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SOCIETAL ISSUES AND PARENTING

Social Demographics, the School Environment, and Parenting Practices Associated with Parents' Participation in Schools and Academic Success among Black, Hispanic, and White Students

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This study explored social demographic factors, school environmental factors, and parenting practices that are associated with child academic success and school-based involvement among the parents of Black, Hispanic, and White students. Analysis of 12,426 parents who completed the National Household Education Surveys-Parent and Family Involvement Survey revealed that parent's participation in school is linked to better grades and is associated with supportive schools and positive parenting practices. The study also revealed that parents who were Black and Hispanic, non-native English speakers, lived in unsafe neighborhoods, and had less than a high school education were less likely to visit the school. The article suggests culturally responsive strategies for school leaders and parent advocates to engage parents in their children's education.

Keywords: Parent involvement, school environment, cultural responsive, academic achievement

Empirical investigation has established the significant role of families in promoting and sustaining high levels of academic achievement among students (Epstein, 1985; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parental involvement in education is positively associated with a variety of favorable outcomes for children, such as increased academic achievement (Griffith, 1996) and social competence (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Taken together, the large body of scholarly research on parental involvement, family-school relations, and family engagement consistently demonstrates that parents are key players in the education reform movement to close

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the achievement gap and ensure equitable outcomes among all groups of students (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

While parental involvement is positively associated with high levels of academic achievement and other positive socio-emotional developmental outcomes for children, engaging parents and increasing levels of participation, particularly among ethnic minority, low-income parents, continues to challenge many educators (Koonce & Harper, 2005; Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Lott, 2001; Trotman, 2001). This may be due to school personnel having a limited understanding of how parental involvement operates across various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Given the ever-increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States (Clayton, 2011) and the demographic shifts that are transforming the face of American schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004), educators and policymakers need a more comprehensive and culturally relevant understanding of parental involvement and its correlates. This study is intended to explore social demographics factors, school environmental factors, and parenting practices that are associated with child academic success and school-based involvement among the parents of Black, Hispanic, and White students.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature reviewed in this section surveys social demographics, school environmental factors, and parenting practices associated with parental involvement in schools and child academic success. The first section looks specifically at the impact of social demographic factors. The second section reviews research findings on the influence of the school environment, and the third section summarizes the literature that highlights the impact of parenting practices on parental participation in schools and child academic success among the parents of Black, White, and Hispanic students.

Social Demographics, Parental Participation, and Child Academic Success

Numerous studies document the relationships between parental involvement and family demographic characteristics such as family income (Hill, 2001); parent's level of education (Hayes, 2011); ethnic background (Smock & McCormick, 1995); household composition (Astone & McLanahan, 1991); parent's age (Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom, 2005); and parent's employment status (Dauber & Epstein, 1989). While some studies have found parent's employment status to be insignificant, others have found it to play a significant role in parent's visiting the school building. For example, Epstein and Dauber (1989) found many parents to report little school-based involvement due to working either full- or part time. Conversely, Smock and McCormick (1995) found that level of parental school involvement did not significantly vary by income, parent's level of education, or parent's employment status. However, it varied significantly by race. In addition, two-parent households also demonstrated higher levels of school-based involvement (Smock & McCormick, 1995), more help with schoolwork, and more supervision outside of the home than did single parent households (Astone & McLanahan, 1991).

A more recent study (Hayes, 2011) found demographic variables to play a minor role in the level of parental involvement among urban African American parents of adolescents of low and high socioeconomic groups. None of the demographic variables hypothesized to predict home-based school involvement were significant for either group. However, level of education significantly predicted the school-based involvement of low-income African American parents. Among Latino parents, studies show that working full-time and being a monolingual Spanish speaker are associated with low levels of parental school involvement, while higher levels of

education and being an immigrant with more than 10 years of residency in the United States are associated with higher levels of school involvement (Terriquez, 2007).

The literature also documents the relationship between family socio-demographic characteristics and child academic success (Eagle, 1989; Astone & McLanahan, 1991). For example, Eagle found parental affluence and education to be related to positive educational outcomes among high school children. While some studies have found family structure to have little impact on student achievement (Eagle, 1989), others have found disruptions to the family unit to have negative consequences for achievement such as truancy and negative attitudes toward school (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Overall, there is wide variation across studies in terms of which demographic variables are most important to employ in studies of parental involvement and student achievement. Collectively, these studies suggest that the salience of demographic variables may differ according to grade level, the achievement outcome being assessed, and the type of parental involvement, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

The School Environment, Parental Participation, and Child Academic Success

Research suggests that contextual variables related to the school's social environment have a primary influence on parental involvement (Epstein, 1986; Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Griffith, 1998; Rosenblatt & Peled, 2002). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) assert that parents take an active role in their child's education, in part, because they perceive opportunities, invitations, or demands from the school's environment that necessitate their involvement. An invitation for involvement from members of the school community is an important factor in motivating parents to become involved in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Numerous studies have demonstrated the relationship between positive school climate and parental participation (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Epstein, 1986; Hayes, 2011).

For example, Dauber and Epstein (1989) found that among inner-city parents in Baltimore, school practices related to informing and involving parents about how to help their children at home and provision of information about academic content and learning goals were the most important determinants in increasing parental school involvement. Overall, school practices were found to play a more significant role than demographic variables (i.e., parent education, family size, marital status, and grade level).

Epstein (1986) found that parents' attitudes were generally positive toward their child's school, but they believed that teachers could do a better job of facilitating their home-based involvement. The majority of parents expressed a desire for teachers to assist them in developing the skills necessary for engaging in specific home-based learning activities with their children. A more recent study found that among urban African American parents, perceived teacher support predicted home-based involvement among those of high socioeconomic status and school-based involvement among those of low socioeconomic status (Hayes, 2011).

Parental satisfaction has also been a key variable in studies on school environment (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Smock & McCormick, 1995). While much of the literature assumes a positive relationship between parental participation and parental satisfaction, some scholars have found evidence that refutes this hypothesis. For example, Smock and McCormick found that parents who reported attending no meetings or fewer than three meetings per year were more likely to rate their satisfaction with their child's school district with a letter grade of "A" or "B." Conversely, parents who reported attending three or more meetings per year were more likely to be less satisfied, assigning to their child's school district a letter grade of "C," "D," or "F." However, in contrast to Smock and McCormick's findings, other studies have revealed that parents who were highly involved in their child's education were more likely to be satisfied with their child's school and to believe that the overall climate was positive (Dauber & Epstein, 1989). Dauber

and Epstein found that overall, parent's attitudes about the quality of their child's education were more highly correlated with school practices to involve parents than the parent's own efforts to be involved.

Affective characteristics and attitudinal factors related to parent's feelings of satisfaction toward their child's school also influence child academic success (Epstein, 1986; Reynolds & Gill, 1994; Tuck, 1995; Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992). Reynolds and Gill (1994) examined the influence of parent attitudes and behaviors on the academic achievement and social adjustment outcomes of 729 inner-city Black sixth graders. Study results indicated that parental educational expectations and parental satisfaction with the quality of their child's education were the two attitudinal variables that were most significantly associated with reading and math achievement and teacher ratings of child behavior. Tuck found similar results where parental satisfaction differed significantly on one key variable—student achievement levels. The higher the achievement level, the higher the parent's satisfaction rating of their child's school.

Other studies have found contrary evidence. For example, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1992) examined the relationship between parents' satisfaction with the quality of their eighth grade child's school and their mathematics achievement. Study results revealed that despite low levels of achievement, the majority of parents—in both public and private schools—reported high levels of satisfaction with their child's school. Specifically, 75% of parents whose children scored in the lowest math test quartile agreed that their child's school was preparing them well for high school, and 61% believed that their child's school was preparing students well for college.

Collectively, the studies yield mixed results. In some cases, high ratings of satisfaction were consistent with high levels of academic achievement, and in other studies it was not. This suggests that among certain groups of parents, satisfaction may not be associated with their child's school performance but with other indicators of quality that may be specific to their cultural and socioeconomic group membership. The direction of the relationship between parental satisfaction and parental involvement is also unclear. While greater parental satisfaction contributes to increases in parental involvement, higher levels of parental involvement also contribute to less parental satisfaction. Highly involved and well-connected parents may develop the skill set and knowledge base—through interactions with other parents and school agents—necessary for maintaining high standards and being more critical in their assessment of the quality of their child's school.

Consistent with the literature, parents' social networks acquired through active participation in their child's education (Sheldon, 2002) can expose them to skills and information (Hill & Taylor, 2004), which empowers them to advocate for their children by challenging school practices (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Overall, positive and supportive school environments encourage parent's continued involvement in their child's education (Webster, 2004). Efforts to increase parental participation are most successful when schools engage in open communication and make concerted efforts to work collaboratively with parents (Watkins, 1997; Griffith, 1998).

Parenting Practices, Parental Participation, and Child Academic Success

Parental characteristics related to their efficacy beliefs, perceptions of the child, and socialization practices are all likely to influence their levels of involvement in their child's education (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Numerous studies have examined the association between parental characteristics and involvement—in both home and school contexts (Overstreet et al., 2005; Hayes, 2011). For example, Overstreet et al. found that parental educational aspirations were the strongest predictor of school-based involvement among the economically disadvantaged African American parents of elementary, middle, and high school students. Hayes found parental educational aspirations to be a strong predictor of both home- and school-based parental participation among urban African American parents of high school students.

Parenting styles, practices, and processes that occur within the immediate family environment are also critical in fostering intellectual growth and development in children (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Seigner, 2006; Shearin, 2007). Research on parenting practices and schooling indicates that, for children, achieving academic success requires the support and coordinated efforts and assistance of parents (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Studies have linked school failure to inept parenting practices and ineffective parenting styles (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Conger, 1991). Studies have also found positive parenting practices to be associated with high levels of educational achievement and attainment among children (West-Olatunji, Sanders, Mehta, & Behar-Horenstein, 2010) and adolescents (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Gutman et al., 2002).

Specifically, Astone and McLanahan (1991) found that high parental aspirations and general supervision are positively associated with grade point average, post-secondary expectations, school attendance, positive attitudes toward school, and high school completion. In addition, frequent parent-child communication was also found to be related to positive attitudes toward school and grade point average. Consistent with the findings of Astone and McLanahan (1991), Fan and Chen (2001) found that among the 25 studies reviewed through meta-analytic procedures, parental expectations was the strongest predictor of student academic achievement. Conversely, parental home supervision was found to have the weakest relationship with students' academic achievement. Still others have found parental monitoring to be a robust predictor of academic achievement, except in adolescence when parental involvement tends to decline (Spera, 2005).

Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) examined the impact of four family protective factors on school grades—family satisfaction, family integration, family support, and home academic culture. Results yielded only one factor, which emerged as having a statistically significant relationship with school performance: home academic culture. The authors suggest that the family processes that have the greatest impact on academic performance are parenting practices that include attending school events or meetings, monitoring homework completion, and school-focused parent-child communication that encourages superior academic performance.

Generally, these studies suggest that positive parenting practices contribute significantly to the achievement of child academic success. However, because the impact of parenting practices on achievement differs according to the age of the child and the achievement outcome being assessed, it is unclear at what developmental stage and for which achievement outcomes these practices may be most salient. In addition, parental educational aspirations are a strong predictor of parental involvement, particularly among the parents of African American children. However, it is unclear whether educational aspirations contribute most to home or school based involvement. In addition, there is limited research on how parenting practices are linked to parental involvement among Latino parents.

Gaps in the Literature

As the literature reviewed above suggests, several studies have provided evidence of the impact of socio-demographic characteristics, school environmental factors, and parenting practices on parental involvement and child academic success. However, the literature is unclear on how socio-demographic factors and varying aspects of the school and home environment differentially impact parental participation and child academic success within and between racial/ethnic groups. While certain aspects of the school and home environment may be facilitative of parental involvement and student achievement for some racial/ethnic groups, others may be less so. This article extends the research literature on parental involvement in education by providing an understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics and home and school practices that are most associated with high levels of parental participation and child academic success among the parents of Black, White, and Hispanic children. A closer look at these factors may present promising avenues

to pursue in the development of school and public policies and programs that seek to increase parental participation and academic achievement among culturally diverse groups of parents and students.

PURPOSE

The existing literature informs the conceptual framework of this study. The current study seeks to contribute an understanding of how schools can facilitate parenting practices that promote children's academic success across racial groups by using a "participant inquiry" and strength-based approach to research (Wiggan, 2007). The research realizes the social and historical context and failures of educational policies and practices and appreciates the resilience of parents who participate in their child's education amid social and economic barriers. This article is intended to promote positive family-school relationships and assist educators, policymakers, social workers, counselors, and other helping professionals in developing an understanding of (1) those factors that may promote higher levels of involvement among Black, Hispanic, and White parents and (2) those parenting practices that are most positively associated with higher levels of academic achievement.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the literature, the primary hypothesis of this study is that parents will be more involved in their child's education if they receive more assistance from the school, are more satisfied with the school, take a personal interest in their child's future, and have a high regard for education. We also hypothesize that factors associated with higher levels of parental participation will also be associated with higher levels of student academic success. The research is inconclusive about the influence of specific demographic factors, including race, on parental participation in schools. However, there is ample research evidence to hypothesize that parents will have unique ways of participating in school based on race and other demographic factors including household and community characteristics. Other research questions explored in this study include (1) do schools communicate with parents differently based on the race or the academic performance of the child and (2) are there significant differences in parenting practices between races and academic performance levels of the student?

METHOD

Participants

The study included parents who completed the *National Household Education Surveys* (NHES)-*Parent and Family Involvement* (PFI) *Survey* (United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). The NHES reports on the condition of education in the United States by collecting data at the household level. The PFI addresses homeschooling, school choice, types and frequency of family involvement in children's schools, school practices to involve and support families, learning activities with children outside of school, and the involvement of non-residential parents. The PFI Survey was utilized to collect data from a nationally representative sample of parents of 12,426 children and youths in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Among the parents surveyed, 7,480 of their children were White, 1,628 Black, and 2,576 Hispanic.

The sample was acquired through the use of random digit dial telephone surveys. The dataset was selected because it had a clear indicator of parental participation; had an adequate sample of Black, Hispanic, and White participants; was a national survey that included multiple states and geographic areas; and had adequate measures of contributing factors, such as parental expectations, parent's level of education, and household composition. The database is indexed for public analysis at the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/nhes/) and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR; www.icpsr.umich.edu).

Procedure

This study used secondary data analysis. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics used a nationally representative sample of parents of children enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The sample was acquired for this study through the use of random digit dialing telephone surveys of households. A list-assisted method, described by Casady and Lepkowski (1993) was utilized. This method reduces the number of unproductive calls due to nonworking or nonresidential numbers, produces a self-weighting sample, is a single-stage and unclustered sample, and eliminates the sequential difficulties associated with other methods. With the list-assisted method, an equal-probability random sample of telephone numbers is selected from all telephones numbers that are in 100-banks (numbers in 100-banks have the same first 8 digits of the 10-digit telephone number) in which there is at least one residential telephone number listed in the White pages directory (the list stratum). Both listed and unlisted telephone numbers are included in the list stratum.

Telephone numbers in 100-banks with no listed telephone numbers (the zero-listed stratum) were not sampled. The sampling frame for NHES: 2003 was all telephone numbers in 100-banks with one or more listed telephone numbers as of September 2002. A stratified list-assisted sample was used in order to support design goals for national-level and sub-domain statistics for the PFI-NHES: 2003. A two-phase stratification was also utilized to select telephone numbers in order to produce more reliable national estimates for sub-domains defined by race and ethnicity. To limit the burden on respondents, a within-household sampling scheme was developed to control the number of persons sampled for extended interviews in each household. Using a within household sampling algorithm developed for NHES: 2003, 34,000 screened households yielded a sample of 14,947 children in kindergarten through twelfth grade. However, a total of 12,426 parent interviews were completed.

Measures

Central Measures

Parental participation in schools. Parental participation in schools was measured with a survey item that asked parents, "During this school year, how many times have you gone to meetings or participated in activities at (CHILD's) school?" Responses for this item ranged from 0 to 200. This continuous measure of parental participation was converted into a categorical measure, from which four quartiles were generated. The cut-points associated with the quartiles were low = 0 to 2; moderate low = 3 to 4; moderate high = 5 to 7; and high = more than 7.

Child academic success. Academic success was measured with a survey item that asked parents, "Overall, across all subjects (he/she) takes at school, does (he/she) get . . . ?" For separate items, parents indicated whether their children got (4) = "mostly A's"; (3) = "mostly B's"; (2) = "mostly C's"; (1) = "mostly D's or lower."

Contributing Factors

Several interval items were employed to measure the social demographic factors, school environmental factors, and parenting practices that were hypothesized to have a relationship with child academic success and parental participation. In preliminary analyses, we used an item that read, "We're also interested in times the school contacted you without your having contacted them first. During this school year, have any of your child's teachers or his/her current school. . . ." Parents then responded yes or no to questions about the school sending newsletters, e-mails, or making personal phone calls home.

To reduce data, Likert-scale items from the survey questionnaire were clustered with principle components analysis (PCA). The following are descriptions of the factors that were posited to influence child academic success and parental participation. Factor structure was explored with Varimax Rotation and Kaiser Normalization. Five factors were accepted based on their eigen values that exceeded 1 and the logical arrangement of items. The five-factor solution explained 61.9% of the total variance.

Social Demographic Factors

Race/ethnicity of the child. Parents were asked to indicate the race/ethnicity of the child whom they were completing the PFI survey in reference to. This variable was utilized as the indicator of race/ethnicity in all analyses. Respondents selected from one of the following response categories: 1 = "White, Non-Hispanic"; 2 = "Black, Non-Hispanic"; 3 = "Hispanic"; 4 = "All other Races." We also used variable indicating the respondents' primarily spoken language to further assess the impact of ethnicity. Due to sample size and delimitations, this study used only White, Black and Hispanic respondents.

Neighborhood characteristics. Parents were asked the question "Are there any conditions in your neighborhood that make you worried about the health or safety of (CHILD)/any of the children in your household?" Respondents selected from one of the following response categories: 1 = "No" and 2 = "Yes." In addition, we used the variable, which was coded from respondents' ZIP code, to determine differences between rural and urban environments.

Parent's level of education. Parents were asked the question "What is the highest grade or year of school that you completed?" Respondents selected from one of the following response categories: 1 = "up to eighth grade"; 2 = "ninth to eleventh grade"; 3 = "twelfth grade but no diploma"; 4 = "high school diploma/equivalent"; 5 = "voc/tech program after high school but no voc/tech diploma"; 6 = "voc/tech diploma after high school"; 7 = "some college but no degree"; 8 = "associates degree (AA, AS)"; 9 = "bachelor's degree (BA, BS)"; 10 = "attended but did not complete graduate or professional school"; 11 = "master's degree (MA, MS)"; 12 = "doctorate degree (PhD, EDD)"; 13 = "professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (medicine/MD; dentistry/DDS; Law/JD/LLB; etc)."

Number of children in household. The number of children in the household was enumerated from parents' response on the demographic questionnaire. This study analyzed the number of children in the household under the age of 6 as a continuous variable, with a range of 0 to 5 children.

Family structure. Parents were asked to indicate the type of household in which their children reside. Respondents selected from one of the following response categories: 1 = "mother and father"; 2 = "mother only"; 3 = "father only"; and 4 = "non-parent guardian(s)."

School Environmental Factors

Assistance from child's school. Parents were asked to rate how well their child's school was doing, over the past year, in providing them with various types of information that would facilitate their involvement in their child's education. The following items, with corresponding factor loadings, were derived from the PCA: (1) provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help your child learn at home (.80); (2) provides information about how to help your child with his/her homework (.79); (3) provides information on community services to help your child or your family (.78); (4) provides information about why child is placed in particular groups or classes (.72); (5) helps you understand what children at your child's age are like (.70); (6) makes you aware of chances to volunteer at the school (.64); and (7) lets you know between report cards how your child is doing in school (.51). The response choices for each item were 1 = "does it very well"; 2 = "just o.k."; 3 = "not very well"; and 4 = "doesn't do it at all." The range for the sum of items was 4, indicating that the parents received the least amount of assistance from their child's school, and 28, indicating that the parents received the greatest amount of assistance from their child's school.

Parent satisfaction with child's school. Parents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their child's school and various aspects of the school. The following items, with corresponding factor loadings, were derived from the PCA: (1) the school their child attends (.81); (2) the academic standards of the school (.80); (3) the teachers their children had this year (.76); and (4) the order and discipline at the school (.76). The response choices for each item were: 1 = "very satisfied"; 2 = "somewhat satisfied"; 3 = "somewhat dissatisfied"; and 4 = "very dissatisfied." The range for the sum of items was 4, indicating those parents who were least satisfied with their child's school, and 16, indicating those parents who were most satisfied with their child's school.

Parenting Practices

Personal talks with child. Parents were asked to report on the frequency with which they talk to their child about various subjects within the past month. The following items, with corresponding factor loadings, were derived from the PCA: (1) friends (.76); (2) experiences in school (.73); (3) things that are troubling him/her (.71); and (4) subjects of drugs or alcohol (.46). The responses choices for each item were 1 = "never"; 2 = "sometimes"; and 3 = "often." The range for the sum of items was 4, indicating a low frequency of talks with their child, and 12, indicating a high frequency of talks with their child.

Future planning. Several items were utilized to measure the extent to which parents engaged in planning for their child's future after high school. The following two items, with corresponding factor loadings, were derived from the PCA: (1) plans for further education after high school (.78); (2) plans for work after their child finishes his/her education (.75). The response choices for these items were 1 = "never"; 2 = "sometimes"; and 3 = "often." The range for the sum of items was 2, indicating those parents who engaged in the least amount of planning for their child's future, and 6, indicating those parents who engaged in the most planning for their child's future.

An additional two items were also utilized to measure the extent to which parents perceived their child's school as helpful in providing information about how to plan for their child's future. The following items, with corresponding factor loadings, were derived from the PCA: (1) school provides information on how to help their child plan for college or vocational school (.52); and (2) school provides information about how to help their child plan for work after he/she completes

their education (.51). The response choices for each item were 1 = "does it very well"; 2 = "just o.k."; 3 = "not very well"; and 4 = "doesn't do it at all." The range for the sum of items was 2, indicating those parents who perceived their child's school as most helpful in providing information about future planning, and 8, indicating those parents who perceived their child's school as least helpful in providing information about future planning.

Academic orientation. Two items were derived from the PCA to measure parents' academic orientation. The first item, with its corresponding factor loading, was how far do you expect him/her to go in his/her education? (.83). The response categories for this item were: 1 = "receive less than a high school diploma"; 2 = "graduate from high school"; 3 = "attend vocational or technical school after high school"; 4 = "attend two or more years of college"; 5 = "finish a four or five year college degree"; and 6 = "earn a graduate degree or professional degree." The second item, with its corresponding factor loading, was: how often does your child do homework, either at home, at an after-school program, or somewhere else outside of school? (.75). The response categories for this item were: 0 = "never"; 1 = "less than once a week"; 2 = "1 to 2 days a week"; 3 = "3 to 4 days a week"; 4 = "5 or more days a week."

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Parent Participation and Academic Performance

Findings demonstrate a significant relationship between the frequency with which parents report visiting the school for meetings and other school-related activities and their child's academic performance. As Table 1 displays, parents in the "high" category (those who visited the school eight times or more during the previous academic year) were the most likely to have a son or daughter who is making mostly A's, and least likely to have a child who is making mostly "Ds" and "Fs." To the contrary, parents in the "low" category (those who visited the school two times or less during the previous academic year) were the least likely to have a son or daughter who is making mostly A's, and most likely to have a child who is making mostly "Ds" and "Fs."

TABLE 1
The Relationship between Parents' Participation in School and Their Children's Academic Performance

	Grades				
	Mostly D's & F's (N = 331)	*Mostly C's (N = 1,481)*	*Mostly B's (N = 3,599)*	*Mostly A's (N = 4,365)*	*Total N = 9,776*
Participation*					
Low	5.1%	20.2%	40.1%	34.6%	*N* = 2,789
Moderate low	3.4%	15.0%	38.0%	43.6%	*N* = 2,721
Moderate high	2.8%	14.4%	35.0%	47.8%	*N* = 1,767
High	1.8%	10.2%	33.1%	54.9%	*N* = 2,499

Chi-square = 279.58, *df* = 9.

Source: National Household Education Survey's Parent and Family Involvement Survey (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

*$p < .001$.

TABLE 2
Percent and Chi-square Analysis of Schools Methods and Reasons to Communicate with the Parents of Black, Hispanic, and White Students

	How Schools Communicate with Parents			*Why Schools Communicate with Parents*	
Student Characteristics	*Personal Notes, E-mails*	*Newsletters, Memos*	*Phone Calls*	*Behavior Problem*	*Academic Problem*
Black	49.0%	86.5%	50.1%	31.9%	32.2%
Hispanic	43.1%	85.3%	42.0%	20.0%	28.5%
White	49.8%	91.6%	39.3%	15.7%	23.8%
Race χ^2 ($df = 2$)	83.57**	226.43**	93.93**	231.15**	74.46**
Mostly D's & F's	64.7%	81.9%	65.6%	50.8%	69.8%
Mostly C's	55.8%	87.0%	54.2%	35.6%	56.4%
Mostly B's	47.5%	90.1%	42.4%	20.5%	30.8%
Mostly A's	44.5%	92.6%	34.8%	9.6%	10.4%
Grades χ^2 ($df = 3$)	95.18**	71.07**	259.42**	737.73**	1,592.67**

Source: National Household Education Survey's Parent and Family Involvement Survey (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).
** $p < .001$.

How and Why Are Schools Communicating With Parents?

Chi-square analysis found significant differences in the methods and reasons school used to communicate with the parents of Black, Hispanic, and White students. Black parents reported the highest percentage of phone calls home and the lowest percentage of personal notes or e-mails received from their child's school. Parents of White students were more likely than parents of Black and Hispanic students to receive regular newsletters from the school. Results also revealed that schools were most likely to call parents when their children were performing poorly in school (Table 2).

Social Demographic Factors

Race and Ethnicity

Survey results indicated that parents of White children were significantly more likely to visit the school than parents of Black and Hispanic students ($F = 109.57$, $df = 3$, and $p < .001$). Over the previous academic year, parents of White students visited the school an average of 8.91 ($SD = 12.8$) times, parents of Black students visited the school an average of 5.55 ($SD = 8.3$) times, and parents of Hispanic students visited the school an average of 4.8 ($SD = 9.3$) times. Parents who mostly spoke a language other than English reported visiting the school an average of 3.3 times; significantly less than the 8.1 times reported by primary English speaking parents ($F = 117.29$, $df = 2$, and $p < .001$).

Parent and Household Characteristics

Parents' level of education and household composition had a significant relationship with parent involvement. The mean number of times fathers and mothers who did not graduate from high school visited the school was 3.69 ($SD = 5.1$) and 3.53 ($SD = 6.35$), respectively. By contrast, the mean for mothers and fathers who graduated from college was significantly higher ($F = 17.90$, $df = 4$, and $p < .001$) at 10.12 ($SD = 15.1$) and 10.16 ($SD = 10.4$), respectively. Some

significant differences ($F = 26.21$, $df = 3$, and $p < .001$) were also observed between students who lived in homes with a mother and father ($M = 7.92$, $SD = 11.8$), mother only ($M = 6.50$, $SD = 10.5$), father only ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 8.7$), and nonparent guardians ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 4.8$). Finally, parents with more children in the home were significantly ($F = 6.04$, $df = 5$, and $p < .001$) less likely to visit the school than parents with fewer children.

Neighborhood Characteristics

Parents who expressed concern or worry about the safety and health of their children due to poor neighborhood conditions were significantly less likely to visit their children's school ($F = 13.23$, $df = 1$, and $p < .001$). In addition, parents who reported living in areas with more than 20% poverty visited their child's school an average of 4.76 ($SD = 11.34$) times, in comparison to parents who lived in areas with less than 5% poverty who reported an average of 8.42 ($SD = 11.1$) visits to their child's school ($F = 45.87$, $df = 3$, and $p < .001$). Parents living in rural areas ($M = 9.08$, $SD = 14.0$) were significantly more likely ($F = 23.00$, $df = 2$, and $p < .001$) to visit their child's school than parents living in urban areas ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 10.9$).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, PARENTING PRACTICES, AND PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis that parents who visit the school more frequently have an overall higher level of satisfaction and more positive experiences with their child's school. We also hypothesized that highly involved parents will have a higher regard for academics, be more invested in their child's future, and be active in their child's life, as evident by talking to them about their personal experiences. Table 3 displays the means, standard deviations, and F-ratios of the factors that have a hypothesized relationship with parent participation among parents of Black, White, and Hispanic students. The table marks variables that are significant by race and reported frequency of parents' visits to the school.

Of the five variables analyzed, all had a significant relationship with parental participation. The F-ratio for parental participation was highest for academic orientation and assistance from school. On Table 3, mean scores with a positive relationship with parental participation, such as academic orientation, get larger when reading from left to right as level of parental participation increases. Figure 1a and b illustrates the linear relationship between the two factors that had the strongest relationship with parental participation among parents of Black, White and Hispanic students.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND PARENTING PRACTICES THAT ARE RELATED TO GRADES AMONG BLACK, WHITE, AND HISPANIC STUDENTS

A second MANOVA was completed to test the hypothesis that those factors associated with parents' participation in school are also associated with student achievement, as measured by school grades. Table 4 displays the means, standard deviations, and F-ratios of factors that had a hypothesized relationship with grades among the children of parents participating in this study. When computing F-ratios, it was found that all five measures tested demonstrated a significant relationship with grades. Academic orientation and satisfaction with school had the largest F-ratios for grades. Figure 2a and b illustrates the linear relationship between the two factors that had the strongest relationship with grades among the children of Black, White, and Hispanic parents.

TABLE 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and F-Ratios of School Environment and Parenting Practices That Are Related to Parental Participation in Schools among Parents of Black, White, and Hispanic Students

		Participation					*F-Ratio*	
	Race	*Low M (SD)*	*Moderate Low M (SD)*	*Moderate High M (SD)*	*High M (SD)*	*Total M (SD)*	*Race*	*Participation*
Assistance from school	White	17.91 (5.8)	20.03 (5.3)	20.75 (5.1)	20.73 (5.4)	19.78 (5.6)	5.14*	43.27**
Least 7—most 28	Black	19.10 (6.5)	19.65 (6.2)	21.07 (5.8)	19.85 (6.1)	19.74 (6.3)		
	Hispanic	18.57 (6.6)	20.85 (5.8)	21.80 (5.8)	20.89 (5.5)	19.92 (6.3)		
	Total	18.28 (6.1)	20.15 (5.6)	20.97 (5.3)	20.65 (5.5)	19.80 (5.8)		
Satisfaction with school	White	13.23 (2.6)	13.82 (2.4)	14.08 (2.3)	14.06 (2.4)	13.78 (2.4)	25.49**	12.58**
Least 4—most 16	Black	13.01 (3.0)	13.03 (3.3)	13.38 (2.6)	12.98 (2.8)	13.07 (3.0)		
	Hispanic	13.31 (2.8)	13.70 (2.7)	14.13 (2.4)	13.88 (2.5)	13.60 (2.7)		
	Total	13.22 (2.7)	13.66 (2.6)	13.98 (2.4)	13.94 (2.4)	13.64 (2.6)		
Personal talks with child	White	10.67 (1.5)	10.86 (1.3)	10.89 (1.3)	10.93 (1.2)	10.84 (1.3)	7.73**	24.52**
Least 4—most 12	Black	10.70 (1.6)	11.10 (1.3)	10.87 (1.5)	11.21 (1.3)	10.95 (1.5)		
	Hispanic	10.28 (1.8)	10.53 (1.6)	10.92 (1.4)	11.08 (1.3)	10.53 (1.7)		
	Total	10.57 (1.6)	10.83 (1.4)	10.89 (1.4)	10.98 (1.2)	10.79 (1.4)		
Future planning	White	9.48 (2.5)	9.56 (2.6)	9.76 (2.6)	9.95 (2.5)	9.70 (2.6)	20.99**	10.08**
Least 4—most 14	Black	9.70 (2.7)	10.32 (2.7)	10.42 (2.7)	10.42 (2.5)	10.15 (2.7)		
	Hispanic	9.89 (2.7)	9.82 (2.8)	10.56 (2.6)	10.26 (2.6)	10.00 (2.7)		
	Total	9.63 (2.6)	9.75 (2.7)	9.99 (2.6)	10.03 (2.5)	9.82 (2.6)		
Academic orientation	White	7.19 (2.0)	7.78 (1.8)	8.06 (1.7)	8.31 (1.6)	7.83 (1.8)	0.08	50.36**
Lowest 1—highest 10	Black	7.35 (2.1)	7.84 (1.7)	7.87 (1.8)	8.16 (1.8)	7.74 (1.9)		
	Hispanic	7.36 (2.0)	7.67 (1.8)	8.07 (1.8)	8.23 (1.7)	7.64 (1.9)		
	Total	7.26 (2.0)	7.76 (1.8)	8.03 (1.7)	8.29 (1.6)	7.78 (1.8)		

M = mean; SD = standard deviation.
Source: National Household Education Survey's Parent and Family Involvement Survey (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).
*$p < .01$; **$p < .001$.

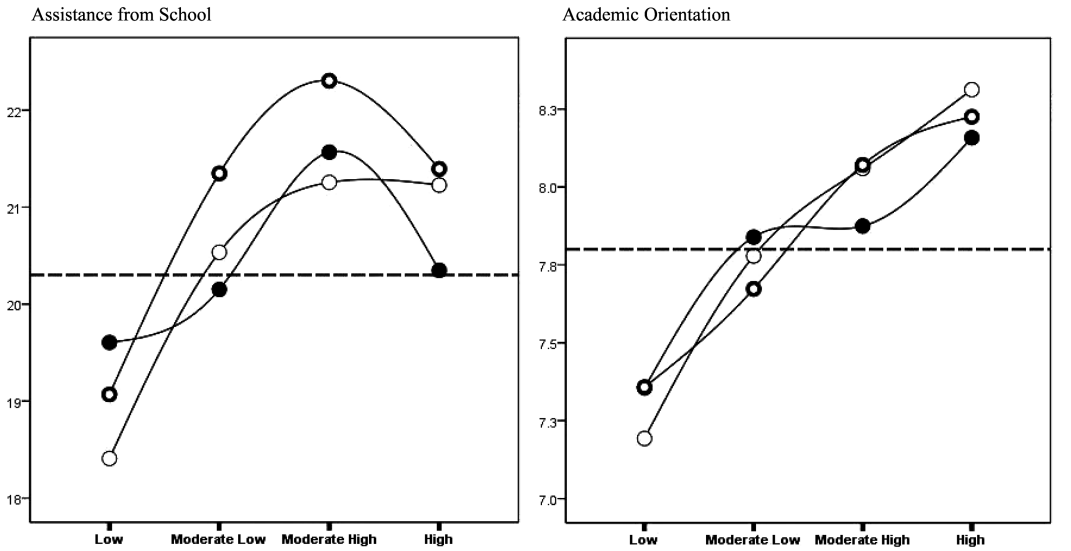

FIGURE 1a,b Means plots of race (separate plots) and parent participation in school (X Axis) on parents' satisfaction with school and academic orientation (Y Axes) among Black, Hispanic, and White students. ● = Black students; ◘ = Hispanic students; and ○ = White students. The dashed reference line on the Y-axis marks the estimated mean of the dependent variable. *Main and interaction effects for disciplinary referrals and race. *Source: National Household Education Survey's Parent and Family Involvement Survey* (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

DISCUSSION

This study examined various socio-demographic characteristics, school environmental factors, and parenting practices that were hypothesized to have a relationship with school-based parental participation and student achievement. Preliminary analyses revealed that highly involved are more likely to have children who are making better grades in school. Findings also revealed that the parents of White children were significantly more likely to visit the school than parents of Black and Hispanic students. Consistent with the findings of Terriquez (2007), parents who primarily spoke a language other than English reported visiting the school an average of 3.3 times; significantly less than the 8.1 times reported by primarily English-speaking parents. As was found in Hayes (2011), parents' level of education and household composition had a significant relationship with school-based parental participation. Mothers and fathers who did not finish high school visited their child's school about three times less than did parents with a college degree.

Notably, schools also had distinct ways of communicating with parents across race. Parents of Black children were significantly more likely to receive phone calls from the school, while parents of White children were more likely to receive newsletters and memos. Parents of children who were making lower grades were also more likely to receive phone calls home. In line with the findings of Smock and McCormick (1995) and Astone and McLanahan (1991), parents with certain neighborhood and household characteristics were also found to visit the school less, particularly those who were in single-parent homes, non-parent guardian homes, and/or homes wherein there were young children. Furthermore, parents who lived in urban areas, neighborhoods described as unsafe, and communities with high rates of poverty were also less likely to visit the school.

TABLE 4
Means, Standard Deviations, and F-Ratios of School Environment and Parenting Practices That Are Related to Grades among Black, White, and Hispanic Students

		Grades					*F-Ratio*	
	Race	*Mostly Ds & Fs M (SD)*	*Mostly Cs M (SD)*	*Mostly Bs M (SD)*	*Mostly As M (SD)*	*Total M (SD)*	*Race*	*Grades*
Assistance from school	White	16.40 (6.0)	18.47 (5.7)	19.71 (5.5)	20.52 (5.3)	19.77 (5.5)	1.22	54.63**
Least 7—most 28	Black	16.92 (6.7)	18.31 (6.4)	19.96 (5.9)	21.32 (6.0)	19.76 (6.2)		
	Hispanic	16.41 (6.2)	18.76 (6.1)	20.09 (6.3)	21.19 (6.0)	19.94 (6.3)		
	Total	16.50 (6.1)	18.50 (5.9)	19.83 (5.8)	20.70 (5.5)	19.80 (5.8)		
Satisfaction with school	White	11.15 (3.3)	13.00 (2.7)	13.81 (2.3)	14.21 (2.2)	13.78 (2.4)	3.09*	104.71**
Least 4—most 16	Black	11.76 (3.7)	12.14 (3.3)	13.36 (2.8)	13.76 (2.7)	13.09 (3.0)		
	Hispanic	11.47 (3.1)	12.79 (3.0)	13.74 (2.5)	14.37 (2.2)	13.61 (2.7)		
	Total	11.35 (3.3)	12.79 (2.9)	13.72 (2.4)	14.19 (2.2)	13.64 (2.6)		
Personal talks with child	White	11.21 (1.2)	10.91 (1.3)	10.89 (1.3)	10.76 (1.3)	10.85 (1.3)	16.38**	2.75
Least 4—most 12	Black	11.06 (1.4)	10.90 (1.4)	11.06 (1.3)	10.91 (1.5)	10.98 (1.4)		
	Hispanic	10.69 (1.8)	10.73 (1.5)	10.47 (1.7)	10.49 (1.7)	10.54 (1.6)		
	Total	11.04 (1.5)	10.86 (1.4)	10.82 (1.4)	10.74 (1.4)	10.80 (1.4)		
Future planning	White	9.05 (2.3)	9.56 (2.5)	9.84 (2.5)	9.73 (2.6)	9.72 (2.5)	7.57*	12.43**
Least 4—most 14	Black	9.56 (2.7)	9.98 (2.5)	10.09 (2.7)	10.54 (2.6)	10.16 (2.7)		
	Hispanic	8.98 (2.3)	9.68 (2.6)	10.06 (2.8)	10.41 (2.7)	10.03 (2.7)		
	Total	9.14 (2.3)	9.67 (2.5)	9.93 (2.6)	9.91 (2.6)	9.84 (2.6)		
Academic orientation	White	5.42 (2.0)	6.61 (1.8)	7.72 (1.6)	8.57 (1.4)	7.85 (1.8)	5.19*	292.14**
Lowest 1—highest 10	Black	5.82 (2.2)	6.93 (1.9)	7.89 (1.6)	8.67 (1.4)	7.75 (1.8)		
	Hispanic	5.99 (2.2)	6.82 (2.0)	7.75 (1.7)	8.37 (1.7)	7.65 (1.9)		
	Total	5.65 (2.1)	6.72 (1.9)	7.75 (1.6)	8.55 (1.5)	7.80 (1.8)		

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; $^{*}p < .01$; $^{**}p < .001$.

Source: Data retrieved from the *National Household Education Survey's Parent and Family Involvement Survey* (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

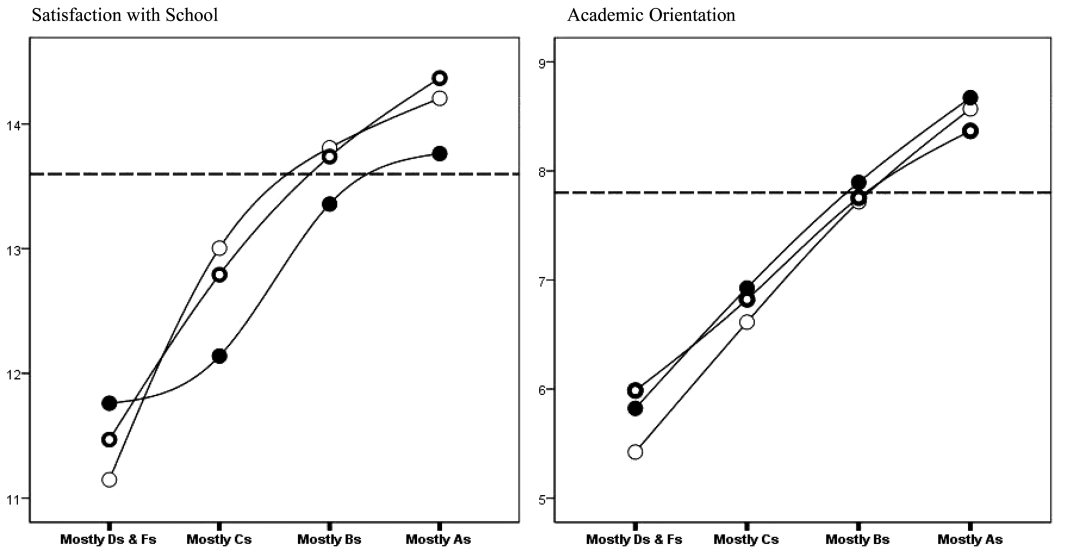

FIGURE 2a,b Means plots of race (separate plots) and academic performance (X Axis) on parents' satisfaction with school and academic orientation (Y Axes) among Black, Hispanic, and White students. ● = Black students; ○ = Hispanic students; and ○ = White students. The dashed reference line on the Y-axis marks the estimated mean of the dependent variable. *Main and interaction effects for disciplinary referrals and race. *Source: National Household Education Survey's Parent and Family Involvement Survey* (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

Additionally, consistent with the findings of Epstein (1986) and Dauber and Epstein (1989), parents were more likely to visit the school when they described the environment as supportive. Supportive schools provide (1) information about how to help children learn at home, (2) information on community services to help their child, (3) explanations of classes in terms of course content and learning goals, (4) information about child development, (5) opportunities for parents to volunteer, and (6) updates on student progress between report cards. Finally, parents also visited the school more frequently when they expressed interest in their child's postsecondary plans and were satisfied with the school's standards in terms of academics, teacher quality, and discipline.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING PARENTS AND PROMOTING CHILD ACADEMIC SUCCESS

From these findings emerge many culturally responsive strategies that can be implemented by school leaders and parent advocates in an effort to engage culturally diverse groups of parents in their children's education. Schools should assess their services and accommodations for parents of diverse backgrounds, including parents who speak a language other than English. Use of interpreters and making all school documents available in languages other than English (e.g., Spanish) could be useful. In addition, school should evaluate communication strategies and make every effort to communicate with all groups of parents (i.e., White, Black Hispanic, and high- and low-achieving students) year round, for both positive and negative reasons, through regular correspondence. Emphasis should be placed on communicating the positive achievements of students.

Although single parents and parents with more children visit the schools less often, schools should avoid stigmatizing these household configurations. Instead, schools should broaden their scope and definition of parental involvement to include multiple forms of participation (i.e., school-, home-, and community-based) that accommodate various household compositions and family circumstances. In addition, special accommodations, such as childcare services offered during school events, are an important engagement strategy to consider for these groups.

Furthermore, schools should assess their communities for safety issues and engage in partnerships with community members in the surrounding area to promote neighborhood safety and cohesion. Finally, school leaders and parent advocates should develop strategies to enhance parents' academic orientation. This may be particularly challenging for parents who may have lower levels of education and may not completely understand the value of education to their child's future. However, schools with highly involved parents are resourceful and adept at helping parents to help their children. Providing college and career fairs, explanations of the importance of specific courses for college admissions and career development, guest speakers, career counseling services, and occupational information are strategies to help parents understand the value of education.

There are several limitations that must be considered within the context of these findings. Since data were collected about socially desirable attributes, some parents may have engaged in impression management during self-report procedures. Although all surveys were confidential, some respondents may have embellished grades or other information to present their children, schools, or themselves in a more positive light. In addition, the survey was lengthy and solicited information beyond this study's scope. Therefore, survey length may have contributed to some fatigue, perhaps leading participants to engage in "Yea-Saying" or "Nay-Saying" whereby they selected only the positive or negative answers on the questionnaire. Finally, readers should not infer causality when interpreting the results of the multivariate analyses. For instance, we cannot say with certainty whether parents' satisfaction with their child's school increases parent participation, parent participation increases satisfaction, or whether a third unmeasured variable may be contributing to the direction of the relationship between these variables.

Notwithstanding, the findings of this study point to specific parenting practices and school characteristics that are associated with high levels of parental participation and child academic success. School leaders and parent advocates can use the findings described in this study to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for bolstering levels of parental participation and student achievement among culturally diverse groups of students and parents.

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