specific time (i.e. 8<sup>th</sup> graders from 2006-2009). Because the findings are representative of a moment in time (2006-2009), trends of maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline may have changed. Furthermore, adolescents of the study were 12-15-year-old adolescents who resided in low socio-economic neighborhoods. As result, the ability to generalize the findings of this study may not be a good representation of present day trends for adolescents' perceptions of maternal figure support. Though the majority of the adolescents within this study were African American, it is unsure if these findings can be generalized across races and/or socio-economic classes.

Nonetheless, there were some insignificant findings for maternal support within this study. Literature suggest that families headed by mothers work longer work hours, which in turn, results to mothers spending less time with their children (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002;

Stoddard & Pierce, 2015). Could the lack of supervision from maternal figures play a role in those insignificant findings? Additionally, adolescents of this study demonstrated high frequencies of moderate and high-level behavior violations. However, this study did not investigate if adolescents' behavior was due to medical or mental health diagnosis such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, etc. Also, paternal figure support was not analyzed within this study, therefore, additional information regarding the direct effects of support and adolescents' level of discipline was not investigated.

### **Major Finding from Study**

Though some results of this study negated literature and research results from previous authors and researchers, results from Research Question 2 offered powerful results that can be used to drive positive outcomes for adolescents. Even though there were significant findings between maternal figure support and neighborhood connectedness, those support systems were not influential in the outcomes of adolescents' levels of discipline at school. This study demonstrated that discipline does not have much to do with adolescents' support systems, but more to do with adolescents' intrinsic motivation—level of hope.

For instance, Research Question 2 investigated if hope regarding the future mediated the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. Results indicated that maternal figure support was a significant predictor of hope and hope significantly predicted adolescents' level of discipline. These results indicated that as maternal figure support increased adolescents' levels of hope increased, which in turn, decreased adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school. Findings from Research Question 2 suggest that Snyder's (1991) framework of hope (Snyder et al., 1991) allows

individuals to understand how adolescents can work towards future goals in a positive manner (Bandura, 1977; Munoz, Hellman, & Brunk, 2017; Snyder, 1994). This was most important for adolescents of the study because they resided in disadvantaged communities that may have exposed them to situations that caused them to learn to deal with stressors and develop problem behaviors (Gracia et al., 2012; Hughes & Witherspoon, 2014; Rudasill et al., 2014).

### **Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory (1979): What Do the Results Mean?**

The discussion of Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems (1979) framework in Chapters 1 and 2 emphasized how individuals' microsystems (i.e. family members, friends, and neighborhood) influence their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1992, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Espelage, 2014; Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011). Moreover, this study demonstrated that adolescents' neighborhood connectedness was not influential in adolescents' levels of discipline at school as previously hypothesized (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Darling, 2007; Espelage, 2014; Lau & Ng, 2014). In fact, findings from Research 1 indicated that even with high levels of maternal figure support adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school were only significantly lowered. Therefore, the effects between maternal figure support, neighborhood connectedness and level of discipline infractions were not as prominent as previously suggested. Actually, adolescents of this study demonstrated that without hope systems outside themselves (i.e. maternal figure support and neighborhood connectedness) were not as influential as previously discussed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1994; McMorris, Lau & Ng, 2014; Leonard, 2011; Sieving, & Stoddard, 2011;)

Some adolescents may lack support systems, adolescents within this study recorded high levels of maternal figure support, hope, and neighborhood connectedness. These findings from

the study are congruent with Snyder's (1994) stance on hope, which suggests that hope is learned primarily through supportive relationships with an adult (Gerard & Booth, 2015; Jain & Cohen, 2013; Snyder, 1994). On the other hand, though adolescents within the study recorded high levels of support, not all adolescents' perception of support are high or even existed for that matter: Can those adolescents have hope? Snyder et al. (1991) defined hope "as a cognitive set involving beliefs in one's abilities to produce workable routes to goals (pathways), and beliefs in his or her capacity to initiate (willpower) and sustain movement toward those goals (agency)..."(Snyder et al. 1991, p. 569).

With that information in mind, could an adolescent still have hope though they may not have learned hope from supportive figures? Results from this study showed that maternal figure support (alone) did predict or influence adolescents' levels of discipline at school. Only through hope, maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline at school were influenced. This suggest that adolescents' levels of discipline at school has to do more with how adolescents feel about themselves than how they feel about someone else. Thus, hope is driven by intrinsic motivations from within (Leeson et al. 2008; Stark & Boswell 2001), which leads to behaviors that are driven by internal rewards (Arnett, 2000; Carver & Scheier, 2002; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006).

### **The Effects of High Hope**

As previously mentioned, results from this study indicate that only through hope, maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline at school were influenced. Adolescents of the study yielded high levels of maternal figure support which could suggest that their maternal figure provided them with support and attachment which researchers have

categorized as being a secure base—or safe haven (Bowlby,1988; Schofield & Beek, 2005; Regional Research Institute for Human Services, 2005; Wilson et al., 2003). By providing support and attachment, adolescents can learn how to overcome obstacles they may encounter from their family, friends, and/ or environment (Baumeister et al., 2003; Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007; Gilman et al., 2006). Gradually, adolescents learn how to internalize negative encounters and understand that experiencing setbacks and obstacles are a part of life’s development (Michael & Snyder, 2005; Shorey et al., 2003; Snyder et al., 1996; Valle et al., 2006). As a result of the study’s significant findings, it is important for educators to help establish and maintain positive interactions with adolescents to create emotionally safe environments that promote positive growth and development.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

#### **How Can School Psychologist Help Facilitate Hope?**

School psychologists are trained in human development, behavior, and mental health to help improve students’ behavior and social-emotional well-being in the school environment (Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2001; Powers, Hagans, & Busse, 2008). Because hope is driven from individuals’ intrinsic motivation (Dowson & McInerney, 2003), strategies to help promote hope should be created and implemented for individuals who will engage in behaviors that will fulfill their intrinsic desires (Synder et al., 2000). Moreover, there are a few psychometric measures school psychologist can use to identify hope that can be used to help facilitate hope. Research has indicated that children’s hope levels are positively correlated with how they feel about themselves, which were recorded via self-report rating scales (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Furthermore, interventions and support from

professionals should be individualized and based the results from the adolescents' self-reports. When screening instrument and assessments are implemented in schools, school psychologists are afforded with the opportunity to enhance early identification and intervention efforts within school they serve (Caldarella et al., 2008). Early identification helps school psychologist and other profession promote positive outcomes for adolescents in the future while preventing adolescents from developing severe behaviors.

### **Instruments Used to Measure Hope**

There are a few rating scales that are used to measure hope. Because hope is an internalized behavior (Duggal, Sacks-Zimmerman, & Liberta, 2016; Mayer & Ybarra, 2004), individuals are given self-report rating scales to collect information about how they feel about their overall psychological well-being (Gresham et al., 2007; Paulhus & Vazire, 2007; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). In addition, self-report rating scales are also used to collect information to obtain information to aid in individuals setting goals for themselves (Hambleton & de Jong, 2003; Shorey et al., 2007).

**Achenbach's Manual for Child Behavior Checklist Behavior Screener (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991).** The CBLC measures a broad range of behavioral and emotional concerns within adolescents (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000). Though the checklist consists of forms that can be rated by parents and teachers, the youth-self report form measures adolescents' emotional difficulties and concerns (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000; Pandolfi, Magyar, & Dill, 2009; Sikora et al., 2008). For example, the CBLC measures internalizing areas such as anxiousness, depression, withdrawal, somatic complaints, and thought problems (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000). Moreover, such constructs should

be measured when identifying individuals with low and overall negative aspects of their psychological well-being (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000; Kelberer, Kraines, & Wells, 2011; Krafft et al., 2015).

**Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition (BASC-3) Screener and Diagnostic Series (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2015).** Reynolds and Kamphaus (2015) have created a screener and a diagnostic assessment tool that allows professional to screen students and conduct comprehensive evaluations to effectively identify interventions for students (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2007; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015a; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015b). For example, the BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BESS; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2015; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015b) is a screener used to provide information of students' behavioral and emotional functioning (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015b). The BASC-3 BESS helps professionals identify students who may need additional support to promote positive behaviors (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015b). Likewise, the BASC-3 teacher, parent, and self-report rating scales are comprehensive measure used to assess adaptive and problem behaviors in the school, community, and home settings (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2007; Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2015a). The BASC-3 screener and diagnostic assessment can help professionals utilize a comprehensive approach to address problem behaviors.

**The State Hope Scale (SHS; Snyder et al., 1996).** The State Hope Scale (SHS) was created to assess agency and goal directed thinking of adolescents. Items from the rating scales ask questions that aids in the understanding of how goal-related awareness influence goal-directed behavior (Cheavans et al., 2005). The SHS measures adolescents' agency and pathway thinking to aid in identify adolescents' strengths and weakness to help promote adolescents'

psychological, physical, and social-emotional well-being (Feldman & Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1996).

**Children's Hope Scale (CHS; Snyder et al., 1997).** The Children's Hope Scale (CHS) was created to measure agency and pathway thinking process, which is needed to accomplish goals (Snyder et al., 1997). This scale helps to identify individuals' behavior and emotional strengths to develop strategies that will support individuals through establishing goal-related awareness (Feldman & Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1997).

**The Trait Hope Scale-Revised (HSR; Shorey et al., 2007).** The Trait Hope Scale-Revised (HSR) includes subscales of self-efficacy, psychological distress, and adolescents' overall well-being (Feldman & Snyder, 2000). The HSR is used to examine adolescents' strengths and positive assets that can be used to create strategies to promote optimism and hope within individuals (Shorey et al., 2007).

### **Hope Interventions: Enhancement at School and in the Community**

Research has noted that helping adolescents acquire hope gives adolescents the confidence and creativity needed to reach long-term goals in school and in life (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005). Options for strategies that can be used by educators to increase hope may include but not limited to mentoring programs, individual counseling, and/or group counseling (Lane et al., 2007; Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine, 2007; Severson et al., 2007; Gresham et al., 2007). Consequently, evidence-based interventions and strategies that promote functional-based support (i.e. focusing on teaching effective, efficient, and relevant behaviors and self-management should be implemented in schools to help professionals and families cultivate hope within adolescents

(Barton-Arwood et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2016; Faulkner & Jimerson, 2017; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McDade et al., 2011; Schmid & Lopez, 2011; Sheldon, 2002).

**Mentoring Programs (Lawrie, 1987).** Research has indicated that mentors play a significant role in the development of hope (Henry, 2009; Kim et al., 2014; Lawrence, 2008; Scioli et al., 2011). Mentoring programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Community-Based Mentoring (CBM) (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000) offers one-on-one mentoring relationships in a school or community setting for at-risk youth between the ages of 6 and 18. BBBS was associated with exhibiting a significant reduction in adolescents demonstrating antisocial behavior and increasing their levels of hope and self-worth (Herrera et al., 2007; Herrera et al., 2011; Kamphaus et al., 2007; Madia & Lutz, 2004). Nonetheless, for years BBBS school and community programs have exhibited that mentored youth had significantly better relationships with adults and emotional support among peers (BBBS, 2013; BBBS, 2018a; BBBS, 2018b; Freedman, 1993; Grossman & Garry, 1997; Herrera et al., 2007; Klein, 1988; McGill et al., 1998). Furthermore, BBBS has also emphasized how mentors aid in promoting in hopeful thinking among youths (Henry, 2009; Herrera et al., 2011; Lawrence, 2008; Scioli et al., 2011).

***Connect with Kids (What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), 2006).*** Connect with Kids is a mentoring program used to teach and promote social-emotional development such as oral values, morality, conflict resolution, resiliency, and social skills training (WWC, 2006). This mentoring program is designed to promote and increase elementary school students and adolescents interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Page & D'Agostino, 2005). Typically, strategies are implemented schoolwide or within the classroom through the curriculum (WWC, 2006). In

addition, Connect with Kids can also be implemented through community outreach components such as non-profit programs, churches, etc. (Page & D'Agostino, 2005; WWC, 2006).

***Positive Youth Development (PYD) Toolkit (Lerner et al., 2005).*** The Positive Youth Development (PYD) Toolkit was developed by YouthPower Learning (n.d.). PYD was created to provide guidance and resources for educators and/or stakeholders to help facilitate positive interactions and thinking within youth mentoring programs (National Academy of Sciences, 2004; National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth for the Family and Youth Services Bureau, 2007). PYD constructs were initially created by Little (1993) to promote positive development for adolescents. Constructs such as (a) competence, (b) confidence, (c) connections (positive, social connections), (d) character, and (e) caring are skills taught to help adolescents develop positive life skills through concrete, positive interactions from mentors, teachers and/ or stakeholders within safe supportive environments (Eccles, & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2004; National Academy of Sciences, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003b).

**Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT; Beck, 1976).** Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be utilized to change patterns of thinking and/or behavior to increase adolescents' positive outcomes by setting multiple, clear, attainable goals (Beck, 1976; Benjamin et al., 2011; Gosch et al., 2006; Hollon & Beck, 2004; Kendall & Hollon 1979; Snyder et al., 2000). For instance, strategies such as (a) guided imagery, (b) dialogue, and (c) instructional strategies can be used to help adolescents increase positive thoughts and feeling about themselves (Barrett et al., 2008; Chambless & Ollendick, 2001; Leahy, 2004; Meyers & Craighead, 1984).

**Guided imagery.** For the exercise adolescents are asked to think of a goal he/she wanted to achieve, how they built motivation and strategies to achieve the goal, and how this experience might aid in future goal pursuits (Benjamin et al., 2011; Chambless & Ollendick, 2001). In addition, professionals are encouraged to help adolescents visualize and understand how to think about different paths that they can take that can lead to an individual obtaining their ultimate goal (Leahy, 2004; Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008).

**Dialogue.** Practitioners engage in dialogue with adolescents by asking them questions such as why is the goal(s) important to them; how will they sustain their motivation (agency) to reach their goal(s), and what steps should be taken (pathway) in order to reach their goal(s) (Bernardo, 2010; Diemer & Bluestein, 2007). Research has shown that adolescents with low hope often lack key problem-solving skills that cause them to give up easily (Du & King, 2013; Snedker & Hooven, 2013; Sterrett-Hong et al., 2018). As previously mentioned, according to Snyder's (1994), hope is learned primarily through supportive relationships with an adult. However, not all adolescents have supportive relationships with adults. As a result, practitioners are encouraged to establish and maintain rapport with adolescents so they can build agencies and pathways for themselves (Miller, Gilman, & Martens, 2008; Neimeyer & Stewart, 2000; Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008).

**Instructional strategies.** Instructional strategies allow for practitioners to provide the adolescents with a list of strategies to enhance goal-directed agency and pathways (Albrecht et al., 2015; Gosch et al., 2006; Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008). Research has shown that instructional strategies such as positive self-talk (i.e., I am committed and focused, I am strong and worthy) and cognitive modeling through think-aloud—a problem-solving strategy used to

help individuals process, examine, and verbalize situations that are unfamiliar to individuals (Albrecht et al., 2015; Hollon & Beck, 2004; Semmler & Williams, 2000). By practicing CBT instructional strategies, adolescents are able to change their inner speech that will allow them to develop positive self-instruction that will allow them to make positive, conscious behavioral choices (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008).

### **Implications for Future Research**

It is uncertain how relationships to the mother and father are correlated to internalizing and externalizing symptoms among adolescents. Although research suggests that both parents promote psychopathological indications in adolescents (Muris, Meesters, & Van den Berg, 2003b), additional research should be conducted to determine how paternal figures or maternal figures demonstrate a unique impact on the development of such behaviors in boys or girls. In comparison to the literature and research observations from this study, female adolescents exhibited more low-level behaviors than moderate or high-level behaviors. As previously discussed, girls are encouraged to display non-aggressive behaviors which promote girls to withhold their feelings rather than addressing their feelings appropriately to deal with hardships they may face (Lynch & Cicchetti, 2002; Gopalan et al., 2010). In American society, mothers are mostly responsible for the emotional nurturing of their children (Lee, Daniels, & Kissinger, 2006). Thus, societal expectations tend to view girls as being soft-spoken and submissive (Boudet, et al., 2012; Congers & Simon, 2010). However, further exploration in developing feelings of hope and resilience for girls should be warranted.

Additionally, males of this study exhibited more moderate and high-level behaviors risk behaviors than girls. These findings from male adolescent may be because they perceived their

maternal figures as nurturing and warm and not authoritative. As previously mentioned, mothers in American society are responsible for the emotional nurturing of their children (Endendijk et al., 2016; Lee, Daniels, & Kissinger, 2006). However, African American fathers are seen to employ authoritarian methods of guidelines, commands, and communication towards childrearing practices (Endendijk et al., 2016; Opondo, 2016). This type of parenting could have influenced adolescents, especially male adolescents, of this study. Consequently, further research highlighting gender variances and its potential correlation between perceived paternal support should be conducted.

It is important to investigate potential variables as to why individuals, in particular adolescents, behave the way they do especially in school. As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, research articles have highlighted that when adolescents do not have a positive support systems, they tend to exhibit negative behavioral outcomes at school (e.g., frequent office referrals and suspensions) (Wallace et al., 2008). Schools discipline practices (i.e. being sent to the office or suspended) interfere with adolescences' opportunities to acquire academic skills and social behaviors (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; McCord, Widom, Bamba, & Crowell, 2000). By missing time in the classroom, adolescents' education and overall development can be hindered. When students are not in the classroom, they are unable to benefit from the major intellectual purposes of school such as the development of mathematical skills, reading skills, and interpersonal skills, which is crucial to their overall development (Tyack, 1988). Even further, when adolescents' have skill and performance deficits in the classroom, adolescents tend to engage in minor disruptive behaviors which can promote students to drop out of school and even escalate to more severe behaviors causing a pattern of socially, unacceptable behaviors inside

and outside of the classroom (Baker et al., 2001; McDougal, Chafouleas, & Waterman, 2015; Skiba & Noam, 2001). Because adolescents spend 7-8 hours of their day at school, what can professions and educators at school do to support and facilitate positive learning and interactions for adolescents.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, research questions results were explained and compared with previous literature findings. Results from the study supported and negated some of the hypotheses that were prosed within this study. Though some findings did not support direct effects of maternal figure support and adolescents' level of discipline, hope as a mediator contributed to significant finding in the relationships between maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school. These findings suggest that adolescents of this study have the ability to purposely set positive goals for themselves regardless of positive or negative environmental contexts they may have faced (Callina, Johnson, Buckingham, & Lerner, 2014; Grewal & Porter, 2007; van Hooft, 2014; Webb, 2013). Additionally, though adolescents' perceived support from a maternal figure influenced their perception of support from their neighborhood, adolescents' perception of support from their neighborhood did not influence their levels of discipline at school. Moreover, gender did not affect the moderated mediation model for the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness for maternal figure support and adolescents' levels of discipline infractions at school.

Subsequently, it is vital for adolescents to engage in programs that create opportunities to help facilitate positive decision-making skills that will allow them to grow and develop self-autonomy and healthy relationships. Foundations for success for the youth begins in childhood

and continues throughout individuals' adolescent years. As a result, mentoring programs and behavioral therapy are strategies that can be used to emphasize and teach positive behaviors and self-management skills which can support positive development as children grow older. These strategies emphasize and highlight that children and adolescents have the ability to grow and development positive perspectives of life which are needed as the foundation for future success.

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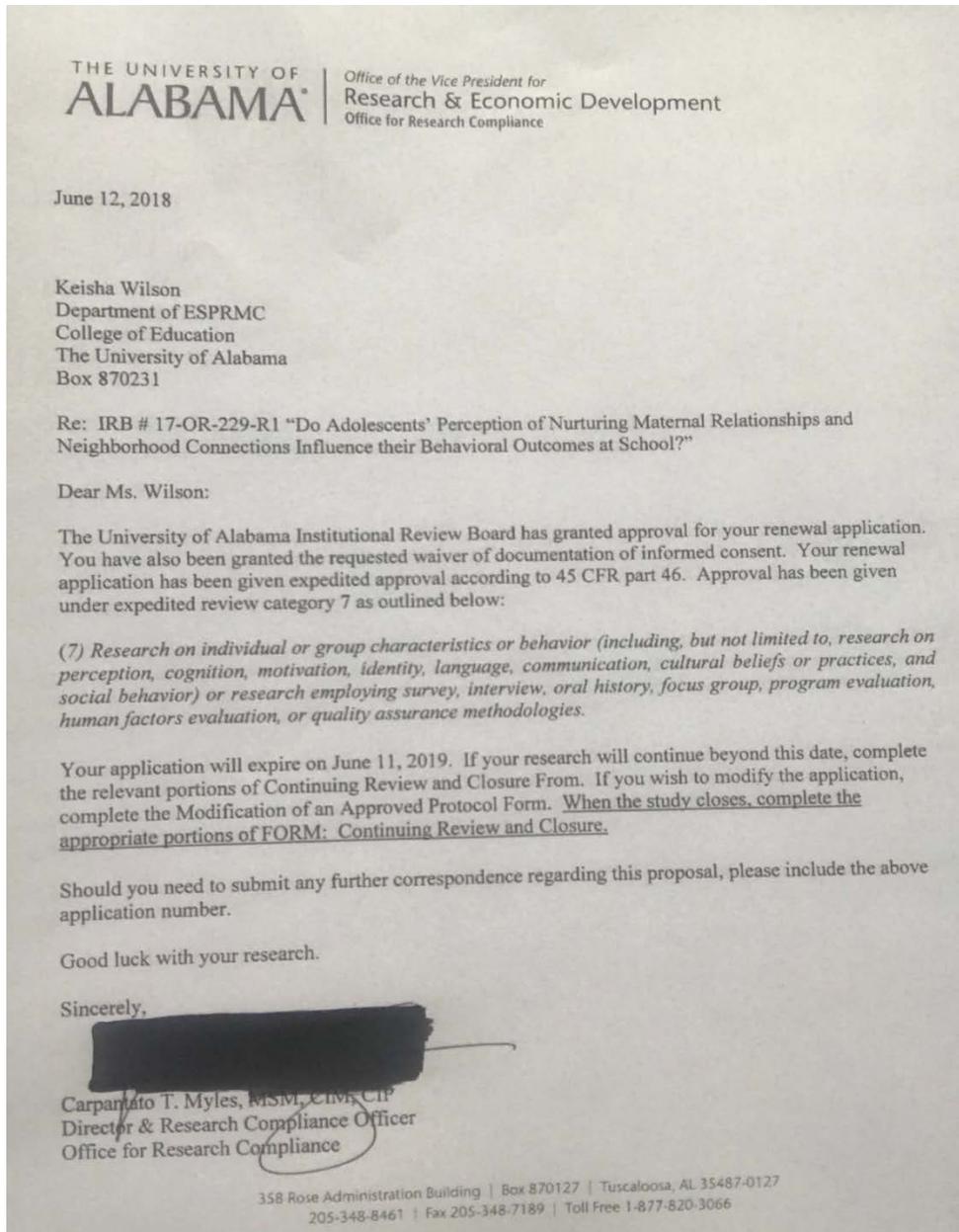
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## APPENDIX A

### IRB PERMISSION



APPENDIX B

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Mediator</b> (explains the relationship between the IV and DV)	<b>Moderator</b> (influences strength of relationship between the IV and DV)	<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Research Question 1	-MYS - Discipline records (MCPSS)	Maternal Figure Support	--	--	Levels of Discipline Infractions	Ordinal Regression
Research Question 2	-MYS - Discipline records (MCPSS)	Maternal Figure Support	Hope	--	Levels of Discipline Infractions	Mediation Analysis (using the process macro)
Research Question 3	-MYS - Discipline records (MCPSS)	Maternal Figure Support	Sense of community (neigh. conn.)	--	Levels of Discipline Infractions	Mediation Analysis (using the process macro)
Research Question 4	-MYS - Discipline records (MCPSS)	Maternal Figure Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hope</li> <li>• Sense of community (neigh. conn.)</li> </ul>	Gender	Levels of Discipline Infractions	Moderated Mediation Analysis (using the process macro)

**Research Questions**

1. Does support from a maternal figure affect adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?

2. Does hope regarding the future mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and adolescents' level of discipline infractions at school?
3. Do adolescents' neighborhood connectedness (sense of community) levels mediate the relationship between support from a maternal figure and their discipline infractions at school?
4. Does gender explain or influence the mediating effects of hope and neighborhood connectedness (sense of community)?

APPENDIX C

CONSTRUCT CODING OF MYS

	<b>Total Items in Scale</b>	<b>Range of Possible Scores</b>	<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Response Options→Coding</b>
Maternal figure support	6	0-6	30-35	*Agree→1 *Disagree→0
Maternal figure	1	0-1	28	*mother→1 *stepm→0 *gmom→0 *aunt→0 *foster mom→0 *father's g-friend→ *older sister→0
Hope	8	0-8 (summative scale)	compute egoh1_9 (negative)= mean.3(z196r_9, z209r_9, z211r_9, z200r_9)*4. compute  egoh2_9 (positive)= mean.3(z214a_9, z205a_9, z216a_9, z223a_9)*4.  compute egoh_9 combined)= mean.5(z196r_9, z200r_9, z205a_9, z209r_9, z211r_9, z214a_9, z216a_9, z223a_9)*8	*Agree→1 *Disagree→0
Sense of community	5	0-5	387,389,392,393,394	*Agree→1 *Disagree→0
Infractions (discipline)	B C D E	0-4		B (0-2)→0 B (3-5)→1 B (6+)→2 C→2 D→2 E→2

Gender	1	0-1	2	*male→ 0 *female→1
Age	1	Ages: 12-15	1	Ages: 9-19

## APPENDIX D

### OUTLINE FOR RANGES OF VARIABLES

#### **MYS Variables**

- i. IV → Maternal Figure Support
  1. Maternal figure support
    - a. 0-6
      - i. 6 questions to measure warmth
        1. (low warmth) 0 → 6 (high warmth)
- ii. DV → Levels of Discipline Infractions
  1. Types of offenses
    - a. B/C/D/E
  2. Number of offenses (in a semester)
    - a. B violations
      - i. 0-2 → 0 (low-risk)
      - ii. 3-5 → 1 (moderate risk)
      - iii. 6+ → 2 (high-level)
    - b. C (any number) → 2 (high-level)
    - c. D (any number) → 2 (high-level)
    - d. E (any number) → 2 (high-level)
- iii. Mediator
  1. Hope
    - a. 8 questions to measure Hope
      - i. (low) 0 → 8 (high)
        1. 4 items reverse
  2. Sense of Community
    - a. 5 questions to measure Sense of Community
      - i. (low) 0 → 5 (high)
- iv. Moderator
  1. Gender
    - a. Male → 0
    - b. female → 1