

Having Our Say: High Achieving African American Male College Graduates Speak About Parental Involvement and Parenting Style

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Lynn Lanier Odom

University of Southern Mississippi

Rose M. McNeese

University of Alabama at Birmingham

The purpose of this study was to examine the patterns of parental involvement and parenting styles of the parents of academically successful African American males who graduated from historically Black colleges or universities (Odom, 2013). More specifically, the study investigated relationships among students' perceptions of their parents' involvement, parenting styles, educational level, and family structure with the student's higher education grade point average. An online self-reported student perception survey instrument was developed and administered to 36 African American male participants. Survey data focused on how the graduates perceived their parents' child rearing practices or parenting style during their educational experiences from kindergarten through 12th grades. Additionally, three students agreed to participate in individual follow-up phone interviews designed to provide in-depth information regarding their perceptions of their parents' impact on their academic success. Common themes discovered in the data revealed that parents were involved every step of the way of their educational journey by holding their son(s) accountable, instilling the value of hard work, mandating rule following, encouraging curiosity, fostering a rich learning environment, and requiring academic excellence.

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Introduction

Historical depictions of the African American male have centered on him being lazy, unmotivated, dangerous, and without morality or intellect. Some current attitudes have suggested that African American males are generally more suited for the cotton field, football field, or basketball court but may not be suited for the classroom or boardroom (Schott Foundation, 2010). Nearly 60 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the disparity in academic achievement between African American males and other ethnic groups is often misunderstood and supported by theories of lack of parental involvement, little or no discipline at home, and fathers absent from the child rearing process (Mandara, 2006). Although educational research has substantiated and reported the problem of underachievement among African American males at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels, there is much debate regarding the causes for this cultural dilemma.

Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest challenges facing colleges in America today is the disproportionate number of African American males who fail to earn a higher education degree when compared to African American women or any other ethnic group (Schott, 2010). Education researchers have explored the causes of this social problem and found a multitude of complex possible reasons for the low rate of African American male college completers. Jaschik (2005) described the dimensions and complexity of recruitment and retention of African American males in higher education as far reaching and entangles a group of issues that begin in early childhood and continue throughout K-12 schooling. Some of the compelling factors found to contribute to non-completers were *parenting styles, school expectations and practices, and students' attitudes and beliefs about school* (Jaschik, 2005).

Cuyjet (2006) added that poor school environments, discriminatory practices such as tracking, and the disproportionality of African American males staffed into special education as possible reasons for these statistics. Cuyjet suggested that the attitudes of African American males also contribute to the low graduation rate, as many do not consider academic achievement, or even high school graduation as worthwhile or desirable goals or they regard achievement as *not cool* among their peers.

On the other hand, many African American males have made different choices and have excelled academically. These young men escaped the stereotypes, completed their secondary education, attended college, and earned their degrees with many African American males recognized for high achievement (Cuyjet, 2006). Noguera (2003) discovered that regardless of the negative statistics on the plight of African American males, there is good news. "Most African American males are not in prison, do not commit suicide, and have not contracted HIV/AIDS," (Noguera, 2003, p. 431). Noguera agreed there are significant problems that confront African American males today. However, by understanding more about those who have escaped becoming a member of the failing statistics, researchers could expand the knowledge base and identify parenting practices and other factors that influence African American males to complete their college degrees.

Harper (2006) reported there is no single pathway for success in education and "nothing is more important than the consistent articulation of high expectations from parents" (p. 73). Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) interviewed dozens of successful African

American college students and their parents and found these parents were employing old-fashioned approaches to child rearing that were spiritually grounded. Additionally, parents encouraged their children to read and guided them toward positive influences and educational opportunities. Hrabowski et al. explored a body of research that focused on the strengths, resilience, and empowerment of African American youth. Included in this study were African American youth involved in activities that nurtured and cultivated leadership and artistic abilities, resiliency among African American youth who succeeded despite unfavorable odds, and empowerment research that examined ways that African American youth developed an inner sense of power in order to achieve despite environmental barriers. Hrabowski et al. posited that at least one supportive adult, inside or outside the family, was vital for student success.

Fleming (2001) claimed there was evidence that the impact on African American students was more positive at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) than at historically White colleges and universities (HWCUs). Even with occasional limited resources, African American students who attended HBCUs “purchased psychological well-being, cultural affinity, nurturing relations, and happiness” (Allen, 1987, p. 30). Fleming (2001) suggested that the African American college advantage resided in the “constructive networking that can be done with teachers, peers, mentors, and friends as opposed to the isolation that is sometimes reported from African American students at HWCUs” (p. 598).

Hrabowski et al. (1998) brought attention to the idea of exploring and defining why some young African American males are academically successful in their book, *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males*. The authors of the book gave voice to an unnoticed and little researched population. These young men had their say regarding their struggles in and outside the classroom. They beat the odds and were successful. The colloquialism *having our say*, speaks to one giving a point of view, opinion, or reflection. During the 1990s, African American centenarians Sadie and Bessie Delaney popularized this saying in their book entitled *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years* (Hearth, Delany, & Delany, 1993).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the patterns of parental involvement and parenting styles of the parents of academically successful African American males who graduated from historically Black colleges or universities (Odom, 2013). More specifically, the study investigated relationships among student’s perceptions of their parents’ involvement, parenting styles, educational level, and family structure with the student’s higher education grade point average. An online self-reported student perception survey instrument was developed and administered to 36 African American male participants. Data gathered focused on how the graduates viewed their parents’ child rearing practices or parenting style during their educational experiences from kindergarten through 12th grades. This study explored and contributed to the limited body of knowledge regarding a specific sample of successful African American young men who have equipped themselves educationally and are recognized as high achievers. By identifying the parenting styles and parent involvement practices of successful African American parents, school leaders could benefit from the study by gaining new knowledge that may increase the involvement of parent stakeholders in

schools. Additionally, this study could empower parents with effective parenting strategies that could help them to promote school success for their children.

Background of the Study

Research provides compelling evidence there is a relationship between student success in school and parental involvement in K-12 education (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Yan, 1999). However, there has been negative discourse when researchers investigated and compared African American parents' patterns of parental involvement with Caucasian middle class standards, which historically painted a dismal outlook for African American males and their academic achievement (Yan, 1999). Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) defined parental involvement inclusively to "consist of any parental attitude, behavior, style, or activity that occurs within or outside the school setting to support a child's academic and or behavioral success in the school in which they are currently enrolled" (p. 2). Studies further reported that students benefitted when their parents were involved in their child(ren)s' schools (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Abdul-Adil and Farmer also reported that a child's readiness, school attendance, attitudes toward education, and postsecondary education entry were directly related to parental involvement.

Some researchers have suggested that parenting style, or the way a parent or parents raise a child might relate to academic achievement (Mandara, 2006). Multiple findings have made it clear that the relationship is complex. Mandara found within cultures, that qualitatively different versions of each parenting style exist and many studies have attempted to apply dominant culture standards to African Americans.

The results of this study will contribute to the limited body of literature regarding why some African American males succeed in college regardless of the current statistics and bleak forecasts for them. Seemingly, they are overcoming peer pressure and media depictions of the African American male by matriculating through higher education and receiving college degrees. With more understanding about what happens to this cadre of educated African American men, there may be K-12 applications for the education of African American boys regarding parental involvement and implications related to parenting styles. Perhaps a common set of themes or recommendations will evolve that can be generalized to parents of African American boys.

Research Questions

Questions answered during this research included the following:

1. Which parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive) is most often cited by graduates as measured by the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire-Short Version (PSDQ-Short)?
2. Are there parental involvement and parenting styles differences based on who reared the graduate?
3. Are there parental involvement and parenting styles differences based on the parent(s) educational level?
4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between graduates' grade point average and parental involvement?

5. Is there a statistically significant relationship between graduates' grade point average and parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive)?
6. What are the graduates' perceptions of K-12 parental involvement and parenting style attributes that contributed to their success?
7. What suggestions related to parental involvement and parenting styles do African American graduate males have for parents currently raising African American boys?
8. What level of parental involvement do graduates report as measured by the High School and Family Partnership Questionnaire for Students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses for Research Questions 2-6 guided this study:

- H₀1.** There are no statistically significant differences among the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting scores of successful African American graduate males.
- H₀2.** There are no statistically significant differences in parenting scores (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and parental involvement scores (parent involvement activities, student role in family decision making) by who raised the successful African American male graduates.
- H₀3.** There are no statistically significant differences in parenting scores (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and parental involvement scores (parent involvement activities, student role in family decision making) by mother's educational level.
- H₀4.** There are no statistically significant differences in parenting scores (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and parental involvement scores (parent involvement activities, student role in family decision making) by father's educational level.
- H₀5.** There is no statistically significant relationship between graduates' grade-point average and parental involvement scores (parent involvement activities, student role in family decision making).
- H₀6.** There is no statistically significant relationship between graduates' grade point average and parenting scores (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive).

Theoretical Framework

Several theories influenced this study. These theories include Bronfenbrenner's (1986) and Spencer's (2006) *ecological theories*. Also influential were Epstein's (1995) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) *home-school partnership models*, *social capital theory*, and *role construction theory*.

Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological theory is a model that includes five systems that interact with a child: (a) the microsystem is the setting in which the child lives. It includes the family, peers, school, and neighborhood; (b) the mesosystem refers to the relationships between microsystems or connections between contexts; (c) the exosystem includes all the outer forces that influence the microsystem; (d) the macrosystem is the term used to explain

the culture and values that are defined by the child's microsystem and mesosystem; and (e) the chronosystem describes the transitions or environmental events throughout life. Bronfenbrenner proposed that home and school are the two main components of parental involvement. These factors influence a child's development; thus, parents and teachers should work collectively and cohesively for the benefit of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Spencer's (2006) phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory highlights the unique developmental experiences of African American children. More specifically, this theory examines the *why* of developmental trajectories of African American children. Because academic development takes place in a social context, this framework combines the individuals' intersubjective experiences with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (Spencer, 2006). These experiences can include racism, inequity, and psychological support or its absence. Spencer asserted that African Americans are not a homogeneous group and some studies fail to consider this. Spencer also claimed that the phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory is useful when researching the unique experiences of African American children. Spencer's theory serves as the foundation for gender- and race/ethnicity-focused research that addresses resiliency, identity, and competence formation processes for diverse youth in both the United States and abroad (University of Chicago, 2012).

Epstein (1995) presented a model that shows how home, school, and community should function as a partnership. Although separate, these overlapping elements influence student success. This partnership includes six types of parental involvement: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) collaborating with the community. Epstein explained this framework is intended to help educators develop comprehensive programs that support the school-home-community partnership. The model suggested that the adults in the home, school, and community form interdependent connections intended to foster student success.

When examining parental involvement, researchers often use the *social capital theory* as the theoretical framework for their studies. Social capital theory is based on the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988, 1992). Social capital refers to the relationships, or networks, persons maintain for the purpose of acquisition and transmission of knowledge related to their children's education. Coleman (1992) described three forms of social capital: (a) level of trust, (b) information networks, and (c) social norms. Bourdieu (1986) asserted that various forms of capital are required to sustain levels of privilege, class, and social status. Coleman (1992) believed that families are responsible for conforming to certain norms to assure the success of their children, while Bourdieu (1986) emphasized the hindrances individuals have accessing resources. Collectively, studies have shown that the decisions made by parents about how to be involved in their children's schooling may be influenced by the parents' social networks and the degree to which they want to conform to school norms or middle class practices (Gavin & Greenfield, 1998).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) presented a theoretical model of the parental involvement process. From a psychological standpoint, their model explained why parents become involved in their children's education and how their involvement makes a difference in student outcomes. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) refined their model in 2005, claiming there is a reciprocal relationship between theory and measurements. Specifically, their research continued to explore the link between parents' psychological motivations for involvement and their involvement behavior (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Price-Mitchell (2009) used system theory, complexity theory, and organizational theory to suggest that *boundary dynamics* are necessary when developing parent-school partnerships. These partnerships help children succeed through an emergent process of dialogue and relationship building in the peripheral spaces where parents and schools interact on behalf of children. Price-Mitchell (2009) suggested reframing these partnerships in the context of schools as *teaching communities* that generate new knowledge and innovation between teachers and parents. This theory is supported by the research conducted by Casanova (1996). Casanova posited that “parental involvement has multiple meanings and has been operationalized in studies in a variety of ways” (p. 30). Casanova proposed parental involvement does not always mean the same thing to everyone and it is not always positive. Consequently, parental involvement terms must be made clear, fair, and consistent among the school, home, family, and ethnicities within a given community (Casanova, 1996).

Research Design

The design of this study is a sequential explanatory mixed method research approach. Relationships were examined among the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables included grade point average, family structure, and parent(s) educational level. The dependent variables were parental involvement and parenting styles.

The researcher administered a survey containing quantitative items to 33 participants. An interview instrument containing qualitative questions was administered to a subgroup of three students from the sample. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) posited that in order to conduct a comprehensive analysis, the mixed method approach is most appropriate. These researchers suggested that often quantitative and qualitative data are both required when exploring factors and relationships among variables. Creswell (2002) described this type of research design as containing two distinct phases. Data from the first phase or quantitative survey were explored further in a second or qualitative phase (Creswell, 2002).

Participants

An online survey tool was used to deliver the survey to participants. The researcher sampled African American males, ages 22-27, who earned a college degree from an HBCU. A sample of convenience was developed when one African American male, known by the researcher and who fit the research criteria, emailed a survey link to 50 African American males who also fit the criteria. Each of these 50 young men was asked to forward an email containing the survey link to seven additional African American males. The survey questions allowed the researcher to exclude any individual or individuals that completed the survey but did not meet the necessary criteria.

Instrumentation

For the purpose of this research, the researcher combined four distinct surveys: (a) The High School and Family Partnership Questionnaire for Students (HSFPQ) (Epstein, Connors-Tadros, & Salinas, 1993); (b) The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire-Short Version (PSDQ)-Short (Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001); and (c) a demographic survey; and (d) a set of interview questions. Letters of permission to use and or alter both the

HSFPQ and PSDQ-Short were acquired. The demographic questions asked participants to respond to questions related to age, college classification level, grade point average, family structure, and parent(s) highest educational level.

The HSFPQ (Epstein et al., 1993) provided the researcher with a means to ask the participants questions about how involved their parents were in their schooling. The participants responded to seven items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*). Epstein et al. normed the scale on a sample of 1,290 students and found reliability of the 7-item scale to be .79. A second HSFPQ scale, the student role in family decision making, was also used. Participants were asked to provide information about the degree to which they or their parents made decisions regarding various student activities. The participants responded to the 19 items using a scale ranging from 1 (*parent decided*) to 3 (*it was up to me*). Epstein et al. normed the instrument on a sample of 1,269 students and found reliability of the 19-item scale to be .81.

The *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire-Short Version-PSDQ-Short* (Robinson et al., 2001) contains 32 statements describing different parent reactions to child behavior. The purpose of this measure is to measure parenting styles along Baumrind's (1989) continuum of descriptors of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. The short version was used for adolescents or adults to report in reflection how they were parented when they were children (C. Robinson, personal communication, May 7, 2012). Cronbach's coefficient alpha values were .86 for authoritative, .82 for authoritarian, and .64 for permissive (Robinson et al., 2001).

The scoring key of the *PSDQ-Short* was used to categorize the students' responses regarding their parents' parenting styles into the three parenting styles. Mean scores were calculated for both mother's and father's three parenting styles.

Procedures

Participants of the study were directed to the on-line survey link with a description of the study and its purpose. The data from the online survey were entered into and analyzed using SPSS software. The data files were held in a secured locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Results are available to all participants upon request.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and to respond to Research Question 1. Research Question 2 was analyzed using a series of one-way within-subjects analyses of variance (repeated measures ANOVA). Research Questions 3 and 4 were analyzed using a series of MANOVAs. Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze Research Questions 5 and 6. Research Questions 7 and 8 were analyzed qualitatively using descriptive statistics to report the themes that emerged.

Discussion

Graduates responded to questions regarding conversations or assistance parent(s) gave regarding grades, homework, and encouragement or praise. The data indicated that parent(s) were involved weekly with schooling. Graduates reported a high degree of involvement.

Graduates also reported jointly making decisions with their parent(s) regarding curfews, friends, money, chores, smoking, drug use, television and telephone use, clothes, and educational issues (Odom, 2013).

Qualitative data described parental involvement that was very hands-on in the early years. Parent(s) established a very stern study regiment (Odom, 2013). Students also reported participating in a variety of school and extracurricular activities. Mothers placed a strong emphasis on reading and studying with rewards tied to excellence in achievement. Graduates reported having developed intrinsic motivation during later schooling years as parent(s) lessened control (Odom, 2013).

Research literature suggested that African American parents often define parental involvement differently than school personnel (Lawson, 2003). Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) defined parental involvement to include any parent attitude, behavior, style, or activity that occurs within or outside the school setting to support a child's academic and or behavioral success. Clark (1983) described this as parents who establish and maintain supportive home environments, engage in frequent and meaningful dialogue with their children, help them with homework, and have clear and consistent behavioral limits. This particular sample of academically successful African American male graduates' parents demonstrated a type of parental involvement that is supported by the literature.

Fields-Smith (2005) reported that the roots of African American parental involvement trace back to slavery. During that time parents tied freedom to education, instilling achievement and the concept of improving one's personal condition through education and hard work. Parents and other adults supported the educational process at home. When parents could not help the child or thought another adult might have influence over a situation, decision, or behavior, they sought assistance from the community, family, a friend, or church member. Qualitative information obtained from the graduates' interviews demonstrated how their parents worked systematically and purposefully, creating in their sons a foundation for academic success during their earlier school years.

Parenting Styles

Analysis of data indicated that on average the graduates reported their mother's authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles were higher than were their father's parenting styles. Further analysis revealed that most often African American mothers and fathers in this sample were described by their sons as using an authoritative parenting style. Graduates reported that their mother's permissive parenting style was significantly lower than their authoritarian or authoritative parenting styles. No difference was found between their father's authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Qualitative results included comments regarding no difference between mother and father's parenting styles. This suggested that parents not only agreed upon expectations for their sons but also parental power was distributed evenly between the parents.

These results were similar to previous research studies of children in general and African American males specifically. Lewin, Lippitt, and White. (1939) first observed a teacher's leadership style in the classroom and its effect on student engagement. Teachers who were warm and fair created more engaging classrooms and students demonstrated more self-regulation and competence. Baumrind's (1971) four dimensions of responsiveness and control or demandingness has application and provides supportive research evidence.

Responsiveness, defined as parental warmth and love and demandingness or parental control, existed to a high degree and is present in the authoritative parenting style. Maccoby and Martin (1983) claimed that a child's environment should be supportive with warmth and love as well as containing firm guidance, control, and discipline. As was revealed in the current study, a high degree of authoritative parenting by both mothers and fathers was reported. Graduates felt loved and nurtured by their parents but they also understood their expectations and knew misbehavior would warrant consequences.

For the qualitative aspect of the study, graduates who were interviewed for this study reported parents using stern words and explanations when there was disobedience. Others reported being grounded, spanked, and losing video games or television privileges when young. All reported that these measures diminished as they aged.

Research also suggests that authoritative parenting may have a positive impact on African American males. Mandara (2006) proposed, after examining empirical research on parenting styles, that African American boys who have authoritative parents are more psychologically and behaviorally adjusted and have higher academic achievement than those in other types of families. The qualitative data supported Mandara's claim that spanking or the fear of being spanked appeared to be an effective way for African American parents to maintain control and discipline over boys. Some researchers suggest that the parenting styles of African American families have been understudied. The current study adds to the limited body of knowledge regarding what high achieving African American male graduates report about the parenting styles of their parents.

Parental Involvement, Parenting Style Differences, and Family Structure

Fathers were highly authoritative when both mother and father raised the graduate. Substantial difference was found concerning the father's authoritative parenting style when the graduate was raised by both parents compared to being raised by their mothers. Hrabowski et al. (1998) interviewed dozens of successful African American college students and their parents and found these parents employed old-fashioned approaches to child rearing that were spiritually grounded. Fathers, when involved, represented a driving force in the male child's development. A father being present often meant more financial stability for the family and provided a positive role model for young males. Mothers in African American families often take a less dominant role in discipline when fathers are present. This research suggested that fathers not involved in raising the graduates were less involved, therefore less authoritative. These findings are supported in current research.

Parental Involvement, Parenting Styles Differences, and Parent(s) Educational Level

There were no significant differences in mother's parenting styles regardless of the education level. No significant difference was determined to exist between father's parenting style and mother's education. Finally, there was no significant difference in parental involvement and family decision-making and mother's education level. There was however, a significant difference in the father's parenting style and father's education levels. Fathers with a college degree were more authoritative than fathers with less or more than a college degree.

These findings are contrary to most literature related to parents' educational level. Hrabowski et al. (1998) addressed the limited financial and academic resources parents

without a college education may offer their sons. Few researchers have studied the parenting styles of fathers, especially African American fathers. Mandara (2006) cited early research describing African American parenting practices as having unrealistic obedience expectations, misuse of power, low levels of reasoning, and little consideration or input from the child. Bluestone and Tamis-LeMonda (1999) reported the practices of middle-class African American mothers as engaging in child-oriented approaches to discipline instead of earlier African American traditional practices.

Grade Point Average, Parental Involvement, and Parenting Styles

There was no statistically significant relationship between graduates' grade point average and parental involvement. There was no statistically significant relation between graduates' grade point average and parenting style.

Attending and Graduating From a Historically Black College or University

The current study's qualitative findings cited the benefit of high achieving African American male graduates attending HBCUs. Benefits included access to resources that might have been unavailable elsewhere; ability to study with an empowered group of peers; and the ability to grow academically and socially without any pressure to attend to imminent Blackness. These comments are supported by the literature as it relates to how HBCUs nurture African American college males. Students are integrated into college life while their ethnic pride, self-esteem, and academic abilities are cultivated and refined. Seifert, Drummond and Pascarella (2006) best described the HBCU experience as one of engagement, support, acceptance, encouragement, and connection. The high achieving African American male graduates in this study give credence to this theory.

Recommendations

This study demonstrated that high achieving African American male graduates from HBCUs do in fact exist. These young men experienced academic success in their K-12 education and successfully graduated from college. The graduates reported that early in their development their parents engaged them in dialogue about their schooling and learning. Parents possessed a high degree of parental involvement in their education. An authoritative parenting style was most often cited as parents provided a nurturing and loving environment over which they had firm guidance, control, and discipline. Parents provided rules, structure, encouragement, and set a high academic bar for excellence. As graduates grew older, they possessed an internal desire to excel and do well academically. Areas that warrant attention in the future include the following:

1. A study that compares African American male graduates from non-HBCU schools with African American male graduates from HBCUs.
2. A study that examines the parenting styles of African American fathers.
3. A longitudinal study on a sample of African American boys entering kindergarten that continues through college completion and the impact of parental involvement and parent training for parents.

4. The current study repeated with consideration to the motivation, resiliency, and competitiveness of graduates.
5. Attention should be directed to providing parents with a set of best practices for raising an academically successful African American male student. Those traditional institutions that are closely held and regarded should work collaboratively with educators to influence this change. Churches and community organizations are an appropriate starting place.

Recommendation for Practice

The participants in this study clearly articulated a reoccurring theme of parents setting high expectations and purposefully developing a plan for their sons' academic success. The graduates reported that parents directed and guided until intrinsically the graduates were driven toward academic success. Some suggestions or recommendations for practice for parents of African American males include the following:

1. Identify how your son learns best (e.g., tactile, visual, auditory). Seek to have interest inventories administered to determine learning style. This is usually how your son will prefer and excel when learning. Schools can assist and Internet websites provided some appropriate resources.
2. Determine academic strengths and weaknesses of your son. Seek to have individual achievement and intelligence tests given. Schools may assist or private psychologists are an option. Such testing allows parents to seek remediation and/or enrichment instruction. In some cases, schools may not initiate this process unless the negative behavior of a child is involved or a learning disability is suspected.
3. Be an advocate for your son and his academic success. Make this a personal mission. Read, talk to other parents, and seek as many resources as possible. Do not wait for teachers or school officials to take the ball. Parents must learn to navigate the educational system.
4. Explore a variety of school options for your son. The neighborhood school may not be the best academic fit.
5. Look for activities in the community that provide opportunities for safety, learning, career exploration, curiosity, development, fun, enrichment, remediation, and real world connections to school curriculum for your son.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the patterns of parental involvement and parenting styles of the parents of academically successful African American males who graduated from historically Black colleges or universities (Odom, 2013). More specifically, the study investigated relationships among student's perceptions of their parents' involvement, parenting styles, educational level, and family structure with the student's higher education grade point average. Although a large body of research suggests that African American males are underachievers and lack the ability, parental support, or desire to achieve academically, this study suggested not only that this is a fallacy but provided insight into the parenting

practices of a particular sample of young African American college graduates. These graduates provided an exception to what is seemingly a stereotypical rule. They reported that their parents were highly involved and used authoritative parenting practices. There were no significant relationships observed among parent(s) educational levels, grade point average, or family structure.

Clearly observed was that no matter the educational levels of the parents, graduates' grade point average, or family structure, parents were highly involved in their graduates' educational experience. Parents set high expectations and created a roadmap for their son's success. The home environment was warm and nurturing with rules and boundaries.

These young men credited their parents' parenting practices for their success. They suggested that parents be involved every step of the way by holding their son(s) accountable, instilling the value of hard work, mandating the obeying of rules, encouraging curiosity, fostering a rich learning environment, and requiring academic excellence. The results of this study indicated trends in parental involvement and parenting styles. This research provided a testimony from African American male graduates who attested to a process that led to academic success for each of them

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