Are Parenting Styles a Significant Factor in the Academic and Career Development of
African American High School Students?

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Abstract

This study used bivariate and hierarchical regression analyses to examine
parenting factors related to academic achievement and career decision-making
among African American high school students. Seven factors including gender,
family configuration, parent/caregiver educational level, parent demandingness,
parent responsiveness, reading achievement, and math achievement were
examined to determine their relationship to academic achievement and career
decision-making. Although literature supports the impact of parenting in child
development, this study did not confirm parenting to be significant in academic
achievement and career decision processing, supporting there may be additional
factors, which are more significant.

Do parents play a significant role in the academic achievement and career decision-
making process of African American children? Research supports (Dornbusch, Ritter,
Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992) that
parenting styles have a significant impact and is a determinant of academic achievement and
behavioral outcomes. Carpenter (1980) found parental involvement enhanced career aspirations.
She discovered the higher the parental involvement, the lower the disparity between career
aspirations and career expectations, as well as the lower the relationship between career
expectation and academic performance. This implies parental involvement has an impact on
African American career decision-making and aspiration development. Howard (2003) found
that African American students indicated parents played a significant role in their academic
identity and performance. Therefore, it is important to determine if the relationship between
parenting, career thoughts and decision-making, and academic achievement is valid and distinct
in African American adolescents (Garg, Levin, Urajnik, & Kauppi, 2005; Sorkhabi, 2006;
Steinberg, 2001). Understanding the impact of parental influences on the adolescent's readiness
to engage in career decision-making would be significant for enhancing the career development
programs and academic curriculum that currently exist in elementary through secondary schools.
Knowledge about this involvement would contribute to answering the broader questions of the
future of the African American culture, economic statuses, and educational attainment (Attaway
& Bry, 2004; Carpenter, 1980; Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007; Fisher & Padmawajaja,
1999).

To understand the impact of parental involvement, this study explored the relationship
between parenting styles and academic achievement and parenting styles and career
development. The theoretical framework for this study was based upon the Social Cognitive
Career Theory, which studies the interaction of the environment, including behaviors and
personal factors such as self-efficacy, beliefs, preferences, and self-perceptions and its
relationship to career decision-making (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 1996). The two

environmental concepts of parenting's impact on behavioral and psychological outcomes explored were the relational approach to career development and parenting styles determinant of academic achievement. Relational approaches to career development consider the impact parents have on career decision-making and occupational choices (Roe, 1957; Sharf, 2006; Young et al., 1997).

Applicability of Baumrind's Typology to Ethnic Groups

Baumrind (1966, 1989) developed the foundation for understanding parenting behaviors and attitudes. The Baumrind parenting style typology offers an explanation regarding the impact parents have on their children's behavioral and psychological outcomes. This foundation gives insight into the methods parents use to relate to their children and an understanding of how parents critically think about relationships with their children. Baumrind developed the typology based upon the premise of how parents respond to their children and the expectations they enforce on their children. Each parenting type can be explained through the comprehension of two dimensions of parent-child interactions; responsiveness, which reflects support, communication, attention to children's needs, and an established predictable environment; and demandingness, which reflects control, willingness to confront children, parameters, and creating expectations. Baumrind developed four parenting style typologies based upon the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness.

Authoritative Parenting utilizes high responsiveness and demandingness, which results in few behavioral problems and is good for psychological development. Research has confirmed (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1992) Baumrind's parenting typology of authoritative parenting (high demandingness and responsiveness) as associated positively with school grades, school adjustment, and school engagement. *Authoritarian Parenting* utilizes low responsiveness and high demandingness, which results in few behavioral problems, yet has been deemed detrimental for psychological development. The Authoritarian Parenting style has been identified as the traditional parenting format for many ethnically diverse families. *Permissive Parenting* utilizes high responsiveness and low demandingness, which results in high behavioral problems, yet has been found not to be detrimental for psychological development. *Neglectful Parenting* utilizes low responsiveness and demandingness, which results in high behavioral problems and is detrimental for psychological development.

Researchers suggest (Garg, Levin, Urajnik, & Kauppi, 2005; Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005) these typologies are limited in perspective and not representative of ethnic or cultural parenting styles. Garg et al., (2005) suggested that Baumrind's parenting style typology may not have the same meaning from an ethnic or cultural perspective; therefore, indicating parenting styles differ by racial and ethnic groups (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). However, there is literature that supports the applicability of Baumrind's parenting typology to ethnic parenting styles. Based upon an extensive review of twenty-five years of research, Steinberg (2001) concluded Baumrind's parenting model measures were comparable across ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The literature he reviewed supported that adolescents develop better in an authoritative parenting dynamic, regardless of racial or socioeconomic background (Steinberg, 2001). However, the literature he reviewed did not present evidence that African Americans fared better with authoritarian parenting styles (Steinberg, 2001).

Sorkhabi (2005) also explored literature that researched the applicability of Baumrind's parenting styles model in collectivistic cultures, in particular its applicability to the Asian culture. However, Sorkhabi's findings presented arguments that both supported and denied the applicability of the model to collectivistic cultures. The conflicting literature implies the applicability of Baumrind's parenting typology to collectivistic cultures, in particular the African American population, is inconclusive and needs further exploration.

The literature that denies the applicability of Baumrind's parenting typology to diverse cultures supports the typology does not clearly and fully define the dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness. The controversy that appears to question the applicability of Baumrind's parenting typology to diverse cultures centers around whether or not parental warmth exists in the authoritarian parenting style, which is the prevalent parenting typology of ethnically diverse families. Harsh physical discipline, which is a part of the authoritarian parenting style, was found to be more prevalent in African American families than in European American families. Sorkhabi (2005) concluded there is not enough evidence presented in the literature to determine the recommended parenting typology for collectivistic cultures. As a result, Steinberg (2001) suggests examining the association between parenting dimensions (responsiveness and demandingness) and child outcomes as an alternative to using the parenting typologies for understanding parenting dynamics.

Career Development Socialization

Several researchers (Amundson & Penner,1998; Kinnier, Leellen-Brigman, & Noble,1990; Turner & Lapan, 2002; Young, Paseluikho, & Valach, 1997; Young et al., 1997) have explored career development using qualitative studies to understand the impact of parent-child communication exchanges; to explore the "joint action" career and goal development conversations between parents and adolescents; to explore the role of emotions in the career goal setting process; to explore how parents shape the values and perceptions of career appropriateness in children through setting expectations on academic and occupational decisions; and to explore the relationship between career decisiveness and family-of-origin enmeshment as it related to problems of career indecision. Each of these studies implied the parent's presence and type of conversation played a role in how the adolescent engaged in career development. These studies demonstrated the salience of the responsiveness dimension of parenting as it related to career thoughts processing, indicating parent-child communication exchanges as having an important role in career exploration.

However, Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville (2007) and Weis (2002) discussed several structural factors that contribute to the African American adolescents' career development and decision-making. Socioeconomic status, in particular poverty, is a factor that continues to impact career development of African American adolescents (Weis, 2002). Even though high aspirations exist, such challenges as family unemployment, poor health care, and exposure to crime and violence are a few of the environmental factors that influence the adolescents' ability to achieve vocationally (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). Low socioeconomic status families may be limited in knowledge and access to career and post-secondary information therefore, unable to effectively engage the child in career development opportunities (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). However, research supports (Bennett, 2006; Ferrari, 2002; Weis, 2002) ethnic

identity and socialization are important for establishing a career. Research also supports (Bennett, 2006) the parents' self-concept and perceptions about their identity impact the adolescents' perceptions of their own ethnic identity. Therefore, it can be assumed strong ethnic socialization compensates for the lack of available finances and access to career resources.

In addition, ethnic socialization assists the adolescent in overcoming the other structural factor of anticipated racial discrimination. African Americans experience unique socio-political problems during the career development process (McCollum, 1998). Unfair access to the job market and other life circumstances has resulted in the underrepresentation of African Americans in higher education (Kimbrough & Salomone, 1993). The underrepresentation has limited African Americans to lower level jobs and has limited their opportunities for career advancement (Carter & Wilson, 1992; Herr & Cramer, 1993 as cited in McCollum, 1998). In addition, these limitations have had an impact on the types of careers African Americans pursue. Literature supports African Americans select career options based upon their perceptions of the openness and acceptance of that vocational environment (McCollum, 1998). A substantial number of African American college students pursue careers that are considered less racially discriminatory, like the social sciences, education, medicine, and law (McCollum, 1998).

Gloria and Hird (1999) believed that career aspirations might not lead to actual placement into their desired occupation, even though the required and competitive qualifications are achieved. As a result of this career barrier, African American adolescents may struggle with career decisions, causing disruptions in the career and academic transition process (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville, (2007) believed African American adolescents who are prepared to face the challenges of racial discrimination might have heightened coping and career self-efficacy. This again supports the critical issue of parental involvement in the ethnic identity socialization.

Lastly, Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville (2007) discussed the cultural factors contributing to the African American adolescents' career development and decision-making. It is possible that academic and career transitions are a reflection of cultural values and family commitments. Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville (2007) believed the possible conflict in adhering to family collectivistic values, while negotiating the individualistic societal values, were reflected during the academic and career transitions. Commitment to family values can be both an encouragement towards and a barrier from effective academic and career transitions (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). In addition, cultural differences have been found to have an impact on career development and decision-making. McCollum (1998) cited several researchers who believe that cultural differences in language, habits, personality characteristics, and values act as barriers to career development. For some African Americans, the decision to pursue post-secondary education could mean an emotional and physical distance from their cultural values and ethnic identity (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). It could also increase the adolescents' anxiety to meet parental expectations (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). This implies that ethnic identity costs are greater for African American adolescents, meaning parental socialization will be critical to effectively guide them towards and through their academic and career transitions.

Academic Achievement Socialization

Research confirms the authoritative parenting style as effective in producing positive academic achievement outcomes in students. However, most research that examines the impact of parenting practices on academic achievement primarily focuses on European Americans or all ethnic groups as one group (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). The research on various ethnic group academic achievement outcomes appeared to offer contradictory results. Weak and/or inconsistent relationships between the Baumrind's parenting typology and academic scores have been demonstrated in studies that examined parental impact on the academic performances of African Americans, Asian Americans and Latino children (Chao, 2001; Dornbusch et al., 1987). Attaway and Bry (2004) found the greater amount of parental control, the lower the African American children's grades, suggesting parenting styles were not a good predictor of academic achievement for African Americans, even though it appeared to be a good predictor of academic achievement for European Americans.

Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville (2007) discussed several individual factors contributing to the African American adolescents' academic development. They believed that African American adolescents are challenged by their perceived connectedness to the prescribed academic content, thus impacting their school engagement and academic achievement (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). As a result, the adolescents found school uninteresting, leading to disengagement and school dropout (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). Secondly, this disengagement led to negative self-perceptions of the feasibility of success, further disassociating them from academic achievement (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). This academic disengagement occurred even in the midst of the high aspirations African American youth held. Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville's (2007) cites several studies that found African American adolescents have academic and career aspirations comparable to their European American peers. However, African American youth are challenged by translating their aspirations into academic achievement (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). In addition, the ability to translate their aspirations into career exploration and planning may be connected to their perceptions of career barriers within their fields of interest (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007).

What appears to be a critical factor in the ability of African American adolescents to be engaged in school and academic achievement, to pursue their educational and career aspirations, and engage in career exploration and planning, is the level of interaction with adults who can influence their academic and career transitions. Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville, (2007) believed role models and mentors of similar race, ethnicity, and gender can influence the adolescents readiness for academic transitions. The role model or mentor can provide the type of socialization necessary to endure the transitional challenge, in spite of the racism and sexism that the adolescent may fear they will encounter (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). These ideas clearly support the necessity for parental involvement in the African Americans' academic development.

Research supports (Bennett, 2006; Ferrari, 2002; Weis, 2002) the African American parents' goal of child rearing and socialization for survival within the predominantly European American society is to develop the cultural identity of the adolescent. This is critical for the

development of their self-concept with regards to their place and purpose in society academically and vocationally. Constantine, Kindaichi, and Miville, (2007) explained that positive racial and ethnic messages from the parents, in addition to other supportive mentors would be instrumental in decreasing the African American adolescents' anxiety so that they can effectively face the academic challenges of the predominantly European American society.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from 250 participants from four high schools in southeast Michigan. Surveys completed by the participants were reviewed to determine if the participants supplied enough data to adequately perform the analyses for this study. Data from 133 participants were eliminated from the analyses because these participants did not give permission for the release of ACT scores, and/or because of missing responses on the demographic survey. As a result, data from 117 participants were used for the analysis.

A majority of the participants were African American (97.4%, $n = 114$), high school seniors (84.6%, $n = 99$), between the ages of 17-18 (86.3%, $n = 101$). A majority of the participants were enrolled in a college bound high school curriculum (78.6%, $n = 92$), with 53% of the college bound enrolled in an education track ($n = 62$) and 25.6% of the college bound enrolled in an honors or advanced placement track ($n = 30$). Statistics and probability was identified as the highest level of mathematics completed (46.2%, $n = 54$), with Algebra 2 as the second highest level of mathematics completed (30.8%, $n = 36$). Twelfth grade English was the highest level completed (54.7%, $n = 64$), with 11th grade English as the second highest level completed (36.8%, $n = 43$). Forty-eight percent ($n = 56$) of the participants expected to complete college and 28.2% ($n = 33$) expected to pursue degrees beyond 4 years of college.

Sixty-one percent of the participants ($n = 71$) indicated females are raising them as the primary and sole caregiver. Fifty percent of all participant caregivers ($n = 58$) never married and 20% of all participant caregivers ($n = 23$) were married. The data showed 35% of all participant caregivers ($n = 41$) completed high school and 17% ($n = 20$) did not finish high school. Approximately 29% ($n = 34$) of all participant caregivers attended 2 to 3 years of college, 10% ($n = 12$) had a bachelor's degree and approximately, 9% ($n = 10$) had a master's or higher degree.

Variables and Measurements

The independent variables were the background variables, the parenting variables, and the career thoughts variables. The dependent variable for this study was academic achievement. A demographic survey, created by the researcher, was used to collect the background variable data of students' age, ethnicity, academic year, gender, family composition, and parent education level. Two subscales of the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI, Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996; 1998) were used to collect career thoughts and decision-making data. The CTI internal consistency reliability ranged from .93 to .97 and the construct scale reliability for high school students ranged from .52 to .72. Two scales of the Parenting Style and Parental Involvement Inventory (PSPI, Touliatos, Perlmutter, & Strauss, 2001) were used to collect Baumrind's parenting dimensions data of demandingness and responsiveness. The PSPI reliability for adolescents ranged from .78 to .87. The reading and math scores from the

Michigan Merit Exam/American College Test (MME/ACT, Michigan Merit Examination Guide to Report, 2009) were used to represent academic achievement data.

Procedures
      This study explored the relationship of academic achievement (reading, math) amongst background variables (gender, family configuration, parent/caregiver education level), parenting variables (demandingness, responsiveness, demandingness x responsiveness interaction), and career thoughts (decision-making confusion, commitment anxiety) of African American high school juniors and seniors. The theoretical framework for this study was based upon the Social Cognitive Career Theory, which studies the interaction of the environment, including behaviors and personal factors such as self-efficacy, beliefs, preferences, self-perceptions and career decision making (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 1996).

<div align="center">Results</div>

      Bivariate analysis.
      A bivariate correlational analysis was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between variables or to determine if each variable functioned independently of each other. The Pearson Correlations (r) cross tabulation results of the various combinations of the dependent and independent variables are presented in Table 1. The interpretation of the relationship significance is based upon the following suggested guidelines: small relationship ($r = .10$ to $.29$); medium relationship ($r = .30$ to $.49$); and large relationship ($r = .50$ to 1.0) (Cohen, 1988, as cited in Pallant, 2007).

      Overall, the results from the Pearson correlation matrix showed slight, yet significant relationships between several of the dependent and independent variables. The strongest relationship was found between Decision-Making Confusion and Commitment Anxiety ($r = .707$, $p = .000$), suggesting as career decision-making confusion increased, career commitment anxiety increased. In addition, there were strong relationships between Parent Demandingness and the Demandingness/Responsiveness Interaction ($r = .674$, $p = .000$), as well as Parent Responsiveness and the Demandingness/Responsiveness Interaction ($r = .685$, $p = .000$), which was expected. To address the positively skewed data, a square root transformation was done, which slightly strengthened the relationship between Decision-Making Confusion and Commitment Anxiety, and the relationship between ACT Reading and ACT Math.

      The Pearson correlation matrix also showed significant negative relationships between variables. The strongest negative correlation was between ACT Reading and Decision-Making Confusion ($r = -.338$, $p = .000$), suggesting as the ACT Reading scores increased, the career decision-making confusion decreased. In addition, there was a small correlation between Parent Demandingness and Decision-Making Confusion ($r = -.191$, $p = .047$), suggesting as parent demandingness expectations increased, the career decision-making confusion decreased. Again, to address the positively skewed data, a square root transformation was done, which slightly strengthened the relationship between ACT Reading and Decision-Making Confusion, and the relationship between Parent Demandingness and Decision-Making Confusion.

Table 1

Correlation Matrix of Variables – Transformed Data

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. ACT Reading	1	.526**	.162	.015	.112	-.338**	-.060
2. ACT Math		1	.065	-.062	-.014	-.125	.029
3. Parent Demandingness			1	-.066	.674**	-.191*	-.077
4. Parent Responsiveness				1	.685**	-.011	.082
5. Demandingness x Responsiveness					1	-.142	.002
6. Decision-Making Confusion						1	.707**
7. Commitment Anxiety							1

Note: * Correlation is significant at the .05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

Hierarchical regression analysis.
Two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships and impact of the student and parent demographics, parenting dimensions, career thoughts processing and academic achievement. The purpose of performing a hierarchical regression was to see how well a particular model could predict academic achievement after controlling for additional variables (Pallant, 2007). Using the SPSS Block method, the ACT Reading and Math scores were entered as the dependent variables for each hierarchical regression analysis. The independent variables of demographic variables were entered into Model 1 for the purpose of statistically controlling for these variables (Pallant, 2007). Parenting dimensions and the parenting dimension interaction were entered into Model 2, and career thoughts processing were entered into Model 3. By using this method to enter the two models of independent variables the data was able to show if a particular model explained some of the remaining variance in the dependent variable (Pallant, 2007).

A significant model for ACT Reading emerged: $F(9, 107) = 3.99$, $p < .05$ (Table 2). The model as a whole explained approximately 25% of the variance ($R^2 = .251$, Adjusted $R^2 = .188$) in ACT Reading. Decision-Making Confusion and Commitment Anxiety (Model 3) had the greatest effect in predicting reading achievement, accounting for 16% of the variance (R^2 Change $= .157$) with Decision-Making Confusion as a significant predictor at a 99% confidence level ($\beta = -.570$, $p < .01$) and Commitment Anxiety as a significant predictor at a 95% confidence level ($\beta = .303$, $p < .05$) (Table 2). The data shows that levels of Decision-Making Confusion and levels of Commitment Anxiety had a direct relationship with ACT Reading scores. Lower Decision-Making Confusion and higher Commitment Anxiety was associated with higher reading ability.

A slightly significant model emerged for ACT Math: $F(9, 107) = 1.60$, $p < .05$ (Table 3). The model as a whole explained 12% of the variance ($R^2 = .119$, Adjusted $R^2 = .048$). The Decision-Making Confusion variable was a significant predictor of math achievement at a 95% confidence level ($\beta = .323$, $p = .018$). The data shows that levels of Decision-Making Confusion had a small relationship with ACT Math scores. Lower Decision-Making Confusion was associated with higher math ability.

The ACT Reading models and ACT Math models reported Tolerance statistic ranges of .914 to .993 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranges of 1.01 to 1.09, indicating low multicollinearity, a strong linear combination, and stability of the β and beta coefficients amongst the independent variables. However, it is important to acknowledge, the data displays small Adjusted R^2 results, which is a reflection of the small sample size used in this study. This means the results must be reviewed with caution with regards to reliability and generalizability (Pallant, 2007).

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting ACT Reading

Variable	Reading Model 1		Reading Model 2		Reading Model 3	
	β	*p*	β	*p*	β	*p*
Student Gender	.108	.276	.110	.262	.142	.125
Parent Gender	-.012	.921	-.031	.792	.066	.547
Family Comp.	.149	.218	.192	.110	.127	.253
Highest Edu. Level	-.008	.939	-.020	.841	-.027	.762
Demandingness			1.34	.038*	1.04	.082
Responsiveness			1.21	.064	.963	.111
Demand x Response			-1.62	.068	.066	.104
Decision Making Confusion					-.570	.000**
Commitment Anxiety					.303	.015*
Total R^2	.036		.094		.251	
Adjusted R^2	.001		.036		.188	
R^2 Change	.036		.059		.157	

*Note: *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.*

Based upon the review of the data presented in tables 2 and 3, the analyses indicated an association between low decision-making confusion (high career thoughts processing) and high reading and math academic performance (high academic achievement). In addition, the analyses also indicated there was an association between high career commitment anxiety (high career thoughts processing) and high reading academic performance (high academic achievement). However, the data did not confirm any association between background variables, and parenting dimensions, with career thoughts processing and academic achievement.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting ACT Math

Variable	Math Model 1		Math Model 2		Math Model 3	
	β	*p*	β	*p*	β	*p*
Student Gender	.105	.289	.110	.268	.112	.260
Parent Gender	.166	.169	.158	.189	.212	.078
Family Comp.	-.059	.621	-.031	.797	-.071	.554
Highest Edu. Level	-.132	.183	-.157	.117	-.160	.103
Demandingness			1.24	.058	1.056	.103
Responsiveness			1.143	.085	.978	.135
Demand x Response			-1.647	.066	-1.458	.099
Decision Making						
Confusion					-.323	.018*
Commitment						
Anxiety					.242	.072
Total R^2	.035		.071		.119	
Adjusted R^2	.000		-.011		.045	
R^2 Change	.035		.036		.048	

*Note: *$p \leq .05$

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

There were a few strengths to this study. Very few studies have solely focused on collecting career development data from an African American population. Most of the literature explored (Baumrind, 1966, 1998; Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007; Ferrari, 2002; Fisher & Padmawajaja, 1999) referenced comparisons between various groups or included African Americans as part of the total diversity sample. Also, the findings of this study, indicating the connection between reading and career development were very significant. For decades, literature has supported (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992) the connection between parental involvement and positive psychological and behavioral outcomes. The outcome of this study supports home and school resources as instrumental in career development. Reading ability was found to be critical to the ability for an African American student to be able to make decisions regarding post-secondary planning.

However, there were factors that were difficult to control during the study, impacting the outcome and the generalizability of the results across the African American community. I had difficulty acquiring a larger sample size, due to the state of Michigan experiencing severe economic difficulties, school closures, administrative changes, and faculty layoffs, which impacted the school districts in the state, particularly the southeast Michigan school districts with high African American enrollment. As a result, schools committed to participating in the study became unavailable to participate. Several schools feared the information collected for this study would be used to identify deficiencies in their school, leading to additional school closures and faculty layoffs. In several cases, this prevented the collection of the ACT Reading and Math scores, even though written permission was given from both the students and their parents.

During the facilitation of the study, students were observed struggling with reading and understanding the questions, indicating literacy and comprehension issues, even though the surveys and inventories used were normed for this particular age group, ethnic group, and reading level. In contrast, a substantial number of participants were enrolled in a college bound curriculum, possibly skewing the association between reading and career decision-making.

The collection of self-reported data was another limitation of the research. It is possible the adolescent participants reported information regarding their beliefs and perceptions of their parental interactions, rather than the actual facts of their family and academic information. In addition, circling responses without reading the questions may have occurred because of the number of surveys and length of the surveys needed to be completed. Students who were caught engaging in this practice were asked to redo the surveys and were monitored by the teachers during this process.

Discussion

This study began with the basic question, "do parents play a significant role in the academic achievement and career decision-making process of African American children?" Using what was understood about the impact of parenting styles on European American adolescents, the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship among academic achievement, career thinking processes and parental involvement of African American high school juniors and seniors from southeast Michigan. Studies have confirmed the importance of the role of parents and have even identified preferred parenting styles for the best academic (Baumrind, 1996, 1998; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994) and career success outcomes (Roe, 1957; Young & Frieson, 1990; Young et al., 1997). Current theories regarding the preferred parenting styles for academic and career success outcomes have mixed thoughts regarding what is effective for African American adolescent development (Garg et al., 2005; Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). This study continues the argument regarding the role of parental involvement in African American academic achievement and career development. The intention was to identify the parenting dimension combinations that existed within the African American culture, with hopes the information gathered would offer a better understanding of the parenting dynamics of the African American family. Although the outcome of the study did not identify parenting dimensions for academic and career development success, the information gathered from this study is useful for educating counselors regarding the unique needs of the African American families and offer insight that will lead to effective engagement of African Americans in the academic and career development process.

The theoretical framework for this study, considered both concepts of the relational approach of career development and parenting styles as determinants of academic achievement as the framework for conceptualizing the type of impact parenting dimensions have on academic achievement and career thoughts processing. Social Cognitive Career Theory supports people will benefit from a home with parents with high educational levels (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 1996). In addition, the theory supports parent/child interactions, as well as family composition as environments conducive to positive career and academic outcomes. Also, the literature (Hickman & Crossland, 2004; Scott & Mallinckrodt, 2005) indicated the gender of the

parent, as well as the gender of the child, played a role in academic and career development. Lastly, literature supports the benefits of family structures and conditions impacting academic achievement and career development outcomes. However, the bivariate and hierarchical regression analyses did not confirm student gender, parent gender, family composition, or parent education level as having a relationship with career decision-making, or academic achievement in African American students. The structural conditions of the family composition, the parents' educational level, nor the parent-child gender interactions appear to be enough to produce African American students who are ready to make career decisions. This outcome demonstrates African American family dynamics do not play a significant role in the academic performance or the career thoughts processing of African American students. Suggesting African American students who are raised by two parents, with a college education and African American students who are raised by a single parent, who did not complete high school, are equally at risk of being not ready to make realistic career decisions. This strongly supported Weis' (2002) concept that parents' socio-economic status and access to resources are critical for successful career development in African Americans.

Howard (2003) cited several researchers who stated schools have become a place of alienation, silence, and ultimate failure for many students of color. As a result, parents have the daunting task of raising their children in a race-based environment of alienation and silence (Bennett, 2006), which suggests ethnically diverse families are socialized to overcome the emotional challenges of a race-based environment, rather than to overcome low academic achievement. In addition, it appears the goal of parenting has been identified as protection and survival (Weis, 2002). As a result, parents may have limited expectations of upward mobility, but, raise their children to have critical survival skills (Weis, 2002). It is possible African American parents are more concerned about meeting basic family needs, rather than investing in a future that is not guaranteed through academic performance.

Bennett (2006) believed ethnic identity was the more salient factor in academic achievement amongst African American children. This suggests racial socialization is the critical factor that influences academic achievement outcomes. It is recognized that African Americans, as well as other racially and ethnically diverse populations face adversity that is influenced by their placement in society (Bennett, 2006; Weis, 2002). This suggests ethnically diverse parents must socialize their children to effectively navigate a race-based society (Bennett, 2006). Implying the messages African American youth receive from their parent socializes them to endure and overcome racial challenges. The probability of the child's ability to acquire the motivation, achievement, and belief in possible upward mobility will be contingent upon the parent's achievement of their own ethnic identity, not their parenting style (Bennett, 2006). This also implies parenting styles are not relevant to academic achievement outcomes. Yet, literature (Attaway & Bry, 2004; Dornbusch, et al.,1987; Howard, 2003) does support parenting styles having an impact on behavioral outcomes of academic achievement. Therefore, Bennett suggests the parenting style will be influenced by the parent's own racial socialization. Howard (2003) confirmed African American students identified their parents as the more powerful influence on their academic identities. The results of Howard's qualitative study of African American youth also identified race and socioeconomic status as additional factors shaping their academic identities. After reviewing the literature, it cannot be concluded academic achievement is not a priority of African American families. However, research supports African American families

must address other issues regarding the socialization of their children, which may take priority over academic achievement (Bennett, 2006).

In conclusion, it appears the controversy regarding the significance of parenting styles on positive academic and career development outcomes of African American youth continues. The outcome of this study confirms the need for future exploration and understanding of possible unique career and academic development needs of African American youth. Much of the currently available literature regarding African American parenting styles, academic achievement and career development are not recent literature. Therefore, there is a need to continue to enhance these areas with current and continued research. This study should be replicated to continue the exploration of African American parenting styles, academic achievement and career decision-making. In addition, future research should also consider exploring, and identifying additional factors such as, socio-economic status, access to resources and services, and discrimination challenges, to determine their relationship to the academic achievement and career decision-making process of African Americans.

<div align="center">References</div>

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