

VALIDATING THE PARENT PROFICIENCIES (PPQ-AA) FOR USE WITH AFRICAN-
AMERICAN PARENTS

By

LAURA MICHELLE REID

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2010

© 2010 Laura Reid

To my husband and my parents, for pushing me to be the best I can be

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my husband, for being my rock through the ups and the downs. I thank my parents, for their continued support and love. I thank my grandmother Levy, for her contagious passion for knowledge. I thank my committee chair, Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji, for her mentorship. Finally, I thank the other members of my committee: Dr. Edil Torres and Dr. William Conwill, for their assistance through the thesis process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	6
ABSTRACT.....	7
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Rationale for the Study.....	9
Significance.....	9
Assumptions of the Study.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	10
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
Parenting Practices and Academic Achievement.....	13
African-American Parenting Practices.....	14
Culture-Centered Counseling Theory.....	15
3 METHODOLOGY.....	16
Participants.....	16
Instrument.....	16
Reliability of the PPQ-AA.....	18
Protocols.....	18
Data Analysis.....	19
4 RESULTS.....	20
5 DISCUSSION.....	22
Significance of Findings.....	22
Recommendations for Counselors.....	25
Limitations.....	27
Future Research.....	27
REFERENCES.....	32
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	35

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>page</u>
5-1	District-wide comparison of academic performance: African-American and white students in the Alachua school district.....	29
5-2	Comparison of African-American and white students' exceptionality in district...	30
5-3	Regression analysis of PPQ-AA predictor for "days present"	31

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Education

VALIDATING THE PARENT PROFICIENCIES (PPQ-AA) FOR USE WITH AFRICAN-
AMERICAN PARENTS

By
Laura Michelle Reid

May 2010

Chair: Cirecie West-Olatunji
Major: School counseling and guidance

African-American students are particularly at risk for academic underachievement. Current literature has demonstrated that parenting practices have a huge impact on student academic performance. The purpose of this study was to share the outcomes of a confirmatory analysis of the Parent Proficiencies Questionnaire for African-Americans (PPQ-AA). The PPQ-AA is a diagnostic tool that assesses parenting practices among low-income African-American parents/caregivers in relation to their child's academic performance. Ten low-income African-American parents in Alachua County completed the questionnaire. Results of multiple linear regressions showed that PPQ-AA is a statistically significant positive predictor of the number of days a student is present at school. This result is significant as previous research shows that students who are present regularly in school should be achieving in the classroom. Since results of this study are to the contrary, educational hegemony could be an explanation. Counselors should advocate for students who are present regularly, but not successful in school. Future research should involve a larger sample size, a qualitative research study and expanding the study to a national level.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Beginning as early as the third grade, African-American students demonstrate significantly lower performance in reading, mathematics, and science as compared to their White counterparts. Many studies have assessed the impact that parental behaviors have on student academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004) and have found that parenting behaviors correlate with increased academic performance (Porter DeCusati & Johnson, 2004). However, much of the literature on African-American parenting has been deficit-oriented, focusing on student weaknesses that require remediation and familial deficits that necessitate parent education (McNeal, 2001; Schwartz, 2002). Current scholarship applies culture-centered approaches to investigating African-American parenting in relationship to children's academic achievement. Use of a culture-centered lens focuses on models of wellness and functioning within the context of the group's own norms. As such, there is a focus on strengths and knowledge construction that is client-based and affirming, thus strength-based. The purpose of this study was to share the outcomes of a confirmatory analysis of the Parent Proficiencies Questionnaire for African-Americans (PPQ-AA). The PPQ-AA is a diagnostic tool that assesses parenting practices among low-income African-American parents/caregivers in relation to their child's academic performance. Significance was found for attendance only, suggesting that African-American parents value participation in school and may see this as a way of supporting their child's schooling experiences. Thus, African-American parents may be exhibiting forms of parent involvement that are not typically recognized by educators.

Delimitations

Although the project was quantitative there were some threats to validity. There was an unequal number of fathers and mothers who took part in the survey and there were only ten participants. There may have been additional constructs the researchers have not identified and were not included in the questionnaire. The location, time and the parents' mood the day he/she might have affected the way in which they responded to some of the questions on the survey.

Rationale for the Study

Much of the research on culturally diverse parents and African-American parents, specifically, use a deficit-oriented approach. Current assessment tools lack culturally specificity and mental health service providers working with African-American parents often poorly conceptualize parent behaviors and attitudes due to ethnocentrism. A more culturally sensitive approach is needed. Additionally, families from low resourced communities have multiple environmental stressors that compound the challenges to childrearing. This study utilized a diagnostic tool that was developed to be used with low-income African-American parents/caregivers. As such, it attempts to meet the needs of a population that is often marginalized and the object of much criticism and judgment.

Significance

It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the literature on parenting and academic achievement. By utilizing the PPQ-AA, the researcher advances knowledge about the strengths of low-income African-American parents. Further, this study emphasized the value of diagnostic inquiry rather than objective scoring to engage African-American parents in a dialogue about effective parenting and academic

achievement. Ultimately, the purpose is to impact the academic performance of low-income African-American children and decrease the achievement gap between these students and their more privileged, White counterparts.

Assumptions of the Study

The researchers of this project make several assumptions regarding the study and its participants.

1. The parents who completed the questionnaire understood the questions presented to them.
2. The parents who completed the questionnaire answered the questions presented honestly.
3. The parents who completed the questionnaire were open to a follow-up feedback session.
4. The school environment was one that would foster achievement if parent proficiencies were evident.

Definition of Terms

- **ACHIEVEMENT GAP.** refers to the observed disproportion on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status.
- **AFRICAN-AMERICAN:** refers to citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in any of the black populations of Africa.
- **AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING.** This is characterized by a child-centered approach that holds high expectations of maturity, compliance to parental rules and directions, while allowing for an open dialogue about those rules and behaviors between the parent and child.
- **AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING.** This style is characterized by high expectations of conformity and compliance to parental rules and directions that does not allow for open dialogue between parent and child.
- **AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING.** This is characterized by a child-centered approach that holds high expectations of maturity, compliance to parental rules and directions, while allowing for an open dialogue about those rules and behaviors between the parent and child.

- CULTURE-CENTERED. Culture-centered counselors make culture the client's culture their focus in counseling as culture is the lens through which the client sees his or her life and draws it's meaning
- CULTURALLY DIVERSE. Individuals who are not members of the dominant culture.
- DISCIPLINE: Behaviors used by a parent to ensure their child behaves a certain way.
- EDUCATIONAL HEGEMONY. A discrepancy in the distribution of resources to those in an educational institution.
- HOME ENVIRONMENT. The place in which a student lives and what he/she is surrounded by.
- LOW-INCOME. Individuals who have limited financial resources.
- NEGLECTFUL PARENTING. Neglectful parenting, also known as nonconformist parenting, is similar to permissive parenting, but the neglectful or rejecting parents do not care much about the child. The parents are low in warmth and control, are generally not involved in their child's life, are disengaged, undemanding, low in responsiveness, and do not set limits.
- PARENT INVOLVEMENT. Parent is engaged with the student and his/her learning at school and in the home.
- PARENT PROFICIENCIES. Parenting behaviors that positively affect student behavior and academic achievement.
- PERMISSIVE PARENTING. Permissive parenting is characterized as having few behavioral expectations for the child and is characterized by warm affect. Parents are nurturing and accepting, but non-demanding. They are very responsive to the child's needs and wishes, while displaying little to no control over them.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Due to structural bias in schooling experiences, African-American students are particularly at risk for academic underachievement compared to White students (Weiss, Lutkus, Hildebrant & Johnson 2002). One example of the outcomes of educational hegemony is the disproportionality in special education. Nationally, African-Americans represented 18.3% of students placed in the special education category of specific learning disability, 26.4% in the category of serious emotional disturbance, and 34.3% in the category of mild retardation; although African-Americans represented only 14.8% of the overall population (US Department of Education and Office of Special Education Program, 2001; Office for Civil Rights, 1999). The statistics in Alachua County (FL) are not dissimilar to national trends (Table 5-1). According to the Florida Board of Education, (FBOE, 2008) there are just over 29,000 students in Alachua County, of which 36.7% are African-American students. Of this number, 3.9% of the African-American school children in the district are considered gifted and 18.9% have an exceptionality on file (Emotional/Behavioral disorder, Mild Retardation or Learning disability) (Table 5-1). At the 5th grade level of the 1930 students who took the Reading and Mathematics Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) 44% of African-American students scored a three or higher compared to 82% of White students (FBOE, 2008) (Table 5-2). Townsend (2000) reported that African-American students had higher rates of discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions compared to White students. These disciplinary actions often lead to other effects, such as grade retentions, school drop out, and academic collapse that widen the currently existing

achievement gap between African-American and White students (Cartledge, Tillman, & Johnson, 2001).

Parenting Practices and Academic Achievement

Current literature has demonstrated that parenting practices significantly impact student academic performance (Epstein, 1990; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Mandara, 2006). Parenting proficiencies that affect student academic performance include parent involvement, the home environment and parent discipline/support (Fan and Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Parental involvement refers to interactions between the parent and school that involve communication with the school's personnel, and routine, non-mandated visits to the child's classroom or school community (Epstein, 1990). Parenting proficiency in the home environment involves cognitive and behavioral activities performed by the parent/caregiver that encompasses support, facilitating their child's performance in the classroom (Grolnick, Benjet, Kuroski & Apostleris, 1997). Finally, discipline and support refer to an authoritative style of parenting that couples firmness with warmth and caring (Park & Bauer, 2008; Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown, 1992).

Many studies have assessed the impact that parental behaviors have on student academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Parenting styles have been assessed in terms of four attitudes: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful (Turkel & Tezner, 2008). Specifically, research has demonstrated that children who are raised in authoritative environment obtain higher grades than their peers who were raised in an authoritarian environment (Park & Bauer, 2008; Steinberg et al., 1989; Steinberg et al., 1992). Authoritative parents are identified as being warm,

supportive and accepting while providing a necessary amount of strictness. However, authoritarian parents are identified as parents who practice a high level of control with low levels of acceptance. Permissive parents tend to have few rules and expectations, whereas neglectful parents spend little time with their children and offer no rules or support. In general, studies have previously provided inconsistent results across ethnic groups when investigating the impact of parental practices on student's achievement (Chao, 1994; Leung, Lau & Lam, 1998).

African-American Parenting Practices

Prior studies on African-American parenting incorrectly conceptualized African-American parents as utilizing an authoritarian style of parenting and used this framework to explain why their children underperformed in school (Steinberg et al., 1992). Current research has begun to examine African-American parenting in new ways, providing evidence to the contrary (Park & Bauer, 2008; Schwartz, 2002; West-Olatunji, Sanders, Mehta & Behar-Horenstein, *in press*). Mandara (2006) reported that when African-American parents use their version of authoritative parenting to teach their children about their cultural heritage gave their children the skills to achieve despite social barriers. Mandara (2006) suggest that African-American parents should monitor their children's homework and limit playtime African-American student success increases. Given this new trend, research now needs to focus on the salient characteristics of African-American parenting that lead to high academic performance.

Mandara & Murray (2002) utilized a typological approach for assessing African-American Family functioning, by classifying parenting styles in to categories. However, currently there is no parenting instrument that is constructed specifically for African-Americans to assess their parenting. Considering the impact that parenting has on

student achievement, a diagnostic instrument that assesses parenting practices and offers parent suggestions for strengthening existing capabilities would prove a valuable tool for counselors and parents.

Culture-Centered Counseling Theory

The assumptions of culture-centered counseling theory are (a) that all human behaviors are learned and demonstrated in a cultural context and (b) that each culture is complex and dynamic (Pedersen, 1997). Culture-centered counselors make the client's culture their focus in counseling as culture is the lens through which the client sees his or her life and draws its meaning (Pedersen, 1992). By taking a culture-centered approach counselors can adjust their interventions and perspectives in a way that is suited for that culture. As a result, interventions and skills can be adapted for African-American parents. The counseling process for African-American parents should provide clients with the opening to explore the meaning of their experiences (Harris & Ford, 1991). Addressing the parenting issues of low-income, African-American parents requires knowledge of and sensitivity to their experiences.

Seeking to analyze which parenting behaviors are correlated with high student academic performance, the researcher asked the question, "Is the PPQ-AA a valid instrument for evaluating the a relationship between specific parenting proficiencies and academically successful low-income African-American primary school children?"

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative methodology to explore the validity of the Parent Proficiencies Questionnaire for African-American Parents (PPQ-AA). The researcher, a female masters student of Jamaican background used her situated experiences in which to analyze and interpret the findings.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of ten low-income parents/caregivers of fifth grade African-American school children in a local public school district located in a suburban area within the southeastern region of the U. S. The school district has approximately 10, 416 primary school students enrolled in 32 schools. As shown in Table 5-1, African-American students comprise 35% of the student population (FBOE, 2008). Of this population, more than 50% of the African-American students receive free or reduced lunch, 44% have a 3 or better (out of 6) on the statewide assessment test, 18.9% have exceptionalities on file, including emotional behavioral disorders, teachable mental handicaps and learning disabilities (Table 5-3) (FBOE, 2008). Also, as shown in Table 5-3 African-Americans underperform on the FCAT as compared to their White peers.

Instrument

The Parent Proficiencies Questionnaire for African-Americans (PPQ-AA) (West-Olatunji, Goodman & Reid, 2008) is a diagnostic tool that was developed to assist low-income African-American parents by identifying parenting skills that correlate with high academic achievement. The goal of the PPQ-AA is to assess low-income African-American parenting and provide helpful feedback that will benefit the parent and

therefore the child by helping parents adjust behaviors in the areas of home environment, parental involvement and discipline/support.

The items that make up this instrument were taken from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), a nationally norm referenced database collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Within the ECLS-K dataset, variables were identified that measured three parenting constructs: parent involvement (10 variables), home environment (36 variables), and discipline/support (10 variables). Reading, mathematics, and science cognitive achievement were measured by the Item Response Theory (IRT) scale scores on the cognitive assessments for reading (C6R3RSCL), mathematics (C6R3MSCL), and science (C6SR1SSCL). The researchers performed a regression analysis on the sample of African-American parents (N= 894) using AM (Version 0.06.03 Beta) statistic analysis software for each of the above three dependent variables for cognitive assessment to determine which of the parenting behaviors were significantly related to academic achievement.

The purpose for using the *PPQ-AA* in this study was to determine whether parents of poor, African-American parents are engaging in parenting practices known to be effective in promoting academic success. Therefore, measuring the parent on the *PPQ-AA* and the child on an academic achievement measure would be evidence for convergent validity. It is expected that the parent's score on the *PPQ-AA* would be positively correlated with the child's score on measures such as the FCAT or GPA. We would expect to have evidence for divergent validity if the *PPQ-AA* correlated negatively with measures that predict academic failure or underachievement. These measures

might include dropping out of school, number of absences, or behavioral referrals. With the exception on the demographic questions, all questions required an answer of yes or no and were divided into three sections. A score for each construct was assigned and an overall parenting score. Content representation evidence was vital to this study to ensure that the intended construct of effective parenting practices for “at-risk” African-American parents is actually being represented. To ensure content representation, five experts in the field of culturally competent parenting practices were asked to review the PPQ-AA items to ensure that what they know to be effective parenting practices that lead to academic success for African-American students are reflected. Item analysis was used to determine how individual items affect the parent’s score. Some items were found to be more important than others and given a higher score than others and evidence based on relations to other variables was assessed for the PPQ-AA.

Reliability of the PPQ-AA

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the PPQ-AA. Results of an exploratory factor analysis with one factor was conducted using MPlus and found that the reliability of the PPQ-AA was 0.047 indicating a weak level of reliability.

Protocols

Informed consent was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The instrument was administered by professional counselors or graduate counseling students. This study required parents of elementary aged parents to fill out the PPQ-AA. The Guidance Director of the Alachua County School District was contacted and provided the researchers with a list of all current fifth grade African-American parents and their phone numbers and addresses, as well as, a report of the fourth grade FCAT

scores for all students. After a list of all students and their parents had been provided, parents were recruited in a variety of ways to fill out the PPQ-AA. These included: 1) calling parents and seeking their participation at a school event over the phone, and 2) appealing to parents at school events and parent nights for participation in the survey. After the surveys were collected they were analyzed to determine those characteristics that are present in the parenting styles of parents whose students perform well in school.

The age of the participants was not considered. Parents/caregivers were informed that participation was voluntary with no monetary compensation and that there were no known risks involved. Potential participants were told that possible benefits are that they will receive feedback on their parenting behaviors and attitudes as they relate to their child's academic achievement.

Data Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using the parent's score on the PPQ as the independent variable and the students' 5th grade GPA, number of days present in their 5th grade year, 5th grade Math, Reading and Science FCAT scores as dependent variables.

Evidence led the authors to several hypotheses.

- **Hypothesis #1:** The PPQ-AA is a statistically significant positive predictor of FCAT score for low-income African-American fifth grade students in the district
- **Hypothesis #2:** The PPQ-AA is a statistically significant positive predictor of Grade Point Average (GPA) for low-income African-American fifth grade students in the district
- **Hypothesis #3:** The PPQ-AA is a statistically significant positive predictor of regular high school attendance (75%) for low-income African-American fifth grade students in the district.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Among the total 10 participants in this study there were nine mothers and one father. The data for 13 students were included in the study; one parent had three students. All parents had female students in the Alachua County school district. All participants were single/never married, divorced, separated and widowed with the exception of one, who was married. Also, with the exception of one, all parents had a high school diploma. Four parents had achieved some college education and one parent had a college degree. The primary language in all households was English. Of those who reported their income, the range was under 10k to 39k a year. All participants would be considered low-income given their annual income and the number of people who live in their household. PPQ scores ranged from 14 to 25 out of a total possible score of 33.

A linear regression was conducted with the PPQ score as the independent variable and the student's 5th grade GPA as the dependent variable. Results of the linear regression showed that PPQ score was not a significant positive predictor of GPA ($b=.382$; $p=.246$). A linear regression was conducted with the PPQ score as the independent variable and the number of days the student was present in their 5th grade year as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 5-4, the linear regression showed that PPQ score was a significant positive predictor of the number of days a student was present in their 5th grade year ($b=.758$; $p=.007$). A linear regression was conducted with the PPQ score as the independent variable and the student's 5th grade Reading FCAT score as the dependent variable. Results of the linear regression showed that PPQ score was a non-significant negative predictor of a student's Reading FCAT score ($b=-$

.227; $p=.502$). A linear regression was conducted with the PPQ score as the independent variable and the student's 5th grade Math FCAT score as the dependent variable. Results of the linear regression showed that PPQ score was not a significant positive predictor of a student's Math FCAT score ($b=.354$; $p=.285$). Finally, a linear regression was conducted with the PPQ score as the independent variable and the student's 5th grade Science FCAT score as the dependent variable. Results of the linear regression showed that PPQ score was not a significant positive predictor of a student's Science FCAT score ($b=.111$; $p=.746$) (Table 5-3).

Results of multiple linear regressions showed that PPQ is a significant positive predictor of only one of the five independent variables, days present at school. While the PPQ did have positive beta coefficients for linear regressions on GPA, Mathematics FCAT, and Science FCAT, none of these were statistically significant in the current sample. In contrast, to the other measures and hypothesized relationship, the beta coefficient indicated a negative prediction for reading FCAT score; however, this was also not statistically significant. The results indicate that further investigation with a larger sample size is needed to determine the strength of these relationships.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

For numerous years African-American parenting has been the victim of misinterpretation in the literature (Mandara, 2006; West-Olatunji et al., *in press*) and there has been scant research examining the role of African-American parenting, relative to academic achievement (McNeal, 2001; Schwartz, 2002). After developing a diagnostic instrument called the Parent Proficiencies Questionnaire for African-American parents, researchers sought to determine how African-American scores on PPQ-AA assessed correlated to low-income, African-American student success in the classroom. The study supported the hypothesis that PPQ-AA scores predict good attendance. However, the study failed to support the hypotheses that scores on the PPQ-AA are predictive of a high GPA, and passing Math and Science FCAT scores. The study also found that PPQ-AA scores non-significantly, but negatively predict FCAT Reading scores. The results of this study do not negate its significance. Future research is necessary to assess the validity of the instrument.

Significance of Findings

Results of the linear regression showed that PPQ-AA scores were a significant positive predictor of the number of days a student was present in their 5th grade year. This means that the PPQ-AA predicts good student attendance. Research has shown that students who attend school regularly perform better academically (Nichols, 2003). Previous research has found that African-American students are particularly at risk for academic underachievement as compared to White students (Lapp et al., 2002; Weiss et al., 2002). This was again supported in the current study where students had a high attendance, but did not excel in the classroom. Some students in the study were

present 100 percent of the time, but were still underachieving. This lack of classroom success might be created by teaching practices that are not culturally adaptable. Teaching is historically modeled after Eurocentric practices that might not work effectively with students from other ethnic backgrounds. For example, in White culture it is common for a teacher to be at the front of the classroom lecturing to students and then giving students practices exercises. In other cultures more hands on learning has been found to be more effective. Results of the study indicate other signs of educational hegemony. White students might have unfair access to resources giving them the academic edge over their low-income African-American peers. For example, White students might have access to paid tutoring services outside of school whereas their black counterparts do not. White students might also have more access to computers and other electronic media that aid classroom success. Several of the students in the study did not have a computer at home. Another example of educational hegemony might be seen when it comes time for students' referral for gifted and special programs. Low-income, African-American students might not be privy to the opportunities available. This means they do not even have a chance to succeed the way those who are knowledgeable about these programs might. They are destined to fail before they even begin.

Another possible reason for the outcomes of this study might be that parent involvement should be measured differently when assessing African-American parenting styles. Previous research has provided inconsistent results comparing the impact of parental practices on student's achievement in the classroom across ethnic groups (Chao, 1994; Leung et al., 1998). Authors have demonstrated that children who

are raised in authoritative environment obtain higher grades than their peers who were raised in an authoritarian environment (Park & Bauer, 2008; Sternberg et al., 1989; Steinberg et al., 1992) and have found most African-American parents to be authoritarian parents, using this to explain why their children underperform in school (Steinberg et al., 1992). The PPQ-AA aims to be African-American specific, but the original questions were taken from the nationally representative ECLS-K dataset. This would mean the majority of people in the data set are White and as such questions are not culturally specific to African-Americans. The questions might very well be assessing successful parenting practices of Whites. Thus, it is understandable that the questions are not assessing successful, low-income African-American parenting practices. The researchers did not control for this potential problem by carrying out a qualitative study with the parents of successful African-American students. Such a study would assess African-American specific parenting that attributes to student success. In sum, the questionnaire might be measuring what it set out not to measure; the successful parenting practices of White parents.

Finally, the questionnaire might be asking the wrong questions; there may be more to parenting than what the questionnaire asks. Parenting is not a simple affair and there is no one equation for success as a parent. As such, it is difficult to capture what parenting practices specially assist students in the classroom. Furthermore, there is variability across parents on what works for them and their child. There may need to be a revision to the questionnaire to fully capture what parenting styles promote high academic achievement. There is a possibility that the questionnaire is not measuring parenting behaviors and student success at all. Researchers might need to totally

redevelop the questionnaire using others questions from the ECLS-K dataset, questions from another dataset or possibly questions developed from a qualitative study that they conduct.

Recommendations for Counselors

The results of this study suggest that the PPQ-AA is potentially a very valuable resource for counselors working with low-income African-American parents. Currently, there is no parenting instrument of its kind available for counselors working with low-income African-American parents. Since much of the research on African-American parenting is deficit-based, an instrument that is strength based would be useful in the field. This might mean more successful outcomes for counselors who can facilitate strength based discussion with parents to assist their students. Counselors can make suggestions to assist parents with their parenting in a way that parents welcome their feedback. For example, maybe a parent cannot figure out what he/she can do to help their child succeed. After completing the questionnaire and meeting with a counselor a parents might decide to visit *The Friends of the Library* book sale and buy more books for their home or a parents might decide not to ignore when their child is disrespectful and address the issue of disrespect as it arises.

Results from the current study indicate that counselors should advocate for students who are attending school regularly, but not achieving in the classroom. Since this outcome is highly indicative of educational hegemony, counselors are bound ethically to assist students at the institutional level. Counselors can start this process by educating teachers about culturally sensitive teaching practices. Maybe the reason why these students are not achieving is because of the teaching practices being used in American schools. As stated previously, for the most part teaching practices in

American schools are Eurocentric and would not work effectively with some African-American students. Current teaching practices are based on a White framework. Teachers can then vary their classroom practices in a way that every student in the classroom benefits. For example, teachers might add some more hands-on activities or some more groups activities, maybe even use pictures for those students who are visual learners. Also counselors can advocate to administrators for students who they think could achieve but are not. Administrators might be able to require that teachers attend workshops that discuss culturally sensitive teaching practices. Administrators could require that teacher implement such practices and spend time observing teachers to ensure they take the task seriously. Continuing education credit can be offered for voluntarily attending workshops that promote culturally sensitive teaching practices.

Finally, counselors can partner with parents to get appropriate programs in to their child's school that will assist those who should be achieving academically, but are not. This might mean offering an after school program where college students in the community come in to the school and provide free tutoring for students. Another possibility is organizing an after school peer homework program, where students are paired with someone in their grade, whom they complete their homework on a daily basis. Finally, outside agencies can be brought in to teach teachers culturally sensitive teaching practices and how to treat students from other ethnic backgrounds in ways that have been shown to promote their success. Volunteer activities might be organized that allow students to leave the campus as a group and provide community outreach. This can be used as kind of hands-on learning for students that can supplement classroom instruction and help students succeed.

Counselors can also refer parents to outside programs and agencies that might be able to help parents and their students for little or no cost. For example programs like Upward Bound and Take Stock in Children provide support and assistance to students from low-income households. Upward Bound provides tutoring, counseling and extra classroom support. It also provides opportunities for cultural education and pride. Many agencies in the community such as libraries offer workshops on student success and parenting skills that might also be helpful.

Limitations

The study had several limitations. The participants were parents of students who were solely from the Alachua County school district. There were only ten parents who participated in the study and only one of them was a father. Finally, all students were female.

Future Research

The biggest limitation in this study was the sample size. Future research with the PPQ-AA would involve a larger sample with at least 150 parents. By increasing the number of parents in the study, we hope to have a clearer test of the proposed hypotheses. Compensation can be offered to parents who participate as there was great difficulty recruiting parents to participate in the study. Also, recruitment methods can be altered. Researchers could partner with local agencies like the library to solicit participants. Researchers could also host events for African-American history month or parent workshops that entice parents to attend who can then complete the questionnaire. A qualitative study would prove useful in revising the questionnaire to be more culture specific to African-American parents. Also, the information learned from the questionnaire feedback sessions parents receive after the PPQ-AA is scored might

help with question revision. Finally, an extension of the study to counties outside Alachua County and around the United States is suggested.

Table 5-1. District-wide comparison of academic performance: African-American and white students in the Alachua school district

	N	%	African-American		white	
			N	%	N	%
FCAT Reading (>2) Gr. 5	1930	68	644	44	953	82
FCAT Mathematics (>2) Gr. 5	1930	61	655	35	953	76

Table 5-2. Comparison of African-American and white students' exceptionality in district

	N	%	African-American		white	
			N	%	N	%
Resident Population	29005		10648	36.7	14303	49.3
Gifted	3746	12.9	415	3.9	2721	19
Exceptionality (EBD, MR and LD)	3723	12.8	2015	18.9	1435	10

Table 5-3. Regression analysis of PPQ-AA predictor for “days present”

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	Sig.
PPQ-AA	1.276	.366	.758	.007*

* $p < .01$

REFERENCES

- Cartledge, G., Tillman, L. C., & Johnson, C. T. (2001). Professional ethics within the context of student discipline and diversity. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 24*, 25-37.
- Chao, R. K. (1994). Beyond parental control and authoritarian parenting style: Understanding Chinese parenting through the cultural notion of training. *Child Development, 65*, 1111-1119.
- Dornbusch, S. M., Ritter, P. L., Liederman, P. H., Roberts, D. F., & Fraleigh, M. J. (1987). The relation of parenting styles to adolescent school performance. *Child Development, 58*, 1244-1257.
- Epstein, J. L. (1990). School and family connections: Theory, research, and implications for integrating sociologies of education and family. *Marriage and Family Review, 15*, 99-126.
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychological Review, 13*, 1-22.
- Feuerstein, A. (2000). School characteristics and parent involvement: influences on participation in children's schools. *Journal of Educational Research, 13*, 29-40.
- Florida Board of Education (2008). Profiles of Florida school districts 2006-2007: Student and staff data. Retrieved February 9, 2009, from U.S. Department of Education Web Site: <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/pdf/ssdata07.pdf>.
- Harris, J. J., III, & Ford, D. Y. (1991). Identifying and nurturing the promise of gifted Black students. *Journal of Negro Education, 60*, 3-18.
- Hill, N. & Taylor, L. (2004). Parental school involvement and children's academic achievement: Pragmatics and issues. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 13*, 161-164.
- Lapp, M. S., Grigg, W. S., & Tay-Lim, B. S.-H. (2002). The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2001 (NCES 2002-483). U.S. Department of Education. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Leung, K., Lau, S., & Lam, W. L. (1998). Parenting styles and academic achievement: A cross cultural study. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 44*, 157-172.
- Mandara, J. (2006). The impact of family functioning on African-American males academic achievement: A review and clarification of the empirical literature. *Teacher's College Record, 108*, 206-223.

- Mandara, J., & Murray, C. B (2002). Development of an empirical typology of African-American family functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology, 16*, 318-337.
- McNeal, R. B. (2001). Differential effects of parental involvement on cognitive and behavioral outcomes by socioeconomic status. *Journal of Socio-Economics, 30*, 171-179.
- Nichols, J.D. (2003). Prediction indicators for students failing the state of Indiana high school graduation exam. *Preventing School Failure, 47*, 112-121.
- Pederson, P. (1992). Culture-centered counseling and interviewing skills: A practical guide. Praeger Paperback.
- Pederson, P. (1997). Culture-centered counseling interventions: Striving for accuracy. Sage Publications.
- Park, H., & Bauer, S. (2002). Parenting practices, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and academic achievement in adolescents. *School Psychology International, 23*, 386-397.
- Porter DeCusati, C. L., & Johnson, J. E. (2004). Parents as classroom volunteers and kindergarten students' emergent reading skills. *Journal of Educational Research, 95*, 235-246.
- Schwartz, J. P. (2002). Family resilience and pragmatic parent education. *The Journal of Individual Psychology, 58*, 250-262.
- Steinberg, L., Dornbusch, S. M., & Brown, B. B. (1992). Ethnic differences in adolescent achievement: An ecological perspective. *American Psychologist, 47*, 723 – 729.
- Steinberg, L., Elmen, J. D., & Mounts, N. S. (1989). Authoritative parenting, psychological maturity and academic success among adolescents. *Child development, 60*, 1424-1436.
- Townsend, B. L. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African-American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 381-392.
- Turkel, Y. D., & Tezner, E. (2008). Parenting styles and learned Turkish adolescents. *Adolescence, 43*, 143-152.
- U.S. Department of Education, & Office of Special Education Programs (2001). Twenty-Fourth Annual report to congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Education, & Office for Civil Rights (1999). OCR elementary and secondary school survey: 1998. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Weiss, A. R., Lutkus, A. D., Hildebrant, B. S., & Johnson, M. S. (2002). *The Nation's Report Card: Geography 2001* (NCES 2002-484). U.S. Department of Education. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

West-Olatunji, C., Goodman, & R., Reid, L. (2008, November). Assessing parenting proficiencies: Working with low-income African-American parents. Workshop presented at the Florida Educational Research Association, Orlando, FL.

West-Olatunji, C., Sanders, T., Mehta, S., & Behar-Horenstein, L. (in press). Parenting practices among low-income parents/guardians of academically successful fifth grade African-American children. *Multicultural Perspectives*.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Laura Reid is a native to Kingston, Jamaica. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from the University of Florida with a minor in secondary education. Laura has presented on African-American parenting at several conferences nationally. She received her Master of Arts in Education from the University of Florida in the spring of 2010.