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An exploration of the alienation experienced by African American parents from their child's educational environment

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE ALIENATION EXPERIENCED BY AFRICAN
AMERICAN PARENTS FROM THEIR CHILD'S
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

By

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Bachelor of Science
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirement for the

**Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Special Education
Department of Special Education
College of Education**

**Graduate College
University of Nevada Las Vegas
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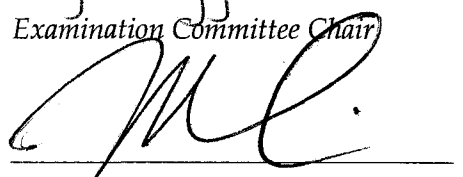
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An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African
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Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education

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ABSTRACT

An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment

By

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Current research suggests that parents are one of the key components to the school success of their children. The literature indicates that parent interest and involvement impacts education in the areas of: (a) quality of instruction received, (b) student respect for learning, and (c) student excellence in school. Involved parents simply make the educational system better. However, in today's world, parents often work long hours, have more than one job, and participate in multiple responsibilities that may limit their participation. Because of the variety of factors that impinge on parents, educators often criticize them for their non-participation or limited participation in the school environment.

One group at risk for becoming alienated from the education of their children is parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This alienation may be due to cultural and language differences that exist between school and home, perceptions held by school personnel, or a sense of alienation held by parents.

The purpose of this study was to: (a) analyze the alienation experienced by African American parents of children with and without disabilities, and (b) examine the relationship of African American parents to the educational system in order to determine the degree of alienation, if any, they felt toward public education. Questionnaire data were analyzed to determine the factors involved in the alienation of a group of 421 African American parents in a large southwestern city.

The *Barriers to School Involvement Survey* (Reglin, et al., 2003) was used to collect data in this study. The questionnaire was used to identify the factors involved in the alienation of African American parents. The questionnaire was comprised of a five-point Likert scale that focused on causes of parent alienation from the educational process. The 30 questions asked the parents to rate their responses from no problem (1), not a problem (2), sometimes a problem (3), often a problem (4), to always a problem (5). The questions on the Modified *Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* were factored into five problem categories for analyzes (e.g., personal concerns, work, lack of interest, logistics, teacher/parent relationship). Four churches were selected for inclusion of this study. The churches are located in a large, southwestern city in the United States. The churches typically are attended by African American families comprised of a wide range of educational and economic levels.

In this study, although significance was found among the five problem categories (e.g., personal concerns, lack of interest, logistics, work, and teacher/parents relationship) across the six research questions (e.g., problem categories, employment status, economics, special education verses general education, family composition, and parent educational level), the significance has little interpretive value in that the means for each

category indicated that parents did not view the problems as a concern impacting their school involvement. The findings of this study are in direct opposition to current research. The difference between the finding of this study and other research may be due to: (a) the collection of data in a church setting, (b) the questionnaire used, or (c) the change in factors affecting parent involvement. It maybe that research needs to focus more on school-based factors and less on parent factors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION.....	1
Alienation Defined.....	2
Parental Alienation from Educational Environments.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	11
Research Questions.....	12
Significance of the Study.....	13
Definitions.....	14
Limitations.....	15
Summary.....	16
CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	17
Parental Alienation from Educational Environments.....	17
Consequences of African American Parent Alienation.....	46
Summary.....	52
CHAPTER THREE METHOD.....	55
Research Questions.....	56
Participants.....	56
Setting.....	61
Instrumentation.....	62
Materials.....	62
Training.....	63
Design and Procedures.....	63
Data Collection.....	64
Treatment of the Data.....	65
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS.....	67
Interscore Reliability.....	67
<i>Modified Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire</i>	68
CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION.....	119
Identified Problem Categories.....	120
Special Education Verses General Education.....	121

Family Economics	122
Family Composition.....	123
Educational Level	123
Employment Status	124
Summary	125
Conclusion	127
Recommendations for Further Study	128
REFERENCES	129
APPENDIX A LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM CH PASTORS	137
APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT, PARENTAL CONSENT	142
APPENDIX C DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.....	145
APPENDIX D <i>BARRIERS TO SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE</i>	147
APPENDIX E PERMISSION TO COPYRIGHT MATERIAL.....	151
VITA.....	153

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Parent Demographic Information.....	58
Table 2	Interscorer Reliability of the Modified Barriers to school Involvement Questionnaire	68
Table 3	Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories	69
Table 4	Pairwise Comparisons.....	70
Table 5	Means and Standard Deviations for Children in Special Education.....	72
Table 6	Independent Sample <i>t</i> -Test for Problem Category.....	73
Table 7	Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories and Income Levels.....	77
Table 8	Summary of Simple Main effect ANOVAs for Income Level at each Problem Category.....	78
Table 9	Multiple Comparisons of Income Levels.....	79
Table 10	Means and Standard Deviations for Income Level One	79
Table 11	Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Categories at Income Level One.....	80
Table 12	Means and Standard Deviations for Income Level Two.....	81
Table 13	Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Categories at Income Level Two	81
Table 14	Means and Standard Deviations for Income Level Three.....	82
Table 15	Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Categories at Income Level Three	83
Table 16	Means and Standard Deviations for Income Level Four	84
Table 17	Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Categories at Income Level Four.....	84
Table 18	Means and Standard Deviation for Family Composition at each Problem Category.....	86
Table 19	Means and Standard Deviation for Educational Level and Problem Categories.....	91
Table 20	Means and Standard Deviation for Educational Level at each Problem Category.....	93
Table 21	Multiple Comparisons for Parent Educational Level at Problem Category.....	96
Table 22	Means and Standard deviations for Problem Category at Educational Levels.....	100
Table 23	Pairwise Comparisons for Parent Category at each Educational Level.....	102
Table 24	Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Category at Employment Status.....	109
Table 25	Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Category at Employment Status.....	110
Table 26	Multiple Comparisons for Problem Category at Employment Status.....	112
Table 27	Means and Standard Deviations of One-way ANOVAs for Employment Status at each Problem Category.....	114
Table 28	Pairwise Comparisons for Employment Status at Problem Category.....	116

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Recently, researchers have begun to examine the lack of African American parent participation in school-based activities (Davis, Brown, Bantz, & Manno, 2004). This lack of participation in the educational process of their children, with and without disabilities, is proving to be detrimental to the education of the children (Bempechat, 1992). Poor communication between professionals and parents has been cited as a reason African American parents feel that their children are not receiving appropriate educational services (Thompson, 2003a). African American parents of children who have disabilities have expressed frustration and anger at policies they believe prevent them from participating in their children's education (Davis, Brown, Bantz, & Manno, 2004).

Harry (1992) discussed five common problems that impact the alienation of African American parents: (a) a lack of trust in the educational system, (b) apathy, (c) constraints and stressful life circumstances, (d) problems with schedules, and (e) transportation. Harry also addressed the role that educator behavior plays in the alienation of African American parents. She found that educators often show a lack of respect for different parenting styles that the parents believe undermines their parental power. Harry (1992) maintains that the background and experience of the majority of educators does not prepare them to work with African American parents. The resulting

gap that is created between educators and African American parents often leads to the parents feeling alienated from their child's education (Calabrese, 1989; Scott-Jones, 1987).

Researchers have defined this alienation in terms of environmental and/or economical conditions that exist when dominant social groups create a situation in which less powerful groups experience feelings of rootlessness, segregation, and a lack of sympathy (Seeman, 1959; Calabrese, 1989). As this alienation gap grows wider, it is the African American students who suffer. A lack of parent participation in the educational process can contribute to low student achievement, a high dropout rate, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy (Epstein, 1996).

Alienation Defined

In theology, philosophy, and psychiatry alienation has been defined as the separation of two entities that results in tension and frustration (Johnson, 1990).

Sociology defines alienation as the separation of individuals from the personal or material environment (Johnson, 1990). *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (2002) defines alienation as a feeling of separation or isolation. Recently, researchers have discussed alienation as being associated most often with underrepresented groups, people living in poverty, the unemployed, and others who have limited power to bring about change in society (Blumenkrantz & Tapp, 2001).

The definition used in the educational literature to discuss the concept of alienation was developed by Seeman (1959). Seeman identified the categories of alienation as: (a) powerlessness, (b) meaninglessness, (c) normlessness, (d) isolation, and

(e) self-estrangement. Powerlessness involves individuals feeling that there is not much they can do about the most important problems in their life. This involves a discrepancy between the individual's expectations for control and the desire for control.

Meaninglessness occurs when a problem becomes so complicated that the individual expresses difficulties with decision making. This involves confusion concerning personal beliefs. Normlessness involves the breakdown of an individual's social norms. The individual believes that in order to get ahead in the world they are forced to do things that are not right. Isolation occurs when a person places little or no value on the goals or beliefs that are usually valued by the general population. Finally, self-estrangement is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that a behavior will result in expected future rewards.

For this study, a sociological definition of alienation was used. This definition focuses on the separation or distance among two or more participants (Dean, 1961). In this study, an alienated person is one who expresses a sense of anguish in terms of unfulfilled expectations concerning a situation (Galbo, 1980).

Parental Alienation from Educational Environments

The alienation of a parent from a school situation means that they feel out of place, experience real and perceived discrimination, and have a sense of estrangement when interacting with the educators of their children (Bempechat, 1992). This alienation may cause the parent to express a sense of fear, depression, and even school phobia (Bempechat, 1992). Because of this alienation, the parents may be suspect of the educational institution. Consequently, they often confuse teaching with learning, grade

advancement with education, and a diploma with competence (Epstein, 1996). In addition, poor communication between parents and professionals, lack of trust by parents in the educational system, logistical constraints (e.g., telephone, transportation, and child care), and/or disagreement with special education classification may contribute to the lack of participation (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991).

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The research indicates that one group at risk for becoming alienated from the education of their children is parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Adelman, 1994). This alienation may be due to cultural and language differences that exist between school and home (Comer & Haynes, 1991). School personnel may have the misconception that parents from diverse cultural groups are apathetic, disinterested, or indifferent to their child's education and may not work to encourage these parents to participate in school (Bloom, 2001). Conversely, these parents may feel as if they don't have anything to offer to the school (Thompson, 2003b). However, research indicates that when the participation of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is solicited they gain a sense of ownership about participating in their child's education (Epstein, 1996). Research also shows that these parents want to be involved in their child's education (Adelman, 1994).

A lack of connection between the culture and/or language of the home and the school may lead to the alienation of parents from ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Most administrators, teachers, and staff are from Caucasian, middle-class backgrounds (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Thus, school customs, expectations, and experiences often do not reflect the backgrounds of the

families from diverse groups (Calabrese, 1990). For example, parents from a diverse cultural background may believe that it is inappropriate to participate in their child's school, believing that it is sole responsibility of the school staff to educate their child (Epstein, 1996).

African American Parents

According to the *United States Census Report 2000*, 36.4 million (12.9%) people identify themselves as African American. The African American population in the United States increased faster than the total population between 1990 and 2000. (e.g., 4.7 million or a 15% increase from 1990 to 2000). Thus, involving African American parents in their children's schooling must be one of the major focuses of the educational system today (Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001). The lack of parental involvement by African American parents has a detrimental impact on the educational progress of their children (Bempechat, 1992). As a result, the educational outcome for African American children often is not positive (Thompson, 2003b).

Poor communication between professionals and parents has been cited as the major reason for the lack of participation of African American parents in their children's education (Thompson, 2003b). The research indicates a variety of reasons that prevent African American parents from participating in school-based activities. These include: (a) a lack of time, (b) economic constraints, (c) lack of transportation, (d) lack of child care, and (e) lack of understanding of educational jargon (Smalley & Reyes-Blanea 2001; Pena, 2000; Coots, 1998).

Economic Factors

Parents living in poverty are less likely to become involved in their child's education than are middle and upper-class parents (Entwisle & Alexander, 1995; Coots, 1998). The economic status of parents is more likely to affect school-based parental involvement than home-based involvement (Coots, 1998; Lareau, 1987; McDermott & Rotherenberg, 2001). Often, parents living in poverty experience doubts about their own educational abilities and abdicate their educational responsibilities to their child's teacher(s) (Sojourner & Kusher, 1997). Researchers believe that parents living in poverty are so focused on the immediate needs of their family that they do not have time to assist their child in school (McDermott & Rotherenberg, 2001).

Recently, researchers have found that teachers often have negative opinions of families living in poverty (Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001). The teachers believe that low-income families do not value education and assume the parents do not have anything to contribute to the education of their children (Bloom, 2001; McDermott & Rotherenberg, 2001). This stigma may lead parents to believe that their economic situation is the reason their child does not perform well in school (Bloom, 2001).

Family Composition

In 1955, over 60% of all households in the United States consisted of a working father, a stay-at-home mother, and two or more school-aged children (Entwisle & Alexander, 1995; Coots, 1998). By 1985, only 7% of American families fit this demographic (Bloom, 2001). Today it is estimated that over one-half of all new marriages will end in divorce (Bloom, 2001) and over 15.3 million children will live with one parent, usually the mother, 90% of the time (Rich, 2002). Many children who live

with single mothers live in severe economic hardship, in part because many fathers fail to provide support to their children (Mulkey, Crain, & Harrington, 1992).

The association between family composition and educational attainment has been the focus of much research in recent years (Rich, 2002). It appears that education is one of the major casualties of being raised by a single parent (Bloom 2001; Rich, 2002).

Generally, single parents have lower educational levels and earn less than two parent families (Entwisle & Alexander, 1995). Thus, schools with a high population of single parents often experience less parental involvement in the school (Entwisle & Alexander, 1995).

These factors play an important role in terms of the interactions between single parents and the educational system and, ultimately, in the educational outcome for children (Downey, 1994; Entwisle & Alexander, 1995). But, they are not the only variables that affect educational outcome. There are other family variables specific to single-parent families that contribute to poor educational attainment for children in these families. These factors include: (a) decreased involvement and support from the non-custodial parent, (b) lack of parental supervision and discipline, (c) the absence of a gender role model (usually male), (d) increased responsibilities of the children (e.g., domestic chores, sibling care), and (e) poor parent/child relationships (Bloom, 2001; Entwisle & Alexander, 1995; Mulkey, Crain, & Harrington, 1992).

Parental Educational Level

Research suggests that one predictor of how well children will succeed in school is the educational attainment of their parents (Epstein, 1995). This holds true across cultures, languages, races, and ethnic groups. According to the *National Center for*

Children in Poverty (2004), 82 % of children whose parents have no high school diploma live in low-income families and 54% of children whose parents have a high school diploma (but no college education) live in poverty. Conversely, only 22 % of children whose parents have some college education live in poverty.

Consequences of African American Parent Alienation

The research on parent participation has drawn attention to the relatively low involvement of African American parents in the education of their children in both special and general education (Winters, 1994; Pena, 2000; Rao, 2000; Thompson, 2003a). The low participation of African American parents, as well as other families from diverse groups, has been attributed to their low awareness of parental rights and a lack of interest or apathy about their children's educational attainment (Rao, 2000; Thompson, 2003a).

School Communication

Often, a weak connection exists among schools, African American families, and communities (Morris, 1999). Too often these relationships are characterized by the failure of the educational system to involve African American families and communities. Because many parents have experienced negative interactions with schools as a student, they may be intimidated by the system (Thompson, 2003b). This may result in a lack of communication between parents and professionals leading to a low participation rate by the African American parents in the education of their children (Thompson, 2003b).

Interaction with Teachers

In 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act* became the law of the land. The Act was designed to close the achievement gap between Caucasian, upper and middle-class

students, poor students, and students from diverse groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Because the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) provides parents, whose children attend underachieving public schools, the right to choose better schools for their children, the need for educators to strengthen relationships with parents is imperative (Trotman, 2001; Thompson, 2003a). This is especially true for African American parents whose children historically have not experienced success in the public school system (Thompson, 2003a).

Other reasons for strengthening interaction between educators and African Americans parents have been cited in the literature. The major focus is on family involvement. The involvement of parents in a child's education positively correlates to the child's educational attainment (Lynn, 1997; Mapp, 1997; Thompson 2003b). Because educators traditionally have equated parent involvement with parental value of education, educators have assumed that low parent involvement reflects a lack of interest in their child's education (Trotman, 2001; Thompson, 2003b). With the low attendance of African American parents at school functions, educators have assumed that they are not concerned with their child's education (Trotman, 2001; Lynn, 1997; Mapp, 1997; Thompson 2003b). However, research indicates that African American parents want to be involved in their child's education (Adelman, 1994). Thus, by proactively communicating with parents, educators increase the likelihood of increasing interaction with the parents (Johnson, 1990).

Interaction with the School

Despite the known advantages of parental involvement, concerns still exist in terms of African American parent participation in school (Pena, 1994). African American parents have experienced personal, cultural, and structural barriers that keep them from actively participating in their children's education (e.g., disabilities, language, and teacher attitudes) (Thompson, 2003a).

Parent involvement has many positive benefits for students, the most important being that it enhances the academic and social achievement of students (Bempechat, 1992). Research suggests that when parents and educators do not develop partnerships, they develop negative attitudes about each other and parents are less likely to participate in school (Epstein, 1996; Thompson, 2003a). Researchers maintain that to address negative attitudes a program involving the continuous training of parents, teachers, and administrators in interaction and communication skills must be established (Nicholson, Evans, Tellier-Robinson, & Aviles, 2001).

School Success of Children

Providing African students with effective public education has proven to be difficult (Epstein, 1996). Many African American parents see their children attending under resourced and overcrowded schools (Brown, 2003). African American parents, more often than Caucasian parents, find their children falling behind in school, dropping out, and being suspended from school (Harrison & Mitylene, 1995). According to *The Progress of Education Reform* (2003), African American students are less likely to graduate from high school, acquire a college or advanced degree, or earn a middle-class living.

Researchers have identified factors that are related to school success (Brown, 2003; Feuerstein, 2000). These factors include: (a) parental involvement, (b) student racial and/or economic background, (c) educational level of parents, (d) access to high-quality preschool instruction, (e) peer influences, (f) teacher expectations, and (g) curricular and instructional quality (Brown,; Lynn, 1997; Mapp, 1997; Thompson, 2003a 2003; Trotman, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

Although the past four decades have seen dramatic changes in the civil rights status of Americans from diverse groups, the public school system appears reluctant to move towards equality (Fields-Smith, 2005). Thus, within education there continues to be a dual system, one for the majority and one for the minority (Brown, 2003; Trotman, 2001; Lynn, 1997; Mapp, 1997; Thompson 2003a). As a result, students from diverse groups experience a high dropout rate, a high rate of suspension, and a high placement rate in special education programs for students with mental retardation and emotional disabilities (Calabrese, 1990).

Current research suggests that involving parents in their children's education will enhance school success (McDermott & Rotherenberg, 2001). As a result, educators and educational policy makers have begun to focus on the inclusion of all family members in the educational process (Epstein, 1996). However, research concerning parental involvement tends to focus on Caucasians and middle-class families (Trotman, 2001; Lynn, 1997; Mapp, 1997; Thompson 2003a). The research focusing on African

American parental involvement tends to be sparse and, when it exists, negative. (Fields-Smith, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to extend present research by: (a) analyzing the alienation experienced by African American parents of children with and without disabilities, and (b) examining the relationship of African American parents to the educational system in order to determine the degree of alienation, if any, the parents feel toward public education. Data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from *The Barriers to School Involvement Survey* (Reglin, Sandran, Losike-Sedimo, & Ketterer, 2003).

Research Questions

Specially, the following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1: Is there a difference between work, personal concerns, teachers/parents relationships, lack of interest or logistical problems in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 2: What role does general education or special education play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 3: What role does family economics play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 4: What role does the family composition play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 5: What role does the educational level of the parents play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 6: What role does employment status play in the alienation of African American parent's from their children's education?

Significance of the Study

Research investigating the factors associated with the alienation of African American parents and their school involvement is important for several reasons. This study will contribute to the educational knowledge base concerning: (a) the factors through which schools contribute to the alienation of African American parents from their children's education, (b) the factors that African American parents contribute to their alienation from their children's education, (c) the level of alienation experienced by African American parents of students with disabilities, (d) the level of alienation experienced by African American parents of students without disabilities, (e) the role that economics plays in the alienation of African American parents, (f) the role that parent educational level plays in the alienation of African American parents, and (g) the role that family composition plays in the alienation of African American parents.

Because the current literature is sparse concerning the school involvement of African American parents, research must continue in this area in order to identify the steps to be taken to foster the successful inclusion of the parents into their child's education (Fields & Smith, 2005; Harry, 1992a). Educators have an ethical responsibility to identify the factors that prevent these parents from participating fully in their children's education. The consequences of not engaging African American parents are too great to be ignored (e.g., high dropout rates, low student motivation, unemployment) (Mulkey, et al., 1992; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000; 2001). It is only

by identifying the factors that prevent African American parents from participating in the educational process that educators can begin to address the successful education of African American children and youth.

Definitions

Alienation. An alienated person is one who expresses a sense of anguish in terms of unfulfilled expectations concerning a situation (Galbo, 1980).

Economic Factors. The financial situation that prevents parents from participating in their child's education (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2001).

Educational Jargon. Buzz words or acronyms that parents cannot understand in terms of their life experiences (Rao, 2000).

Family composition. Composition of a family unit in terms of family memberships (Mulkey, et al., 1992).

Institutional Barriers. Beliefs and actions taken covertly or overtly by schools that inhibit parental involvement (Rao, 2000).

Lack of Childcare. A lack of access to childcare for their children may prevent parents from participating in school meetings and functions (Mulkey, et al., 1992).

Lack of Time. As a result of working or taken care of family members, parents may not have time to participate school meetings and functions (Mulkey, et al., 1992).

Lack of Transportation. A lack of transportation to and from school may prevent parents from attending school meetings and functions, especially when children attend school outside of their home community (Mulkey, et al., 1992).

Parent Alienation. Parents feel out of place, experience real or perceived discrimination, and have a sense of estrangement when interacting with the educators of their children (Bempechat, 1992).

Parent Educational Attainment. Level of schooling attained by a child's mother and father (Epstein, 1995).

Parent Involvement. A multi-dimensional construct that involves the participation of parents in both school and home activities (Thompson, 1999a).

Parents' Negative Experience in School. As a result of their own educational experience, some parents do not value education or may feel powerless when dealing with educators (Thompson, 1999a).

Personal Barriers. These are the factors that influence parental decisions to participate in school-based activities (e.g., attitudes towards other cultures, prior experiences in school settings, or lack of confidence to communicate) (Epstein, 1996).

Practical Barriers. Issues that prevent the involvement of parents and teachers in developing strong home and school relationships (e.g., dual jobs, single parent, or transportation) (Epstein, 1996).

Limitations

The limitations of the study:

1.) Studies that utilize self-reporting data tend to be limited in nature due to the fact that participants may not be honest in their responses because they may feel compelled to give answers that are socially desirable. This may be compounded in this study because the questionnaire will be distributed and collected in church settings.

2.) This study will examine the alienation of African American parents only.

Alienation may also be a concern for parents from other diverse groups and may differ in its nature.

3.) The sample of parents used in this study will be non-random. Only African American parents at four churches located in a large southwestern city will participate. Results may differ when a randomized sample is used.

Summary

The problem of alienation has been a pervasive theme in the classics of sociology and the concept has continued into modern society (Calabrese, 1987). African American parents often experience alienation from the educational system. The result of this alienation has the greatest impact on the education of children (Johnson, 1990).

Current school involvement efforts concerning the solicitation of the involvement of African American parents in the education of their children are positive steps towards building parent-school relationships (Thompson, 2003b). However, research indicates that the number of African American parents participating in their children's education is on the decline (Thompson, 2003b). Thus, more research is needed to assist schools and educators to understand the feelings of alienation from the educational process experienced by these parents. From this awareness and understanding, school systems can develop policies and programs that better meet the needs of African American parents and increase their engagement in the educational process.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITURATURE

The role that parents play in their child's educational development is not a new concept. Parental involvement has many positive benefits for a child, including enhancement of academic and social success (Pena, 2000). In addition to being beneficial for a child's educational success, parental involvement also benefits teachers and the parents (Trotman, 2001). Researchers have found that when parents actively take part in their child's school environment positive family-school-community relationships develop (Feuerstein, 2000). This research supports the need to successfully include parents into the educational environment (Thompson, 2000a).

Despite the many known advantages to parent involvement, research indicates that weak connections exist between African American parents and the educational system (Thompson, 2003b). When it comes to participating in the educational environment, many African American parents encounter personal, cultural, and structural barriers that cause them to be alienated (Trotman, 2001).

Parental Alienation from Educational Environments

The importance of parental involvement in the educational process has been documented by many researchers, school professionals, and policymakers. The research suggests that parent participation in their child's education results in an increase in

student academic achievement and positive parental attitudes towards school (Davis, Brown, Bant, and Manno, 2001; Epstein. 1996). The research also indicates that when parents are involved there is an increase in student attendance, a decrease discipline problems, and an increase in ambitions expressed by students (Davis, Brown, Bant, and Manno, 2001; Epstein. 1996).

To evaluate parental involvement in school, Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1992) conducted a study in which they examined parents' sense of efficacy and its relationship to parental involvement. Three-hundred and ninety parents of children in kindergarten through fourth grade in a large metropolitan public school district responded to a questionnaire assessing parent efficacy and involvement in five activities. The activities were: (a) help with homework, (b) educational activities, (c) classroom volunteering, (d) conference participation, and (e) telephone calls with teachers. From the same schools, 50 teachers responded to questionnaires assessing teacher efficacy, perception of parent efficacy, and estimates of parent involvement.

The Parent Questionnaires contained demographic information, a set of questions for estimates of participation in specific activities and questions to assess respondent perceptions of parent or teacher efficacy. The Parent Questionnaire contained Likert-scale response items that asked participants to give specific information about themselves (e.g., employment status, education, family income, marital status, age, and gender) as well as estimates of their level of involvement in their child's school environment. The items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Possible scores for The Parent Questionnaire ranged from 12 to 60.

The Teacher Questionnaire asked for specific information from the teachers (e.g., grade taught, enrollment, percentage of students qualifying for free lunch, years at present school, highest degree earned, age, and gender). Participating teachers were asked to estimate the number of students in their classes whose parents participated in scheduled conferences, volunteered at school, assisted with homework, participated in other school activities (e.g., reading, playing games), and telephone conferences. All items were scored on a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Possible scores for The Teacher Questionnaire ranged from 7 to 35.

Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (1992) found that there was a correlation among parent efficacy and three indicators of parent involvement. High levels of efficacy were related to parents spending more time in their child's classroom volunteering, more hours spent in classroom activities, and fewer telephone conferences with their child's teacher. Parent efficacy did not show a correlation with parent gender, marital status, employment, or family income. However, parent education did show a correlation in efficacy scores. The study indicated that the higher the educational attainment of the parent, the higher their efficacy scores. Teacher efficacy and perception of parent efficacy were positively related to the teacher reports of parent involvement in homework, school activities, volunteering, and conference participation. Teacher efficacy also showed a positive link to teacher perception of parent efficacy.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992) concluded that parental efficacy is related to volunteering, educational activities, and telephone conferences. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992) also maintained that there was a positive relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher reports of parental involvement. Higher efficacy teachers reported a higher level

of parental participation in helping with homework, volunteering, participating in educational activities, and conferences which may suggest that these teachers are open to parental involvement. It may also suggest that teachers who perceive and report higher levels of parental involvement develop a higher sense of personal efficacy.

In a study designed to assess parental satisfaction with their child's school, Erickson, Rodriguez, Hoff, and Garcia (1996) conducted a study with Caucasian parents and parents from diverse ethnic groups. The researchers hypothesized that parents from diverse ethnic groups would report less satisfaction with schools and more alienation from schools. Parents of 169 children in elementary school (10 African Americans, 50 Hispanic Americans, 59 Southeast Asians, 8 other Asians, 35 Caucasians, and 11 who indicated an ethnicity of other) volunteered to complete a questionnaire that focused on their satisfaction with their child's school and teacher as well as their perceived alienation from the school.

A modified version of the Dean Alienation Survey (Dean, 1961) was developed for this study. The twenty question, modified survey was designed to measure parental alienation from school and was based on a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). The questionnaires were developed to accommodate the primary language spoken by each parent (e.g., English, Spanish, and Hmong). The overall satisfaction of the parents with their child's school and teacher was ascertained through parent interviews. Parents were asked to indicate the amount of input they felt parents should give to the school on a four-point scale, ranging from none to teaching the child is the school's job. Demographic information also was collected.

Means and standard deviations for all variables were calculated. A series of one-way analyses of variance were calculated to determine if parents from diverse ethnic groups felt significantly differently than did the Caucasian parents concerning overall school satisfaction, alienation from school, satisfaction with their child's teacher, the extent to which they felt their child's teacher was understanding of their needs, and the amount of input they felt parents should give to school. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between the parents from diverse groups and Caucasian parents in terms of overall school satisfaction, alienation, or satisfaction with their child's teacher. However, Caucasian parents reported feeling that their child's teacher was significantly more understanding of their needs as a parent than did the parents from diverse ethnic groups. Caucasian parents also reported feeling that parents should give schools significantly more input about how to teach their child than did parents from diverse ethnic groups.

Erickson et al. (1996) concluded that Caucasian parents are not anymore satisfied with their child's school or teachers than parents from diverse groups. However, parents from diverse groups reported experiencing more alienation from school. Parents from diverse ethnic groups also perceived their child's teachers as not understanding their needs as parents and felt that parents should not provide input concerning teaching their children.

Sheldon (2002) conducted a study to ascertain the role that parents play in their child's school. Survey data were collected from 195 mothers of elementary school children. The survey was sent home with the students and the mothers were asked to complete the survey and mail it back to school. Sheldon (2002) only asked mothers to

complete the survey because he maintained that mothers tend to be more involved in their child's education. Using a five-point Likert scale, the mothers indicated whether they (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree with statements dealing with their child's education. The survey also included questions concerning demographics, parental beliefs, parental social networks, and parent involvement in their child's education.

Mothers from two elementary schools participated in the study, one school was located in an urban setting and the other was in an adjacent suburb. The enrollment at the urban school was 324 students of which 55% of the students received free or reduced lunch, and the suburban school enrollment was 295 students of which 19% received free or reduced lunch. Of the mothers who completed the survey 70% were Caucasian, 10% Asian American, 7% African American, 4% were Hispanic, and 9% identified themselves as other ethnic groups.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the variables that may predict parental involvement at home and school. Four regression models were tested. Model A tested the association between demographic variables and school involvement at home and showed that ethnically diverse mothers and Caucasian mothers from the suburban school reported higher levels of parental involvement at home than ethnically diverse mothers from the urban school. Analyses also indicated that ethnically diverse mothers from both urban and suburban schools reported significantly less school involvement than did Caucasian mothers. Model B tested social network variables to identify social ties to parental involvement at home and school. The data indicated that ethnically diverse and Caucasian mothers had social networks that were associated with parental involvement at home. Mothers with more ties to other adults reported higher

levels of parental involvement at home. This also was true for school involvement. Further analysis indicated that ethnically diverse and Caucasian mothers from both schools reported higher levels of school involvement when they had the opportunity to interact with mothers whose children attended the same school as their own children. Model C tested parent beliefs related to parental involvement. Model D examined the degree to which parent networks predict parental involvement at home and school after accounting for beliefs and background. The data indicated that ethnically diverse and Caucasian parents from urban and suburban schools who developed social networks with other parents were more likely to be involved in their child's education at home and school.

Sheldon (2002) concluded that when ethnically diverse parents from urban schools don't talk about school or their child's education with other parents they may be at a disadvantage in terms of their ability to help their children in school. She maintained that by developing social networks to learn about school policies and procedures parents empower themselves. She suggests that it does not take a large or extensive network to promote and encourage parent involvement in their child's schooling. However, this network is the key to school involvement.

Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) conducted a study that examined the factors influencing parental involvement in their child's school. This study identified three sets of factors related to parental involvement: (a) parent and child (b) family context, and (c) teacher behavior and attitude.

Participants in this study were 209 mothers (81% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 4% other diverse groups) of third through fifth grade students

from four urban public schools. The children and their 28 teachers also participated in the study. Demographic information was collected from each family (e. g., educational attainment of the mother, family makeup).

Interviews with the mothers were conducted in the home, at the university, or in school. All interviews were conducted in the spring to ensure that mothers had time to become involved in their child's school and so that teachers had enough time to get to know the children and their mothers. The questionnaires for the children were administered in a group in their classroom. The teachers completed a questionnaire focused on their attitude toward parental involvement and their practices to encourage parent involvement.

Analyses were conducted to ascertain if assessments of the same types of involvement by different raters could be combined. The teachers and students rated the school involvement of the mothers. The three indices were combined to form one measure of school involvement. Parent and child ratings of cognitive involvement and of personal involvement were moderately related and these ratings were combined. To examine the relations between predictor variables and the three parent involvement indices the Hierarchical Linear Modeling (Raudenbush, 1992) was used.

The Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was used to analyze the relations between predictor variables (e. g., parent attitude, child difficulty, difficult context, social support, and teacher attitudes) and the three parent involvement indices (e. g., school, cognitive, and personal). The HLM was conducted in two steps. The first step assessed relations between each predictor and each involvement outcome, controlling for parent economic level. Parent attitudes were associated with all three types of involvements

(e. g., school, cognitive, and personal). Next, HLM was used to examine the effects of the predictor variables as well as the hypothesized interactions among child gender and family makeup and the predictors as well as the hypothesized interactions between predictor variables and teacher attitudes.

The results indicated that there were three significant interactions for cognitive involvement, all involving teacher attitudes. In each of the cases, the effects of teacher attitudes were moderated by other variables (e. g., parental beliefs, social network, and parent involvement behavior). For family makeup, teacher attitudes were positively associated for two-parent families, but not for single-parent families.

Grolnick et al. (1997) concluded that multiple factors are necessary to explain parent involvement in the educational environment of their child. These factors also varied for different types of involvement. Grolnick et al. maintained that the findings indicated teachers must develop interventions to assure that all parents have the opportunity to be involved in their child's school.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) examined the multidimensional representations of parental school involvement and the impact of that involvement on the school performance of children. They also evaluated a model in which children's motivational resources were examined as mediators between parental involvement and the children's success in school. They assessed parental involvement through teacher and student measures. Three hundred students ages eleven to fourteen, and 18 teachers from four schools in a predominantly middle class Caucasian school district participated.

Parent involvement was assessed by teacher and student report measures. Questionnaires were used to assess student motivational resources (e. g., perceived

competence, control understanding, and self-regulation). School competence was indicated by student grades and teacher ratings of competence. The parent involvement indices were used to assess each of three aspects of parental involvement: (a) behavior, (b) personal, and (c) intellectual/cognitive. Parent behavior was assessed by teachers completing a questionnaire focusing on mothers and fathers that included four questions about parent-school interaction (e.g. attendance at conferences, open house, school activities, and school events). Each item was rated by the teacher on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (regularly). Parents were assessed by the children who completed a 40-item questionnaire designed to assess their perceptions of their parents on three dimensions: (a) involvement, (b) support, and (c) structure. To assess parental involvement in intellectual/cognitive activities, Grolnick and Slowiaczek developed two checklists that asked the children to designate how often their mother and father engaged in activities at home (e. g., reading the newspaper, talking about current events). The children also completed a 90-item intellectual and cultural orientation subscale to assess the extent of family involvement in intellectual and cultural activities (e. g., lectures, music, and art).

In order to ascertain the levels and variances of the items designed to assess parental involvement, means, standard deviations, and ranges of the parent involvement items from the various measures were examined. For parent behavior, both the parents and teachers rated the parents, especially mothers, as relatively involved. Parents were rated as highest in attending parent-teacher conferences, lower in attending open house, and lowest at attending school events. The means for the children is rating of their parents indicated personal involvement was on the high end.

A series of pairwise *t*-tests indicated that mothers were more likely to be involved in school than fathers. There were correlations between mother and father involvement, indicating that children with involved mothers also tended to have involved fathers.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Parent involvement in their child's educational environment is influenced by the cultural and linguistic diversity that exists between the family and school (Hill & Craft, 2003; Morris, 1999). A parent's culture affects their perception of their child's schooling as well as whether teachers and schools are willing to respect their culture and language (Epstein, 1995; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Research suggests that ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse parents are less likely to be involved in their child's schooling (Epstein, 1996).

Calabrese (1990) conducted a study to examine the degree of separation or alienation, if any, parents felt towards the schools attended by their children. One hundred and thirteen parents of children enrolled in the fourth or fifth grades participated in the study. Parents included 92 females and 21 males (91 of the parents were Caucasian and 22 were ethnically diverse parents). Ninety-four parents were married and nineteen were single parents. Of the 91 Caucasian parents, 63 were employed. Of the 22 ethnically diverse parents, 12 were employed. The urban district, in which the participating schools were located, was under a court-approved desegregation plan. Ethnically diverse children were bussed to schools within the district to achieve racial balance.

The parents were administered a revised version of the Dean Alienation Scale (Dean, 1961). The questionnaire consisted of 24 statements to which the parents responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Total Alienation Score was compiled from the sub-scores of social isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness responses.

The means and standard deviations of total alienation, isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness were analyzed. The results indicated that ethnically diverse parents were more alienated from the schools than Caucasian parents. The ethnically diverse parents had a higher sense of total alienation, social isolation, and normlessness than did Caucasian parents. There were no significant differences in powerlessness between ethnically diverse parents and Caucasian parents. Unemployed diverse parents had higher levels of normlessness and powerlessness than those who were employed. Unemployed ethnically diverse parents scored higher than Caucasian parents in terms of total alienation, isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness. There were no significant differences by gender or marital status.

Calabrese (1990) concluded that a high sense of alienation among ethnically diverse parents may be an explanation for ethnically diverse students not achieving educational success. He maintained that this high sense alienation among ethnically diverse parents should not be attributed to environmental causes, but should be examined in light of a school's culture and the perception of ethnically diverse parents by that culture.

Research investigating the role of ethnicity and family income on parenting, academic socialization, and school readiness was examined by Hill (2001). One hundred

and three kindergarten children (54 African American and 49 Caucasian), their mothers, and their teachers participated in the study. During the second half of kindergarten, the mothers were interviewed in their homes. Seventeen kindergarten teachers from the school evaluated the involvement of the mothers in the school. Demographic information was collected from each of the families.

Mothers and teachers completed a *Parent/Teacher Involvement Questionnaire* that focused on parent involvement. The mothers responded using a five-point Likert scale with ranges from 0 (never) to 5 (more than once a week). Teachers responded to similar questions about the mothers using the same response format. The questionnaire assessed three areas: (a) parenting practice, (b) school readiness of children, and (c) family income.

The school readiness of the children was assessed using two subscales of the *Metropolitan Readiness Test Level 2* (Nurss & McGauvran, 1995). The *Sound Letter Correspondence Subscale* was used to assess prereading skills and the *Quantitative Concepts Subscale* was used to assess premath skills. Parenting, as it relates to affective relationships and disciplinary strategies, was measured using the *Children's Report of Parenting Behavior Inventory* (Schaefer, 1965). Letters introducing the study were mailed to the parents of kindergarten students requesting permission to contact the family. Those who agreed to be contacted were called and screened for eligibility on the basis of ethnicity and economic status. Four teams of interviewers conducted all interviews that lasted 90-minutes. Interviewers and families were matched by ethnic group and by gender.

To determine the relationship among ethnicity, family income, and the child's school readiness, two regression equations were calculated with ethnicity, family income, and the interaction of ethnicity and family income as predictor variables. Quantitative concepts and sound-letter correspondence were also predictor variables. For the analysis predicting sound letter correspondence, the coefficient for ethnicity and family income was not significant.

To determine the relation among parenting practices, school readiness, and the role of family income, three regression equations were calculated. One for each variable (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, quantitative concepts), and two with parenting variables as the predictor variables (e.g., acceptance, hostile control, inconsistent discipline, enforcement, withdrawal of relations). To test the relationship between parental expectations and school readiness, two regression equations were calculated, one with quantitative concepts as the predictor variable and one with sound-letter correspondence as the predictor variable.

The relation among the *Parent Teacher Involvement Scale* (Kohl et al., 2000), school readiness, and the role of ethnicity was tested by three sets of hierarchical regression equations. The first set had prereading and premath as the predictor variables, and the *Parent School Involvement Scale* (e.g., school involvement, home involvement, and value of education) as the predictor variable. The second set had prereading and premath as predictor variables, and the *Parent Contact Scale* (e.g., mother-initiated contact and teacher-initiated-contact) as predictor variables. The third set had prereading and premath as predictor variables, and the *Nature of Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale* (e.g., quality of parent teacher relationship, parent endorsement) as the predictor

variables. In each set of hierarchical regression equations, the interactions of ethnicity with each predictor variable and family income with each predictor were included to ascertain the role of ethnicity and family income for each relationship.

The results indicated that maternal acceptance and hostile socialization strategies were related to school readiness. Family income moderated the relationship of acceptance, hostile control, and inconsistent discipline with prereading and premath. Involvement in the home and school and the teachers' perceptions of how much parents valued education were related to premath performance. Ethnicity moderated these relationships in that involvement at home and valuing education were related to premath performance for Caucasians, but not for African Americans. The data indicated that parent-teacher contact was unrelated to children's school readiness.

Hill (2001) concluded that parental impact on early school success is multidimensional. Maternal warmth or acceptance was positively related to prereading and premath. For parental school involvement, the extent to which teachers believed parents valued education and the quality of the parent-teacher relationship were positively related to prereading. Hill (2001) maintained that parents who foster positive or high quality relationships with teachers are likely to maintain consistency between the home and school environment.

Parents who speak languages other than English often encounter barriers that may keep them from participating in their child's education. Pena (2000) conducted a qualitative study of Mexican American parental involvement in their child's education. Pena conducted a case study of one elementary school with a large concentration of Mexican American families. He studied the concept of parent involvement within the

school context, but parents were free to define parent involvement using their own terms and by their own actions.

Brief meetings were held with the four participating teachers to provide information concerning the study. The introductory letter inviting parents to participate in the study was distributed in four classrooms during the fourth week of school. Forty-three of 75 letters were returned with 30 parents agreeing to participate in the study. Interviews with the parents were conducted. The participating parents included 12 parents with children in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Demographic information was collected on each of the participating families. The open-ended interviews focused on involvement, communication, site-communication. Other data for this study were collected through direct observation of the parent-teacher organization, the playground committee, parent conferences, open-house meetings, and open-ended interviews with the parents.

According to Pena (2000), the language that dominated the parent meetings was English. Many of the parents reported that their attendance was unnecessary at meetings that were conducted in English because they could not understand what was being discussed. Another factor found to influence Mexican American parent involvement was the educational level of the parent. A limited educational level of the parents often affected school participation in subtle ways because parents did not voice their concerns. The parents that reported no formal education in the United States or in Mexico believed that they could not help their children in school because of their limited education. The parents did not express these concerns to the teachers.

Pena (2000) concluded that parents are able to identify the factors that they believe influence their involvement in their child's education. He suggests that teachers must build positive relationships with parents and that teachers need time to plan and organize parent activities. He also found that even though administrators want parent involvement they usually do not provide training or time for teachers to create activities for parents.

African American Parents

The lack of participation by African American parents in their child's education has been found to be detrimental to the educational outcomes of African American children (Feuerstein, 2000). Poor communication between school professionals and parents has been cited as a major reason why African American students are not receiving necessary services in school (Feuerstein, 2000 Larearu, 1987; Lynn, 1997). Research continues to show the overrepresentation of African American children labeled as having mental retardation and emotional disabilities and the underrepresentation of children labeled as gifted and talented (Rao, 2000). Many researchers have suggested that involving African American parents in their children's educational environment can be the solution to this situation (Feuerstein, 2000 Larearu, 1987; Lynn, 1997).

Thompson (2003a) examined variables that may predict how African Americans parents rate the teachers of their children and the public school system. African American parents of school-aged students in 11 southern California school districts participated in the study. One hundred and twenty-nine African American parents participated in the quantitative phase and 23 of these were interviewed for the qualitative

phase. Eighty percent of the parents and guardians who participated in the study were women. The average participant had two school-aged children.

The questionnaire completed by the parents consisted of 39, Likert-type questions and open-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of demographic information, questions pertaining to their child's school experiences, and how parents perceived school personnel, suspension, and expulsion. The questionnaire also included questions concerning parent attitudes about college, literacy issues, academic problems, and specific ways in which the parents and guardians assisted their children academically.

Correlations and stepwise multiple regressions were conducted. The results indicated that 69% of the African American parents of the elementary students gave their child's teachers an excellent or good rating, while 14 % gave the teachers a low rating. Sixty-six percent of the parents of middle school students rated their child's teacher as excellent and 11% rated them as poor. And, 49% of the African American parents who had children in high school rated their child's teachers as excellent while 20% gave the high school teachers a low rating. Sixty percent of the participating African American parents rated the public school system as excellent.

Thompson (2003a) concluded that six variables: (a) the school district climate, (b) math problems, (c) suspension, (d) writing problems, (e) reading comprehension problems, and (f) reading rate problems have an impact on African American parent satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their child's educational environment. African American parents were more satisfied with the elementary school and became less satisfied as their children progressed through the school system.

In another study conducted by Thompson (2003b), six of the most frequently cited problems that concerned African American parents of children attending urban schools were examined. One hundred and twenty-nine African American parents completed a questionnaire consisting of 39, Likert-style questions and opened-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of items pertaining to demographic information, experience with school, racism at school, parent perception of school personnel, suspension and expulsion, attitudes about college, and ways in which parents can assist their children academically.

The study was designed to provide African American parents the opportunity to describe different aspects of their children's educational experience. Data were analyzed using regression analyses. The results indicated that six problems concerned African American parents about their child's education. More than half of the parents cited racism as a major problem in their child's school district. Nearly 40% of the parents were concerned that their children were having a difficult time with mathematics. Thirty percent of the parents stated that their child had been suspended from school at least once. Thirty percent of the parents also stated that their child experienced problems with writing. And, twenty percent of the parents indicated that their child had problems with both reading-rate and comprehension.

Thompson (2003b) concluded that identifying specific problems and their predictive variables provides educators with useful information concerning how to increase African American parents' satisfaction with the public school system. Thompson maintained that educators must begin to listen to the perceptions of parents concerning

the racial climate in schools, improvements needed in math and reading skills, and the beliefs held by African American parents concerning discipline policies and practices.

A research study by Reglin, King, Losike-Sedimo, and Ketterer (2003) explored what African Americans parents perceived as barriers to school involvement and their strategies to facilitate school involvement. The sample consisted of 50 families selected from four, low performing elementary schools in an urban school district. The families were randomly selected from the four schools.

Data were collected over a four-month period through home visits. The *Barriers to School Involvement Survey* (Reglin et al., 2003) and the *Strategies to Facilitate School Involvement Interview* (Reglin et al., 2003) were developed. The surveys used a three-point Likert scale. Parents circled either major constraint, minor constraint, or no constraint to indicate the level of a particular barrier. The four items on the school involvement interview solicited parental strategies to facilitate African American parent involvement in their child's school.

The data from the survey were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability and reported using frequencies and percentages. The survey data indicated that 84% of the parents perceived that poor communication between parents and school was the major barrier to school involvement. Eighty percent of the parents identified child care as a barrier to school involvement. Seventy-eight percent of the parents identified a lack of transportation as a barrier to school involvement. Pressure and stress from life situations were identified by 66% of the parents as being a barrier to their involvement in their child's school while 62% stated that finding the time in their daily schedule kept them

away from school. Finally, 62% of the parents identified work demands as a barrier to school involvement.

For the interview items, the parents were asked to share important school involvement strategies. The interview data suggest that parents perceived that child-care assistance, transportation, and more flexibility in the scheduling of parent-teacher meetings would increase attendance at the meetings. These parents also identified as important being a parent volunteer and serving as chaperones on field trips. The parents suggested that if the schools are interested in increasing volunteerism they must be more flexible in the times that volunteers can support the school. Finally, the parents believed that to ensure student academic success parents must take a more active role in their child's education.

Reglin et al. (2003) concluded that, as schools become more ethnically diverse, strategies must be developed to improve the academic and social outcomes of ethnically diverse students. This study suggests the importance of educators understanding parental involvement for all children, especially those from ethnically diverse families.

Economic Factors

African Americans families are overrepresented among economically disadvantaged groups in the United States (National Research Council, 2002). Parents living in poverty generally have few resources to provide an educationally enriched home life for their children. As a result, they are more likely not to participate in their child's educational environment (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2001). Research also indicates that the educational system views these families negatively (Lareau, 1987; Scott-Jones, 1987; Smalley & Reyed-Blanes, 2001).

In a study designed to ascertain the academic and social competences of children as mediators to explain the relationship between parent-school involvement and child achievement, Hill and Craft (2003) examined the ethnic variation between two variables (e. g., academic and social competencies). Sampling was conducted to obtain economically comparable African American and Caucasian kindergarten children and their mothers. Three ethnically diverse elementary schools participated in the study. One hundred and three kindergarten children and their mothers were interviewed in their homes. The sample consisted of 54 African Americans and 49 Caucasians, along with 17 kindergarten teachers. Within each ethnic group, annual family income ranged from less than \$5,000 to above \$90,000.

School achievement of the children was assessed using two subscales of the *Metropolitan Readiness Test Level 2* (Nurss & McGauvran, 1995). *The Sound-Letter Correspondence Scale* was used to assess reading and the *Quantitative Concept Scale* was used to assess math. Mothers and teachers reported on parental school involvement using three subscales of the *Parent Teacher Involvement Questionnaire*. Teachers reported on two aspects of children's academic competence using the *Authority Acceptance Scale of the Teacher Observation Health Profile* and the *Academic Behavior Skills Scale*. Two scales from the *Children's Social Competence Scale* were used to address the children's ability to navigate social situations.

In each analysis, math and reading performance were analyzed separately. The mean differences and the intercorrelations across ethnicity on: (a) parental involvement, (b) academic competence, (c) social competence, and (d) achievement outcomes were examined using a MANOVA. Caucasian parents scored higher than the African

American parents on the *Qualitative Concept Scale*. Caucasian parents also were rated higher by teachers as having higher levels of acceptance authority, academic behavior skills, and perceived value of education. Math achievement, home involvement, and valuing education were significant across ethnic groups. For reading achievement, only the perceived value of education was significantly related to the reading scores for both groups. The relations between parental involvement and reading scores were similar across ethnic groups.

Hill and Craft (2003) concluded that for African American parents involvement may improve the academic success of children. African American parents were less likely to have social networks that include parents of other children in their child's school. However, Caucasian parents had a stronger network that may provide more extensive information about their child's school climate and school activities.

Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) conducted a qualitative study to identify the educational ideas and attitudes held by parents from diverse ethnic groups who lived in poverty. The goal was to ascertain the impact of these ideas and attitudes on their school interaction patterns. The study was conducted in an elementary school located in a community comprised of African Americans, Hispanics, and Pacific Islanders living in poverty. Many of the Hispanic and Pacific Islander families were first generation immigrants to the United States.

To study parent-school interaction across grade levels, parents who had children in second, fourth, and sixth grades were interviewed by phone. Thirty families participated in the interviews. Parents in the study were representative of the family characteristics that were common to the majority of the families at the school (e.g., length

of time in the school district, length of time in the community and country, and affiliation with school-based groups). Demographic information was collected from each of the parents. The series of in-depth interviews with the parents focused on educational background and experiences, ideas concerning the meaning and value of schooling, thoughts about a parent's role in their child's schooling, and the relationship between parents and schools.

Interview transcripts were coded and summarized according to general descriptive categories (e. g., parent attitudes, self-reported behavior, and exploration of interactions and exchanges). Educational attainment of the parents varied from fourth grade to a four-year college degree. The Hispanic parents had an average of six years of schooling. One of the African American parents came from a home in which their mother and father had graduated from college. Many of the Hispanic and Pacific Islander parents reported that their schooling had been cut short because of family obligations. And, many of the parents reported cutting school short due to economic difficulties. The interview transcripts revealed a tendency for parents from all three ethnic groups to compare their own childhood experiences with those of their children. Many of the parents also recalled the role that their own parents played in their education. The parents also reported that they viewed education as a vehicle for financial success.

Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) concluded that there are many variables preventing parents who live in poverty from participating in their child's education. They maintained that in order to involve parents in their child's schooling teachers must stop assuming that parents who live in poverty are too lazy, incompetent, or preoccupied to

participate in their child's schooling. They suggest that the focus of teachers should be on collaborating with parents.

In a similar study, Drummond and Stipek (2004) investigated the beliefs of parents who lived in poverty concerning their role in guiding their child's education and the impact these beliefs had on their school participation. The 234 participants (African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) rated the importance of helping their second and third grade children in: (a) reading, (b) math, (c) homework, and (d) knowing what their child was learning at school.

Parents reported whether they had helped their child in math and reading on a weekly basis and if they had read with their children weekly. They also answered open-ended questions concerning the type of help they needed to become active in their child's school. On questionnaires, teachers rated each student's reading and math skills and noted whether they had given a child's parent suggestions for helping at home with math and reading. Analyses were conducted based on the factors associated with the parent involvement ratings.

A MANOVA was used to compare grades and ethnicity, and indicated a main effect for grades. Parent beliefs did not vary significantly by ethnicity. A paired *t* test was used to compare parent ratings in math and reading. Math and reading were not significantly different for second graders, but as the child's grade level increased there were significant differences. However, grade level was not associated with reported helping behaviors for reading or math. To assess the association between teacher communication and parent beliefs about involvement, an ANOVA was conducted. For reading, results indicated that parents rated the importance of involvement higher when

teachers recommended that they help their child. For math, there were no significant differences when teachers recommended that the parents help their child. There were no significant differences among groups from different ethnic backgrounds. Parents from all three ethnic groups, including parents with limited or no English proficiency, thought involvement in their child's educational environment was important.

Drummond and Stipek (2004) concluded that most parents strongly value involvement in their child's schooling. Parents from all three ethnic groups thought that involvement in their child's educational environment was important.

In a study conducted by Halle, Kutz-Costes, and Mahoney (1997), the achievement-related beliefs and behaviors of African American parents were collected. Relations among parental factors and the academic self-concept and achievement of children also were examined. All of the participants lived in poverty. The goals of this study were to: (a) determine the strength of the association between parental belief about academic achievement and parents' achievement-fostering behavior, (b) assess the relationship between the parental factors and the child's achievement, and (c) determine whether a child's academic self-concept mediates the relationship between parental perceptions of the child's the ability and academic achievement.

Forty-one African American children (22 girls and 19 boys) and their parents were interviewed at home. All children were in third or fourth grade in an inner-city elementary school in which the majority of the students lived in poverty. During the initial interview, demographic information was collected on each family.

The parents were asked to assess their parental beliefs and behaviors regarding academic achievement. The interview focused on three aspects of parent-related

conditions: (a) expectations, (b) developmental beliefs, and (c) perception of ability. The children's self concept was assessed using a scale modeled after Nicholl's (1978) *Scale of Perceived Competence*, a measure that examines a child's self-system beliefs. The interviews were conducted individually for the parents and together for the parents and child.

To determine whether participants responded differently according to ethnicity, analyses of variance were conducted on each of the parental belief and behavior measures and on the child's WRAT-R (Jastak and Wilkinson, 1984) scores. Descriptive analyses of parent belief and behavior measures indicated a large amount of variability for the African American parents. The correlation indicated that most of the parents' education-related beliefs were related to achievement-fostering behaviors in the home. The data indicated few associations between parental behavior and child achievement. Correlations between parent and child perceptions of the child's ability and actual achievement were significantly correlated with the child's achievement.

Halle, Kutz-Costes, and Mahoney (1997) concluded that for African American families living in poverty academic success and parent perception of their children's academic skills were associated with achievement. Parental perceptions of specific abilities were more strongly related to the children's academic score than the children's own beliefs about their academic skills.

Family Composition

Over the last fifty years family composition has changed dramatically (Bloom, 2001 & Coots, 1998). In 1955, over 60% of all households in the United States consisted of a working father, a stay-at-home mother, and two or more school-aged children

(Entwisle & Alexander, 1995; Coots, 1998). By 1985, only 7% of American families fit this demographic (Bloom, 2001). Today it is estimated that over one-half of all new marriages will end in divorce (Bloom, 2001) and over 15.3 million children will live with one parent, usually the mother, 90% of the time (Rich, 2002).

Astone and McLanahn (1991) conducted a study to examine the relationship between family structure and child achievement in high school. The goal was to use data from the High School and Beyond Study (1980) that studied whether differences in achievement are accounted for by differences in parent educational aspirations and parenting style.

Students were randomly selected members of either the sophomore or senior class of 1980. A subsample of respondents was surveyed in 1982, 1984, and 1986. Data were analyzed from the students who were African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic sophomores in 1980.

The first part of the analysis examined if children from single-parent families were more likely to receive encouragement and supervision from their parents than children from two parent families. The data indicated that children in single parent families reported less parental involvement in their schooling and supervision outside the home than did children in two parent families. The second part of the analysis addressed whether differences in school-related parenting style (single versus two parent families) accounted for the difference in child's educational attainment.

Results from the analyses showed that students from a one-parent family had significantly lower grades and test scores than did those from a two-parent home. Results

also indicated that grades and test scores are even lower when ethnicity, economics, and parent educational level are taken into consideration.

Astone and McLahahan (1991) concluded that the differential effects of both mother absence and father absence on the academic success of students are transmitted through variables such as ethnicity, economics, and parent educational level. They also suggested that children from single parent families had lower educational expectations on the part of their parent, less monitoring of school work by mother or father, and less overall supervision of social activities than children from two parent families.

Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington (1992) also analyzed data from the High School and Beyond Study to examine if youth in one-parent households had significantly lower grades and test scores than youth from two-parent households. The data were drawn from the sophomore class of 1980. Data were randomly selected from African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic students.

The variables analyzed focused on father absence or mother absence and the impact of the absence on student test scores and grades. The goal was to identify the mechanisms through which family composition may affect student performance in school. The variable means and standard deviations were calculated for student scores on vocabulary tests and then related to mother absence versus the absence of the father. A regression equation was computed that indicated that the youth from one-parent homes had lower grades because they have less parental supervision and that these youth often exhibited negative behaviors at school.

Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington (1992) concluded that the different effects of both mother absence and father absence on student academic performance are transmitted

through the intervening variables of ethnicity, economic conditions, and behavior. Living in a home in which the father was absent had a significant effect on student grades and test scores, whereas living in a home in which the mother was absent had a small effect on student test scores and grades.

Consequences of African American Parent Alienation

The research on parent participation has drawn attention to the relatively low involvement of African American parents in the education of their children in both special and general education (Winters, 1994; Pena, 2000; Rao, 2000; Thompson, 2003a). The low participation of African American parents, as well as other families from diverse groups, has been attributed to their low awareness of parental rights and a lack of interest or apathy about their children's educational attainment (Rao, 2000; Thompson, 2003a).

Harry, Allen, and McLaughlin (1995) conducted a three-year longitudinal study designed to investigate the school participation of African American parents. The goal of this study was to identify parental expectations of their child's early education, including the role that the home and school played.

The study was conducted in a large urban school district in which 80% of the students and 70% of the school professionals were African American. Interviews and observations were used to determine the views of 42 African American parents of preschoolers and kindergarten students. Eighteen of the students were in general education programs and 24 were in special education programs for students with mild disabilities.

In the first year of the study, the students randomly were identified from participating general education preschool classes. During the second year, the special education group was added. Observation data were collected focusing on professional interaction with the parents. These data were collected through observing parent-teacher conferences. The data also were collected through taped and non-taped interviews with the parents and professionals. Interviews with the parents were conducted at home. The data were analyzed using the constant comparative approach in which incidents, comments, and opinions are coded.

The data indicated that the parents of the special education students believed that the role of the special education classroom was to help their children catch up with their typical peers. The parents were concerned with the placement of their children in classrooms with older students who the parents believed had behavior problems. The parents also were concerned that their children were not being educated with typical peers and the stigma associated with labeling.

The parents identified the deterrents that kept them from participating in their child's school. These were: (a) inflexible scheduling of conferences, (b) limited time for conferences, (c) the emphasis placed on documentation rather than participation, and (d) the use of educational jargon. The parents also were concerned with classroom environment and curricular issues.

Harry, Allen, and McLaughlin (1995) concluded that the absence of meaningful communication between the school and parents was the source of much confusion and distress for the parents. They maintained that teachers show little effort to adapt the

structure of parent participation to encourage African American parent involvement or input.

Reynolds and Gill (1994) conducted a study to investigate the role of parent attitude and behavior on the academic and social success of African American students who live in poverty. The study focused on parent attitudes and behaviors towards their child's school and the influences these attitudes and behaviors had on the child's social success. The participants were 729 African American parents living in poverty. All children attended schools that were eligible for Title I services.

In 1990 and 1992, the parents completed a 61, Likert-item questionnaire dealing with their attitudes and behavior concerning their child's education. The questionnaire consisted of items dealing with their: (a) home environment, (b) attitudes towards education, (c) educational expectations, (d) parent-child interactions, and (e) their views on participating in their child's school. Parent data were collected in two stages. During the first stage, questionnaires were mailed to the parents. In the second stage of the study, the parents were interviewed over the telephone.

Correlational and regression analyses were used to analyze the data. According to the results, the parents stated that they understood the importance of educational success. The parents also indicated that without educational success their children would be unable to find employment. While the parents reported that they provided positive support to their children, only 14% indicated that they participated in their child's school.

Reynolds and Gill (1994) concluded that parents living in poverty who have a limited educational background do understand the importance of educational attainment. These parents also understood the importance of being involved in their child's

education. However, the parents had low to moderate levels of interaction with their child's school.

In a study designed to understand the impact of the relationship between African American parents and school professionals, Colbert (1991) worked with 23 parents (3 couples, 2 men, and 16 women). All had children attending a public elementary school. The participants completed a 52-item questionnaire designed to elicit family demographics and parental attitudes toward their child's education, satisfaction with past and present school experiences, communication of responsibility for child's education, perceptions on inclusion, school involvement, and child-rearing practices.

Transcriptions of the interviews were coded for tabulation of response frequencies. The data were repeatedly compared and contrasted to determine if any connections existed. The results indicated that the parents reported they were unclear about the purpose of school. They also expressed a strong sense of anger and frustration toward school and reported that they conveyed these feelings to their children. The parents reported concerns regarding teacher perceptions and tension in their interactions with school professionals. Although the parents had concerns about their relationships with their child's teacher, they understood the importance of taking part in their child's school.

Colbert (1996) concluded that teachers and administrators must learn new ways to increase positive parent perception of school personnel and of the school environment as a whole. He maintained that educators have a moral responsibility to develop rapport and trust with the parents with whom they interact. School Communication and Interaction

It appears that a weak connection exists among schools, African American

families, and communities in which they live (Morris, 1999). Too often these relationships are characterized by the failure of the educational system to involve African American families and their communities. Because many parents have experienced negative interactions with school as a student, they may be intimidated by the system (Thompson, 2003b). This may result in a lack of communication between parents and professionals resulting in a low participation rate by the African American parents.

Despite the known advantages of parental involvement, concerns still exist in terms of African American parent participation in school (Pena, 1994). Parent involvement has many positive benefits for students, the most important being that it enhances the academic and social achievement of students (Bempechat, 1992). Research suggests that when parents and educators do not develop partnerships, they develop negative attitudes about each other and parents are less likely to participate in school (Epstein, 1996; Thompson, 2003a).

Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) conducted a study in which 200 school district superintendents in 15 states were surveyed concerning their adoption of district parent involvement policies and the programs in place to implement these policies. The survey was developed to generate information regarding the existence of formal parent involvement policies as well as actual practices and programs. The survey consisted of 12, open-ended questions asking the superintendents to list programs and practices implemented to support parental involvement in their district. Surveys were mailed to the district superintendents followed by a phone call two weeks later.

Analysis was conducted to compare means of the sample with the population means. This was followed with a chi-square goodness of fit test to compare the geographic distribution of the sample districts with the population distribution. The results indicated that some districts reported having at least one policy supporting parental involvement in their child's schooling, however, many of the districts reported a lack of policies supporting parent involvement in several critical areas (e.g., communication with parents, school programs, decision making about school policies and practices).

Kessler-Sklar & Baker (2000) concluded that it is important to ascertain district level parent involvement policies, programs, and practices. Research findings allow districts to examine at the parent involvement program they have in place. Kessler-Sklar & Baker maintain that if schools are serious about ensuring parental involvement, it must start at the district level.

A study conducted by Watkins (1997) investigated parental mastery orientation and performance orientation as predictors of parent involvement variables that mediate the effects of teacher communication, child success, parent educational level, and parent ethnicity on parent involvement. The school population consisted of 41% of the students living in poverty, 64% Caucasian, 33% African Americans, and 3% American Indian, Asian American, or Latino/Latina. The parents of 303 children in second through fifth grade in a large urban school district participated in this study. During the third quarter of the school year, surveys were sent home. The parents completed four surveys: (a) the *Parent Mastery Questionnaire Scale*, (b) the *Parent Performance Orientation Scale*, (c) the *Parent Involvement Scale*, and (d) the *Parent-Perceived Amount of Teacher*

Communication. The surveys were used to ascertain how the parents viewed teacher communication, child's academic success, and parental involvement.

To determine the variables that contributed to parent involvement, multiple-regression analysis of parent involvement in teacher communication, child success in school, master orientation, performance orientation, parent efficacy, parent education level, and ethnicity was conducted. The results indicated that parent education level and ethnicity did not have a direct impact on parent involvement in their child's schooling, but they indirectly affected parent involvement through parent efficacy and parent performance orientation. There was a significant direct effect of teacher communications on parent involvement, and an indirect effect through parent mastery orientation.

Watkins (1997) concluded that teacher communication can increase many forms of parent involvement in their child's educational environment. He maintained that when parents see that their children are not performing in school they are interested in intervening, but due to poor communication between teacher and themselves they may tend to shy away from being involved.

Summary

A major focus of educational policies in the United States is closing the gap that exists in educational opportunities for all students (Reglin, 1998). The pervasive thought has been that disparities exist in terms of equal access to quality education depending on ethnicity, language spoken, and economic group. Researchers suggest that parental involvement in the education of their children is one issue that impacts this gap (Calabrese, 1989; Davis, et al., 2004; Harry, 1992; Scott-Jones, 1987). They suggest that

educators must understand the factors that may cause parents to feel alienated from their child's schooling in order to create a bridge between home and school (Thompson, 2003a, 2003b; McDermott & Rotherenberg, 2001). Of particular concern has been the perceived alienation of African American parents from the educational environments in which their children participate (Fields & Smith, 2005; Harry, 1999).

The participation of African American parents has been defined in the literature as: (a) assisting at home at home, (b) volunteering in the classroom, (c) attending conferences, and (d) participating in school activities (Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992; Pena, 2000; Thompson 2003a, 2003b). The findings of inquiries into these categories appear to indicate that parents want to be involved and know that their involvement impacts the educational outcomes for their children. However, parents from different cultural and linguistic groups as well as parents who live in poverty indicate a low involvement in their child's school for a variety of reasons ranging from a lack of parent-teacher communication to not understanding how to be involved (Fan & Chen, 2001; Fantuzzo, et al., 1995).

While the specific reasons for a lack of African American parental involvement remain elusive, the impact of low involvement is multidimensional. The consequences of what is identified as the alienation of African American parents (Blumenkrantz & Tapp, 2001) are high drop out rates, an over identification of African American students as needing special education services, truancy, low student motivation, low graduation rates, and unemployment (Gribbs, et al., 1999; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000, 2001).

If the United States is to close the educational opportunity gap, an action plan must be developed that seeks to understand the complex relationships between parents, teachers, school communities, and cultural/linguistic/economic communities. It is only through a proactive plan that a bridge will be built.

CHAPTER

METHOD

Overview

The importance of parental participation in the education of their children has long been known (Zellma, & Waterman, 1998; Griffith, 1996; Lynn, 1997). Research agrees that parent involvement in the education process is related to academic and behavioral success of students with and without disabilities. (Thompson, 2003a; Smalley & Reyes-Blanea, 2001; Pena, 2000; Epstein, 1996; Coots, 1998). Yet, there continues to be a problem when it comes to soliciting the participation of African American parents in school activities (Thompson, 2003b).

The home and school environments are the primary settings in which children grow and develop. Today the relationship between home and school often is tenuous, particularly when it comes to developing the relationships between African American parents and the school. Research suggests that there are five reasons that African American parents do not participate in the education of their children: (a) a lack of trust in of the educational system, (b) apathy, (c) constraints and stressful life circumstances, (d) problems with schedules, and (e) transportation.

This study investigated the alienation experienced by African American parents as they interact in the education of their children. To investigate the components of the alienation of African American parents, a modified version of the *Barriers to School Involvement Survey* (Reglin, et al., 2003) was used.

Research Questions

This study involved the administration of a questionnaire designed to investigate the factors associated with African American parent alienation from the educational process. The study focused on the following questions:

Research Question 1: Is there a difference between work, personal concerns, teachers/parents relationships, lack of interest, or logistical problems in the alienation of African American parents?

Research Question 2: What role does general education or special education play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 3: What role does family economics play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 4: What role does the family composition play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 5: What role does the educational level of the parents play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Research Question 6: What role does employment status play in the alienation of African American parents?

Participants

The participants in this study (n=421) were African American parents in a large southwestern city. The pastors of four churches (A, B, C, and D) agreed to allow their churches to participate in this study (see Appendix A). The congregation of churches A, B, C and D are predominantly African American. Only parents who had or have had

school-aged children participated in the study. And, only parents who signed an informed consent form participated in the study (see Appendix B). According to the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale, the parent questionnaire was at the 5.9 readability level. Table 1 represents the demographics that were collected from the participants in this study.

Table 1

Parent Demographic Information

Characteristics	A (n=95)	B (n=100)	C (n=112)	D (n=114)
Gender				
Male	31	26	28	30
Female	64	74	84	84
Total	95	100	112	114
Ethnic Background				
Hispanic American	0	0	0	0
American Indian	0	0	0	0
Asian American	0	0	0	0
African American	95	100	112	114
European American	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	95	100	112	114
Marital Status				
Married	47	41	60	58
Widowed	4	4	5	5
Divorced	14	27	27	25
Separated	3	10	10	4
Never Married, living with partner	4	5	2	3

Table continues

Never Married	23	13	8	19
Total	95	100	112	114

Employment Status

Employed	63	65	67	91
full time				
Employed	8	7	4	4
part-time				
Unemployed,	6	6	12	5
but looking				
Not employed	18	22	29	14
(stay-at-home parent, retired, etc.)				
Total	95	100	112	114

Educational Background

Formal Schooling,	11	10	5	2
no high school				
diploma, or				
GED				
High school	45	25	14	22
graduate				
(diploma or GED)				
Some college,	19	33	46	41
or post high school,				
but no degree				

Table continues

Associate degree/	17	17	28	38
Bachelor's degree (AA, AS, BA, BS, etc.)				
Graduate degree	3	15	18	11
Total	95	100	112	114
<hr/>				
Family Income				
< \$19,999	15	14	17	11
\$20,000-\$39,999	43	38	38	35
\$40,000-\$69,999	10	33	39	38
\$70,000-over	10	15	18	30
Total	78	100	112	114
<hr/>				
Number People in the Household				
Mean	3.4	3	3.1	3.42
Number of Children in the Household				
Mean	2	1.3	1.5	1.8
Number of Children Receiving Special Education Services				
Mean	24	7	37	30
<hr/>				

Parents

Four hundred and twenty-one parents participated in this study. Parent participation was solicited by the pastors of four churches located in a large southwestern city. The four churches were contacted by telephone and meetings were held with the

pastors to discuss the involvement of their church in the study. Pastors who agreed to participate in this study signed a consent form (see Appendix A) to allow their church to be used for data collection.

All parents who participated in the study signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B). Once parents signed a consent form, they were given a packet that consisted of a demographic information sheet (see Appendix C) and a questionnaire (see Appendix D).

Data Collectors

There were four data collectors on site at the churches to assist parents with completing the questionnaire and the demographic sheet. The data collectors were African American women who were active in the four churches. They were trained in the data collection techniques that were used in the study.

Setting

The churches selected for inclusion of this study were located in a large, southwestern city in the United States. They typically are attended by African American families comprised of a wide range of educational and economic levels. Consent of each church pastor was obtained prior to the study (see Appendix A). The churches were selected due to the vast differences among African Americans that attend each church (e.g., economic levels, education, and vocation). Data were collected on Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons at a table located in a classroom in each church. Churches A, B, C, and D all had a predominantly African American congregation. The churches were located in low-income areas of the city. Church A had a membership of

900, Church B had a membership of 528, Church C had a membership of 850, and Church D had a membership of 800. The church members travel from various locations within the city to attend these churches.

Instrumentation

Permission was obtained to use a modified form of the *Barriers to School Involvement Survey* (Reglin, et al., 2003) in this study (see Appendix E). The questionnaire was used to identify the factors involved in the alienation of African American parents. The questionnaire was comprised of a five-point Likert scale that focused on causes of parent alienation from the educational process. The 30 questions asked the parents to rate their responses from no problem (1), not a problem (2), sometimes a problem (3), often a problem (4), to always a problem (5).

Each church received a color-coded questionnaire. The color coding of the questionnaire was to facilitate keeping track of the questionnaires and data entry. Church A questionnaires were yellow, Church B questionnaires were pink, Church C questionnaires were blue, and Church D questionnaires were orange.

Materials

The *Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* is designed to identify factors involved in the alienation of African American parents from the educational process. In addition to the questionnaire, a demographic survey was used to collect data that might also be involved in parent alienation (e.g., economics, family composition).

Training

The four data collectors in this study were trained to assist parents as they completed the demographic information sheet (see Appendix C) and the *Barriers to School Involvement* questionnaire (see Appendix D). Each data collector received a script to read to the parents so that all data were collected in a systemic manner. Data collectors were trained to identify the correct color code for each church. This was followed by learning the information on the demographic sheet as well as the questionnaire. The last portion of the training consisted of the data collectors rehearsing the script.

Design and procedures

This study was conducted over a period of five weeks and consisted of three phases. The phases consisted of meeting with pastors, training of data collectors, and the data collection.

Phase One

During phase one, meetings were arranged with the pastors of the participating churches. Times and locations were arranged to administer the questionnaire to church members. Data were collected at each church every Sunday and Wednesday for five consecutive weeks. The pastors also completed the consent form to allow the study to take place in their churches.

Phase Two

In phase two, the data collectors were trained in a one-hour session held at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Data collectors were trained to identify the correct color code for each church (e.g., Church A/ yellow, Church B/ pink, Church C/ blue, and Church D/ orange). The data collectors practiced reading the information on the script so they knew exactly what to tell perspective participants. Each item on the *Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* was discussed so that the data collectors understood each item.

Phase Three

Informed consent forms were obtained from parents at the churches (see Appendix B). Only parents who signed consent forms received the packet containing the parent demographic sheet (see Appendix C) and the *Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* (see Appendix D). Parents were required to sign a sheet that they had received the questionnaire. The sign-in sheets and the questionnaires were not correlated. Parents were asked to sign in simply to make sure that they did not fill out more than one questionnaire. With assistance, as needed from the data collectors, parents completed the questionnaires and demographic sheet. Packets were collected from the parents and sealed in an envelope marked with the name of the church and date. Data were collected for five consecutive weeks on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings.

Data Collection

Interscorer reliability on the scoring of the *Modified Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* was determined by $[\text{agreement}/(\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement})]$

x 100 = percent of agreement. Twenty-five percent of all questionnaires were checked to ensure reliability. The data collected from the questionnaire and demographic information was entered into a SPSS statistical file for analysis.

Treatment of the Data

Research Question 1: Is there a difference among work, personal concerns, teachers/parent relationships, lack of interest, and logistical problems in the alienation of African American parents from their child's education?

Analysis: In order to ascertain the alienation differences among work, personal concerns, teacher/parent relationships, lack of interest, logistical problems, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. An alpha level of .05 was set.

Research Question 2: What role does general education or special education placement play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Analysis: In order to ascertain the role general or special education placement plays in the alienation of African American parents five Independent *t*-tests were conducted. An alpha level of .05 was set.

Research Question 3: What role does family economics play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Analysis: In order to ascertain the role family economics plays in the alienation of African American parents a 4X5 (economics by problem) mixed model factorial ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem category was conducted with a follow

up one-way repeated measures ANOVA at each problem category. An alpha level of .05 was set.

Research Question 4: What role does the family composition play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Analysis: In order to ascertain the role family composition plays in the alienation of African American parents, a 6X5 (family composition by problem) mixed model factorial ANOVA was conducted. An alpha level of .05 was set.

Research Question 5: What role does the educational level of the parents play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

Analysis: In order to ascertain the role parent educational level plays in the alienation of African American parents a 5X5 (parent grade level by problem) mixed model factorial ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem category with a follow up one-way repeated measures ANOVA at each problem category. An alpha level of .05 was set.

Research Question 6: What role does employment status play in the alienation of African American parents from their child's education?

Analysis: In order to ascertain the role parent employment status plays in the alienation of African American parents a 4X5 (employment status by problem) mixed model ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem category with a follow up one-way repeated measures ANOVA at each problem category. An alpha level of .05 was set.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the alienation experienced by African American parents from the education of their children. To investigate this alienation, a modified version of the *Barriers to School Involvement* (Reglin, et al, 2003) was created. According to the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale, the parent questionnaire was at the 5.9 readability level. The questionnaire was administered to 421 African American parents in a large Southwestern city. The parents also completed a demographic survey. The data were collected at four churches attended by predominately African Americans from a wide range of educational, vocational, and economic levels. Only parents with a child currently or previously enrolled in school participated in the study. Data were collected over a five-week period (Sundays and Wednesdays). Data were collected by four trained data collectors who also were active in the four churches. The data collectors were on site to assist the parents in completing the questionnaire and demographic survey. Data were analyzed using quantitative analysis.

Interscore Reliability

Twenty-five percent of all the questionnaires were check to ensure interscorer reliability. Trainer A rescored 25% of the modified *Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaires*. Interscorer reliability was determined by $[\text{agreement} / (\text{agreement} + \text{disagreements})] \times 100 = \text{percent of agreement}$. See Table 2.

Table 2

Interscorer Reliability for the Modified Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire

Source	Trainer A	Percent of Agreement
<i>Modified Barriers to School Involvement</i>	103/105*	95.2%

Note. *agreement / agreement + disagreement

Modified Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire

The *Modified Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* is a 30-item, five-point Likert scale that measures the factors involved in the school alienation of African American parents. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed to answer the following six questions:

Research Question 1: Is there a difference among work, personal concerns, teachers/parent relationships, lack of interest, and logistical problems in the alienation of African American parents from their child's education?

It was predicted that the five identified problems (e. g., personal concerns, work, lack of interest, logistics, teacher/parent relationships) would contribute significantly to the alienation of African American parents from their child's education.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using a one-way repeated measures ANOVA to ascertain if there were significant differences among the five problem means. The alpha level was set at .05 for this analysis. The results of the repeated measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences among the five means for the problem areas [$F = 52.73, p < .0001$] (see Table 3).

A pairwise comparison was conducted as a follow up test. The results indicate that there were significant differences among all the means ($p < .0001$) except between work and lack of interest (see Table 4). The mean scores indicate that the parents identified as the most significant problems affecting their interactions with their child's school as logistics and personal concerns. The means for teacher/parent relationships was significantly lower than other means indicating that parents saw this as least of the problems affecting their school participation. However, all means for the five problem areas clustered in the *not a problem* and *rarely a problem* categories on the Likert Scale of the questionnaire. So, while significant differences were found among the means, the differences do not indicate that parents found any of the problem categories to be a major impediment to their participation in their child's schooling.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories

Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns (n=421)	2.2	.88
Work (n=421)	1.8	.72
Lack of Interest (n=421)	1.8	.84
Logistics (n=421)	2.1	.92
Teacher/Parent Relationships (n=421)	1.7	.59

Table 4

Pairwise Comparisons

Problem Category	Problem Category	Mean Differences	<i>p</i>
Work	Personal Concerns	.203	<.0001*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.187	<.0001*
	Lack of Interest	-.134	<.0001*
	Logistics	.284	<.0001*
	Personal Concerns	Teacher/Parent Relationships	-.016
Personal Concerns	Lack of Interest	-.337	<.0001*
	Logistics	.081	<.0002*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	Lack of Interest	-.320
Teacher/Parent Relationships	Logistics	.097	.0031*
	Lack of Interest	Logistics	.418

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research Question 2: What role does general education or special education placement play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

It was predicted that special education parents would report more alienation than parents whose children were in general education.

Independent *t*-test were conducted to compare the means responses for parents whose children are in general education verses special education for the five problem areas (e.g., personal concerns, work, lack of interest, logistics, and teacher/parent relationships). The alpha level of .05 was adjusted using Bonferroni technique ($.05/5 = .01$) for this analysis (see Table 5). The results of the five independent *t*-tests indicated no significant differences in the alienation attitudes between parents of students in general education verses parents of students in special education for the five areas (see Table 6).

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Children in Special Education

Problem Category	Children in Special Education	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	None (n=337)	2.0	.89
	One or More (n=83)	2.0	.81
Work	None (n=337)	1.8	.77
	One or More (n=83)	1.7	.58
Lack of Interest	None (n=337)	1.8	.87
	One or More (n=83)	1.7	.73
Logistics	None (n= 337)	2.1	.93
	One or More (n=8)	2.1	.84
Parent/Teacher Relationships	None (n=337)	1.7	.59
	One or More (8)	1.7	.56

Research Question 3: What role does family economics play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

It was predicted that economic conditions would contribute significantly to the alienation of African American parents from their child's education, with parents reporting less income expressing stronger concerns in the five problem areas than parents with higher yearly incomes.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using a 4X5 (income level by problem category) mixed model factorial ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem

category to ascertain if there were significant differences among the five problem category means in relation to parent economic status. The alpha level was set at .05 for this analysis. The results of the mixed model factorial ANOVA indicate a significant income level by problem category interaction [$F = 2.624, p = .0016$] (see Table 7).

Table 6

Independent Samples t-Tests for Problem Category

Problem Category	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Personal Concerns	-.603	.5466
Work	.791	.4304
Lack of Interest	1.180	.2400
Logistics	.498	.6189
Teacher/Parent Relationships	-.392	.6955

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Simple main effects analysis was conducted as a follow up to the significant interaction. This analysis was conducted in two parts. Part 1 analyzed income level differences at each problem category. Significant differences were found between income level for the “work” problem category [$F = 5.366, p = .0012$] (see Table 8).

Tukey’s multiple comparisons test was conducted to determine where the significant differences among income levels occurred (see Table 9). The multiple comparisons test indicated that there were significant differences between the two lowest income levels (less than \$19,999 and greater than \$20,000-\$39,999) and the highest income level (greater than \$70,000) (see Table 9).

Part 2 of the simple main effects analysis examined problem category means at each income level. Means and standard deviations for income level one (<\$19,999) are found in Table 10. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA at income level one indicated a significant difference between problem areas [$F= 9.707, p = <.0001$].

A pairwise comparison test was conducted to determine the nature of the differences among the five problem categories in income level one (see Table 11). The pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences between personal concerns and work ($p = .0248$), between personal concerns and lack of interest ($p = .0002$) and between personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0001$). No significant difference was found between personal concerns and logistics ($p = .4177$). Significant differences also were found between work and lack of interest ($p = .0183$). No significant differences were found between work and logistics ($p = .0572$) or between work or teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0992$). Significant differences were found between lack of interest and logistics ($p = .0001$), however, no significant difference was found between lack of interest and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .2254$). And, finally, a significant difference was found between logistics and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0001$).

While these means are significant, the means for parents in income level one again were clustered in *not a problem* to *rarely a problem*. The highest mean for income level one was for the personal concern category (2.2) followed by the logistics category (2.1).

A second one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on income level two (\$20,000-\$39,999). The income level two analysis indicated a significant difference

among problem categories [$F= 16.2, p = <.0001$]. The means and standard deviations for income level two are in Table 12.

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to determine the nature of the differences among the five problem categories in income level two (see Table 13). The pairwise comparisons test indicted significant differences between personal concerns and work ($p = .0212$), between personal concerns and logistics ($p = .0009$), and between personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p = <.0001$). No significant difference was found between personal concerns and lack of interest ($p = .0538$). Significant differences also were found between work and logistics ($p = .0001$) as well as work and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0011$). No significant difference was found between work and lack of interest ($p = .9389$). A significant difference was found between lack of interest and logistics ($p = <.0001$), while no significant difference was found between lack of interest and parent/teacher relationships ($p = .0563$). And, finally, a significant difference was found between logistics and teacher/parent relationships ($p = <.0001$). As was the case with income level one, the means were clustered in *not a problem to rarely a problem* category. However, the means were clustered in the *not a problem to rarely a problem* category. The highest mean for income level two was for the logistics category (2.2) followed by the personal concerns category (2.0).

A third one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on income level three (\$40,000-\$69,999). The income level three analysis indicated significant differences among the five problem categories [$F= 14.59, p = <.0001$]. See Table 14 for the means and standard deviations for income level three.

Pairwise comparisons was conducted to determine the difference among the five problem categories at income level three (see Table 15). The pairwise comparisons test indicated significant differences between personal concerns and work, between personal concerns and lack of interest ($p = .0373$), between personal concerns, and logistics ($p = .0016$) and between personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p = <.0001$). Significance differences were also found between work and logistics ($p = .0001$) as well as between work and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0043$). No significant differences were found between work and lack of interest ($p = .6603$). Finally, a significant difference was found between lack of interest and logistics ($p = <.0001$) while no difference was found between lack of interest and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .1280$). Once again the means clustered in the *not a problem* to *rarely a problem*. The highest mean for income level three was for the logistics category (2.0).

A fourth one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on income level four (over \$70,000). Means and standard deviations are found in Table 16. The results indicated a significant difference among problem categories [$F = 22.29, p = <.0001$].

A pairwise comparisons test was conducted to determine the nature of the differences among the five problem categories in income level four (see Table 17). The pairwise comparisons test indicated significant differences between personal concerns and work ($p = <.0001$), between personal concerns and logistics ($p = .0051$), and between personal concerns and teachers/parent relationships ($p = <.0001$). There was no significant difference between personal concerns and lack of interest ($p = .1777$). Significant differences also were found between work and lack of interest ($p = .0004$) and between work and logistics ($p = <.0001$). However, no significant difference was found

between work and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0662$). Significant differences were found between lack of interest and logistics ($p = .0045$) as well as between lack of interest and teacher parent/relationships ($p = .0040$). And, finally, a significant difference was found between logistics and teacher parent/relationships ($p = .0001$). The means for income level four clustered in the *not a problem* to *rarely a problem* category, with the highest mean being in the logistics category (2.1).

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories and Income levels

Problem Categories	Income Level	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	<\$19,999	2.1	1.04
	\$20,000-\$39,999	2.0	.91
	\$40,000-\$69,999	1.9	.82
	\$70,000 and over	1.9	.76
Work	<\$19,999	1.9	.86
	\$20,000-\$39,999	1.9	.73
	\$40,000-\$69,999	1.7	.73
	\$70,000 and over	1.6	.47

Table continues

Lack of Interest	<\$19,999	1.7	.81
	\$20,000-\$39,999	1.9	.91
	\$40,000-\$69,999	1.7	.85
	\$70,000 and over	1.8	.74
Logistics	<\$19,999	2.1	.99
	\$20,000-\$39,999	2.2	.97
	\$40,000-\$69,999	2.0	.91
	\$70,000 and over	2.1	.76
Teacher/Parent	<\$19,999	1.8	.74
Relationships	\$20,000-\$39,999	1.8	.61
	\$40,000-\$69,999	1.6	.57
	\$70,000 and over	1.6	.43

Table 8

Summary of Simple Main Effect ANOVAs for Income Level at each Problem Category

Problem Category	F	p
Personal Concerns	1.870	.1340
Work	5.366	.0012*
Lack of Interest	1.588	.1918
Logistics	1.401	.2420
Teacher/Parent	2.417	.0659
Relationships		

Note. *Significant at $p < .05$ level.

Table 9

Multiple Comparisons of Income Levels

Problem Category	Income	Income	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Work	<\$19,999	\$20,000-39,999	.0193	.9982
		\$40,000-\$69,999	.1414	.5974
		\$70,000 and over	.3468	.0251*
	\$20,000-\$39,999	\$40,000-\$69,999	.1707	.2262
		\$70,000 and over	3.661	.0009*
	\$40,000-\$69,999	\$70,000 and over	.2054	.1498

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Income Level One (<\$19,999)

Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	2.2	1.04
Work	1.9	.86
Lack of Interest	1.7	.81
Logistics	2.1	.99
Parent/Teacher Relationships	1.8	.74

Table 11

Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Categories at Income Level One

Problem Category	Problem Category	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Personal Concerns	Work	.275	.0248*
	Lack of Interest	.503	.0002*
	Logistics	.068	.4177
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.406	.0001*
Work	Lack of Interest	.228	.0183*
	Logistics	-.207	.0572
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.131	.0992
	Lack of Interest		
Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.435	.0001*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	-.097	.2254
	Lack of Interest		
Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.339	.0001*

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories at Income Level Two

Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	2.0	.91
Work	1.9	.73
Lack of Interest	1.9	.91
Logistics	2.2	.97
Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.8	.74

Table 13

Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Category at Income Level Two

Problem Category	Problem	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Personal Concerns	Work	.139	.0212*
	Lack of Interest	.144	.0538
	Logistics	-.189	.0009*
	Parent/Teacher Relationships	.262	<.0001*

Table continues

Work	Lack of Interest	.005	.9389
	Logistics	-.328	.0001*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.124	.0011*
Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.333	<.0001*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.118	.0563
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.451	<.0001

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 14

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories at Income Level Three

Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	1.9	.82
Work	1.7	.73
Lack of Interest	1.7	.85
Logistics	2.0	.91
Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.6	.57

Table 15

Pairwise Comparisons of Problem Categories at Income Level Three

Problem	Problem	Mean	<i>p</i>
Category		Difference	
Personal Concerns	Work	.125	.0149*
	Lack of Interest	.150	.0373*
	Logistics	-.156	.0016*
	Parent/Teacher Relationships	.234	<.0001*
Work	Lack of Interest	.025	.6603
	Logistics	-.271	<.0001*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.109	.0043*
Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.296	<.0001*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.084	.1280

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Categories at Income Level Four

Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	1.9	.76
Work	1.5	.46
Lack of Interest	1.8	.74
Logistics	2.1	.76
Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.6	.43

Table 17

Pairwise Comparisons for Problem Categories at Income Level Four

Problem Category	Problem	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Personal Concerns	Work	.389	<.0001*
	Lack of Interest	.119	.1777
	Logistics	-.148	.0051*
	Parent/Teacher Relationships	.325	<.0001*

Table continues

Work	Lack of Interest	-.270	.0004*
	Logistics	-.537	<.0001*
	Teacher/Parent	-.064	.0662
	Relationships		
Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.267	<.0045*
	Teacher/Parent	.206	.0040*
	Relationships		
Logistics	Teacher/Parent	.473	<.0001*
	Relationships		

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research Question 4: What role does the family composition play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

It was predicted that the family composition (e. g., married; never married, but living with partner; divorced; widowed; separated; never married) would contribute significantly to the alienation of African American parents from their child's education. It was predicted that single parents would experience more alienation than two-parent families.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using a 6X5 (family composition by problem) mixed model factorial ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem category to ascertain if there were significant differences among the five problem category means in relation to family composition. An alpha level of .05 was set for this analysis. The means and standard deviations are in Table 18.

The results of the mixed model ANOVA indicated significant difference among the problem categories [$F=30.48, p = <.0001$], but not for the interaction between the categories and marital status [$F = 1.85, p = .1012$] or family composition [$F = 1.85, p = .1012$]. This indicates that there is a difference across the problem categories, however, marital status did not impact the opinions provided by the parents. Once again, the problem means clustered in the *not a problem* to *rarely a problem* categories.

Table 18

Means and Standard Deviation for Family Composition at each Problem Category

Problem Category	Marital Status	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	Married	1.9	.78
	Never Married, Living with Partner	1.9	.64
	Divorced	2.0	1.0
	Widowed	2.1	1.11
	Separated	2.5	.84
	Never Married	2.0	.92

Table continues

Work	Married	1.7	.64
	Never Married,	1.9	.65
	Living with Partner		
	Divorced	1.8	.76
	Widowed	1.8	.89
	Separated	2.2	.91
	Never Married	1.9	.73
Lack of Interest	Married	1.8	.83
	Never Married,	1.9	.86
	Living with Partner		
	Divorced	1.8	.87
	Widowed	1.8	.92
	Separated	1.9	.89
	Never Married	1.8	.81
Logistics	Married	2.0	.82
	Never Married,	2.1	.86
	Living with Partner		
	Divorced	2.2	1.00
	Widowed	2.2	1.10
	Separated	2.8	1.02
	Never Married	2.1	.95

Table continues

Teacher/Parent	Married	1.7	.55
Relationships	Never Married,	1.9	.55
	Living with Partner		
	Divorced	1.7	.57
	Widowed	1.7	.83
	Separated	2.1	.75
	Never Married	1.7	.55

Research Question 5: What role does the educational level of the parents play in the alienation of African American parents from their children's education?

It was predicted that various parent educational level (formal schooling, no GED or high school diploma; high school graduate; some college or post high school, but no degree; associate/bachelor degree; graduate degree) would have different impacts on the alienation of African American parents from their child's education. It was predicted that the less education held by a parent, the higher the level of alienation experienced by the parent.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using a 5X5 (parent education level by problem) mixed model factorial ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem category to ascertain if there were significant differences among the five problem category means in relations to parent education level. The alpha level was set at .05 for this analysis. The means and standard deviations for parent educational levels by problem category are in Table 19.

The results of the mixed model ANOVA revealed a significant problem categories by educational level interaction ($F=3.682, p<.0001$). See Table 20 for means and standard deviations for educational level at problem category. Simple main effects analysis was conducted as a follow up to the significant interaction. This analysis was conducted in two parts. Part 1 analyzed educational levels at each problem category. One-way ANOVAs with Bonferroni alpha level corrections ($.05/5 = .01$) indicated that there significant differences among personal concerns [$F= 5.187, p = .0004$], logistics [$F = 4.196, p = .0024$], and teacher/parent relationships [$F = 2.860, p = .0233$]. there were no significant difference for the lack of interest category [$F = 2.460, p = .0449$], or the work category [$F = 2.093, p = .0810$].

A Tukey HDS multiple comparisons post hoc test was conducted to determine where the differences occurred among the problem categories at parent educational level (see Table 21). In the personal concerns category the multiple comparisons revealed differences between high school graduates and parents with some college ($p = .0002$), and between high school graduates and parents with Associate degrees or Bachelor degrees ($p = .0009$). In the lack of interest category there was a mean difference between high school graduates and parents with some college ($p = .0290$). In the logistics category there were mean differences between high school graduates and parents with some college ($p = .0034$) as well as between high school graduates and parents who held Associate degrees and Bachelor degrees ($p = .0245$).

Part 2 of the simple main effects analysis looked at differences in problem categories at each educational level. One-way ANOVAs with repeated measures with the Bonferroni alpha level correction ($.05/5 = .01$) were conducted (see Table 22 for the

means and standard deviations for problem categories at educational levels). There was not a significant difference between problem categories at the formal schooling, no GED level [$F = 1.928, p = .1215$]. There was a significant difference between problem categories and among those subjects with high school diplomas [$F = 6.83, p = .0001$]. Pairwise comparisons revealed the differences to be between personal concerns and logistics ($p = .0057$), personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0474$), work and lack of interest ($p = .0044$), work and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0001$), lack of interest and logistics ($p = .0006$), and logistics and teacher/parent relationships ($p < .0001$).

There was significant difference between problem categories among those subjects with some college [$F = 30.307, p < .0001$]. Pairwise comparisons revealed the differences to be between personal concerns and work ($p < .0001$), personal concerns and lack of interest ($p = .0111$), personal concerns and logistics ($p = .0017$), personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p < .0001$), work and lack of interest ($p = .0404$), lack of interest and logistics ($p < .0001$), lack of interest and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0029$), and logistics and teacher/parent relationships ($p < .0001$).

There was a significant difference between problem categories among those subjects with Graduate degrees [$F = 11.03, p < .0001$]. Pairwise comparisons revealed the differences to be between personal concerns and work ($p < .0001$), personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0001$), work and lack of interest ($p = .0129$), work and logistics ($p < .0001$), lack of interest and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0058$), and logistic and teacher/parent relationships ($p < .0001$). See Table 23 for a complete list of results from pairwise comparisons test.

While significant differences were found between the five problem categories at various educational levels the means once again clustered in the *not a problem to rarely a problem* categories. This indicates that educational levels most probably do not impact the alienation of these parents

Table 19

Means and Standard Deviation for Educational Level and Problem Categories

Problem	Educational	Mean	Standard
Category	Level		Deviation
Personal Concerns	Formal	1.8	.78
	Schooling,		
	No GED		
	High School	1.7	.79
	Diploma		
	Some College	2.1	.86
	Associate/Bachelor	2.2	.87
Work	Graduate Degree	1.9	.88
	Formal	1.9	.79
	Schooling,		
	No GED		
	High School	1.8	.77
Diploma			
Some College	1.8	.68	

Table continues

	Associate/Bachelor	1.8	.68
	Graduate Degree	1.5	.69
Lack of Interest	Formal	1.7	.73
	Schooling, No GED		
	High School	1.6	.90
	Diploma		
	Some College	1.9	.79
	Associate/Bachelor	1.9	.88
	Graduate Degree	1.8	.80
Logistics	Formal	2.0	1.04
	Schooling, No GED		
	High School	1.9	.93
	Diploma		
	Some College	2.3	.88
	Associate/Bachelor	2.2	.86
	Graduate Degree	1.9	.89
Teacher/Parent	Formal	1.8	.781
Relationships	Schooling, No GED		
	High School	1.58	.64
	Diploma		

Table continues

Some College	1.75	1.00
Associate/Bachelor	1.77	1.11
Graduate Degree	1.52	.59

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviation for Educational Level at each Problem Category

Problem	Educational	Mean	Standard
Category	Level		Deviation
Personal Concerns	Formal	1.8	.79
	Schooling,		
	No GED		
	High School	1.7	.79
	Diploma		
	Some College	2.1	.87
	Associate/Bachelor	2.2	.93
Work	Graduate Degree	1.9	.87
	Formal	1.9	.79
	Schooling,		
	No GED		
	High School	1.8	.77
	Diploma		
	Some College	1.8	.69

Table continues

	Associate/Bachelor	1.8	.68
	Graduate Degree	1.5	.69
Lack of Interest	Formal	1.7	.73
	Schooling, No GED		
	High School	1.6	.91
	Diploma		
	Some College	1.9	.79
	Associate/Bachelor	1.9	.88
	Graduate Degree	1.8	.80
Logistics	Formal	2.1	1.04
	Schooling, No GED		
	High School	1.9	.93
	Diploma		
	Some College	2.3	.88
	Associate/Bachelor	2.2	.86
	Graduate Degree	1.9	.89

Table continues

Teacher/Parent Relationships	Formal Schooling, No GED	1.8	.66
	High School Diploma	1.6	.63
	Some College	1.8	.54
	Associate/Bachelor	1.8	.56
	Graduate Degree	1.5	.61

Table 21

Multiple Comparisons for Parent Educational Level at problem category

Problem Category	Educational Level	Educational Level	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Personal Concerns	Formal schooling, No GED or Diploma	High School Diploma	.1490	.9257
		Some College	-.2626	.5803
		Associate/Bachelor	-.3218	.4018
		Graduate Degree	-.0629	.9999
	High School Diploma	Some College	-.4111	.0022*
		Associate/Bachelor	-.4708	.0009*
		Graduate Degree	-.1758	.7657
Some College		Associate/Bachelor	-.0579	.9841
		Graduate Degree	.2353	.4647
	Associate/Bachelor	Formal Schooling	.3218	.4018
		No GED or Diploma		
		High School Diploma	.4708	.0009*
		Some College	.0597	.9841
		Graduate Degree	.2950	.2878

Table continues

Lack of	Formal schooling,	High School Diploma	.1190	.9634
Interest	No GED or Diploma	Some College	-.1994	.7816
		Associate/Bachelor	-.1521	.9153
		Graduate Degree	-.0357	.9998
	High School	Some College	-.3184	.0290*
	Diploma	Associate/Bachelor	-.2711	.1415
		Graduate Degree	-.1548	.8278
	Some College	Associate/Bachelor	.0473	.9928
		Graduate Degree	.1637	.7716
	Associate/Bachelor	Formal Schooling	.1521	.9153
		No GED or Diploma		
		High School Diploma	.2177	.1415
		Some College	-.0473	.9928
		Graduate Degree	.1163	.9333
Logistics	formal school, No GED or Diploma	High School Diploma	.1917	.8555
		Some College	-.2264	.7442
		Associate/Bachelor	-.1842	.8746
		Graduate Degree	.1116	.9829

Table continues

	High School	Some College	-.4181	.0034*
	Diploma	Associate/Bachelor	-.3757	.0245*
		Graduate Degree	-.0756	.9890
	Some College	Associate/Bachelor	.0424	.9964
		Graduate Degree	.3425	.1571
	Associate/Bachelor	Formal Schooling	.1841	.8746
		No GED or Diploma		
		High School	.3757	.0245*
		Diploma		
		Some College	-.0424	.9964
		Graduate Degree	.3011	.3195
Teacher	formal school,	High School Diploma	.2127	.4259
Parent	no GED	Some College	.0472	.9950
Relationship	or Diploma	Associate/Bachelor	.0285	.994
		Graduate Degree	.2703	.2933
	High School	Some College	-.1655	.1838
	Diploma	Associate/Bachelor	-.1842	.1522
		Graduate Degree	.0576	.9798
	Some College	Associate/Bachelor	-.0187	.9992
		Graduate Degree	.2230	.1520

Table continue

Associate/Bachelor	Formal Schooling	-.0285	.9994
	No GED or Diploma		
	High School Diploma	.1842	.1582
	Some College	.0147	.9992
	Graduate Degree	.2147	.1273

Table 22

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Category at Educational Levels

Educational Level	Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Formal Schooling, No GED or High School Diploma	Personal Concerns Work Lack of Interest Logistics Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.8 1.9 1.7 2.1 1.8	.79 .79 .73 1.04 .66
High School Graduate	Personal Concerns Work Lack of Interest Logistics Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.7 1.8 1.6 1.9 1.6	.79 .77 .91 .93 .63

Table continues

Some College	Personal	2.1	.86
	Concerns		
	Work	1.8	.69
	Lack of Interest	1.9	.79
	Logistics	2.3	.88
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.8	.54
Associate/ Bachelor Degree	Personal	2.2	.93
	Concerns		
	Work	1.8	.68
	Lack of Interest	1.9	.88
	Logistics	2.3	.86
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.8	.56
Graduate Degree	Personal	1.9	.87
	Concerns		
	Work	1.5	.69
	Lack of Interest	1.8	.80
	Logistics	1.9	.89
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.5	.61

Table 23

Pairwise Comparisons for Parent Category at each Educational Level

Educational Level	Problem Category	Problem Category	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Formal Schooling, no GED, or High School Diploma	Personal Concerns	Work	-.095	.4987
		Lack of Interest	.134	.3588
		Logistics	-.205	.0984
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.048	.5441
	Work	Lack of Interest	.229	.1531
		Logistics	-.111	.4413
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.143	.1559
		Lack of Interest	-.339	.0617
	Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.086	.5145
		Teacher/Parent Relationships		
		Logistics	.254	.0612
		Teacher/Parent Relationships		

Table continues

High School	Personal Concerns	Work	-.105	.0968
Graduate		Lack of Interest	.104	.2339
		Logistics	-.163	.0057*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.112	.0474*
	Work	Lack of Interest	.209	.0044*
		Logistics	-.058	.3713
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.217	.0001*
	Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.267	.0006*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.008	.9100
	Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.257	.0000*
Some College	Personal Concerns	Work	.357	.0000*
		Lack of Interest	.197	.0111*
		Logistics	-.170	.0017*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.358	.0000*

Table continues

	Work	Lack of Interest	.128	.0406*
		Logistics	.495	.0000*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.033	.3363
	Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.336	.0000*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.161	.0029*
	Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.527	.0000*
Associate/ Bachelor Degree	Personal Concerns	Work	.362	.0000*
		Lack of Interest	.304	.0009*
		Logistics	-.068	.2381
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.399	.0000*
	Work	Lack of Interest	-.058	.4044
		Logistics	-.430	.0000*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.037	.3600

Table continues

	Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.371	.0001*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.905	.1845
	Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.466	.0000*
Graduate Degree	Personal Concerns	Work	.360	.0000*
		Lack of Interest	.125	.2067
		Logistics	-.063	.3356
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.345	.0001*
	Work	Lack of Interest	-.235	.0129*
		Logistics	-.423	.0000*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	-.015	.7282
	Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.188	.1052
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.220	.0058*
	Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.408	.0000*

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research Question 6: What role does employment status play in the alienation of African American parents from their child's education?

It was predicted that parent employment status would contribute significantly to the alienation of African American parents from their child's education. It was predicted that parents with full-time employment would identify fewer problem areas than parents who were unemployed or employed part-time.

Questionnaire data were analyzed using a 4X5 (employment status by problem level category) mixed model factorial ANOVA with repeated measures on the problem category. The alpha level was set at .05 for this analysis. The means and standard deviations for problem categories by employment status are in Table 24.

The results of the mixed model ANOVA revealed a significant problem categories by employment status interaction $F = 2.803, p = .0008$. Simple main effects analysis was conducted as a follow up to the significant interaction (see Table 25). This analysis was conducted in two parts. Part 1 analyzed employment status differences at each problem category. One-way ANOVAs with Bonferroni alpha level correction ($.05/5 = .01$).

Significant between group differences were found lack of interest $F = 8.39, p = .0001$, logistics $F = 4.804, p = .0026$, and teacher/parent relationships $F = 4.12, p = .0067$. No significant differences were found for personal concerns $F = 2.583, p = .0529$, or work $F = 1.673, p = .1722$.

Tukey HSD multiple comparisons post hoc tests were conducted to determine the nature of the differences among employment categories. In the lack of interest category the multiple comparisons test revealed mean differences between parents employed full-

time and parents who were not employed ($p < .001$). In the logistics category, there was a significant difference between parents employed full-time and parents who were not employed ($p = .0118$). Finally, in the teacher/parent relationships category there was a significant difference between parents employed full-time and parents who were not employed ($p = .0041$) (see Table 26).

Part 2 of the simple main effects analysis looked at differences in problem categories at each employment level. One-way ANOVAs with repeated measures with the Bonferroni alpha level correction ($.05/4 = .0125$) were conducted (see table 27 for the means and standard deviations for problem categories at employment levels). The results indicated a significant difference among problem categories for employed full-time $F = 38.130, p < .0001$, employed part-time $F = 6.873, p = .0001$, not employed $F = 14.58, p < .0001$. No significant difference was found between problem categories in the unemployed but looking category $F = 2.464, p = .0793$.

Pairwise comparisons (see Table 28) revealed the differences to be between all pairs of problem categories for parents employed full-time ($p < .05$). For parents employed part-time, there were significant difference between the problem categories of personal concerns and work ($p = .0164$) and personal concerns and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0003$). There were also significant differences between work and logistics ($p = .0024$), lack of interest and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0220$) and logistics and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .0001$).

For employment status of not employed, the pairwise comparison indicated significant differences between all pairs of problem areas ($p < .05$) except personal concerns and work ($p = .4239$) and lack of interest and teacher/parent relationships ($p = .2067$).

The significant difference found in the problem category of lack of interest between parents employed full time and unemployed parents may indicate that employed parents did not experience a lack of interest in their child's school while unemployed parents indicated a higher of lack of interest. It also appears in the problem category of lack of interest that parents who were employed part time experience less of a lack of interest than do unemployed parents. The significant differences found in the problem category of logistics indicates that logistics does not impact the school participation of employed parents when compared to unemployed parents. The significant differences found in the teacher/parent relationships category indicated that full-time employed parent indicated that this problem rarely impacted their school interaction. However, unemployed parents indicated that it did. While these significant differences were found, the means for the five problem categories once again clustered in the *not a problem* to *rarely a problem* range.

Table 24

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Category at Employment Status

Problem	Employment	Mean	Standard
Category	Status		Deviation
Personal Concerns	Employed Full-time	2.0	.89
	Unemployed but Looking	1.7	.66
	Employed Part-time	2.2	.97
	Not Employed	2.0	.81
Work	Employed Full-time	1.8	.72
	Unemployed but Looking	1.8	.56
	Employed Part-time	1.8	.92
	Not Employed	1.6	.66
Lack of Interest	Employed Full-time	1.9	.88
	Unemployed but Looking	1.5	.67
	Employed Part-time	1.9	.89
	Not Employed	1.4	.62

Table continues

Logistics	Employed Full-time	2.2	.93
	Unemployed but Looking	1.7	.64
	Employed Part-time	2.2	.97
	Not Employed	1.9	.86
Teacher/Parent	Employed Full-time	1.8	.60
	Unemployed but Looking	1.6	.53
	Employed Part-time	1.6	.60
	Not Employed	1.5	.50

Table 25

Means and Standard Deviations for Problem Category at Employment Status

Problem Category	Employment Status	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Concerns	Employed Full-time	2.0	.89
	Unemployed but Looking	1.7	.66
	Employed Part-time	2.2	.97
	Not Employed	2.0	.81
Work	Employed Full-time	1.8	.72
	Unemployed but Looking	1.8	.56
	Employed Part-time	1.8	.92
	Not Employed	1.6	.66

Table continues

Lack of Interest	Employed Full-time	1.9	.88
	Unemployed but Looking	1.5	.67
	Employed Part-time	1.9	.89
	Not Employed	1.4	.62
Logistics	Employed Full-time	2.2	.93
	Unemployed but Looking	1.7	.64
	Employed Part-time	2.2	.97
	Not Employed	1.9	.86
Teacher/Parent	Employed Full-time	1.8	.60
Relationships	Unemployed but Looking	1.6	.53
	Employed Part-time	1.6	.60
	Not Employed	1.5	.50

Table 26

Multiple Comparisons for Problem Category at Employment Status

Problem	Employment	Employment	Mean	<i>p</i>	
Category	Status	Status	Difference		
Lack of Interest	Employed	Unemployed	.4059	.1059	
	Fulltime	Employed	-.0251	.9986	
		Part-time			
		Not Employed	.4800	.0000*	
	Unemployed	Employed	-.4310	.2410	
		Part-time			
Not Employed		.0741	.9812		
Employed	Not Employed	.5051	.0249*		
	Part-time				
Logistics	Employed	Unemployed	.5017	.0525	
	Fulltime	Employed	.0300	.9982	
		Part-time			
		Not Employed	.3502	.0118*	
	Unemployed	Employed	-.4716	.2432	
		Part-time			
Not Employed		-.1515	.8934		

Table continues

	Employed	Not Employed	.3201	.3592
	Part-time			
Teacher/Parent	Employed	Unemployed	.1451	.6582
Relationships	Fulltime	Employed		
		Part-time.	1171	.7299
		Not Employed	.2419	.0041*
	Unemployed	Employed	-.0279	.9982
		Part-time		
		Not Employed	.1040	.8739
	Employed	Not Employed	.1319	.7213
	Part-time			

Table 27

Means and Standard Deviations of One-way ANOVAs for Employment Status at each Problem Category

Employment Level	Problem Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employed Full-time	Personal Concerns	2.0	.89
	Work	1.8	.72
	Lack of Interest	1.9	.88
	Logistics	2.2	.93
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.8	.60
	Personal Concerns	1.7	.66
Unemployed, But Looking	Work	1.8	.56
	Lack of Interest	1.5	.67
	Logistics	1.7	.64
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	1.6	.53
	Personal Concerns	1.7	.66
	Work	1.8	.56

Table continues

Employed Part-time	Personal	2.2	.97
	Concerns		
	Work	1.8	.92
	Lack of Interest	1.9	.89
	Logistics	2.2	.97
	Teacher/Parent	1.6	.60
	Relationships		
Not Employed	Personal	1.8	.81
	Concerns		
	Work	1.6	.66
	Lack of Interest	1.4	.62
	Logistics	1.9	.86
	Teacher/Parent	1.5	.50
	Relationships		

Table 28

Pairwise Comparisons for Employment Status at Problem Category

Educational Level	Problem Category	Problem Category	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
Employed Full-time	Personal Concerns	Work	.214	.0000*
		Lack of Interest	.121	.0257*
		Logistics	-.181	.0000*
	Work	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.271	.0000*
		Lack of Interest	-.093	.0354*
		Logistics	-.395	.0000*
	Lack of Interest	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.057	.0228*
		Logistics	.359	.0000*
		Teacher/Parent Relationships	.239	.0003*
	Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.452	.0000*
		Relationships		

Table continues

Employed	Personal Concerns	Work	.359	.0164*
Part-time		Lack of Interest	.239	.0934
		Logistics	-.009	.9391
		Teacher/Parent	.531	.0003*
		Relationships		
	Work	Lack of Interest	.209	.3670
		Logistics	-.058	.0024*
		Teacher/Parent	.217	.1125
		Relationships		
	Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.247	.0897
		Teacher/Parent	.292	.0220*
		Relationships		
	Logistics	Teacher/Parent	.539	.0001*
		Relationships		
Not Employed	Personal Concerns	Work	.200	.0042*
		Lack of Interest	.389	.0000*
		Logistics	-.043	.4239
		Teacher/Parent	.308	.0000*
		Relationships		

Table Continues

Work	Lack of Interest	.189	.0162*
	Logistics	-.243	.0010*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	.108	.0399*
Lack of Interest	Logistics	-.432	.0000*
	Teacher/Parent Relationships	-.081	.2067
	Logistics	.351	.0000*
Logistics	Teacher/Parent Relationships		

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Parents are one of the key components to school success. Research indicates that parental interest and involvement in their child's education can improve the quality of instruction, instill a respect for learning, and inspire students and teachers to excel (Sheldon, 2002, Thompson, 2003a). Involved parents simply make the educational system better. However, in today's world, parents work long hours, have more than one job, and have a variety of responsibilities that may limit their time. The result is that parents often are criticized by educators for their non-participation or limited participation in the school environment.

Studies indicate that children whose parents share in their formal education benefit from this involvement (Bempechat, 1992; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hill & Craft, 2003). Some benefits include: (a) higher grades and test scores, (b) long term academic achievement, (c) positive attitudes and behaviors, (d) successful school programs, and (e) effective schools. The most accurate predictor of a child's success in school is a parent who: (a) expresses high expectations for the child's academic and behavior success, (b) creates a home environment that encourages learning, and (c) is involved in the child's education at home and in the community.

Research indicates that all parents want their children to achieve academically (Thompson, 2003b). And, overall, parents indicate that they want to be involved in the

education of their children (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Sometimes, however, they simply do not know where or how to begin. Often parents are intimidated by the educational system and don't feel that teachers welcome them into that system (Sojourner & Kusher, 1997). Recent research suggests that educators must develop ways to include reluctant parents in their children's education, especially parents from cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds (Hill & Craft, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to: (a) analyze the alienation experienced by African American parents of children with and without disabilities, and (b) examine the relationship of African American parents to the educational system in order to determine the degree of alienation, if any, they felt toward public education. Data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from *The Barriers to School Involvement Survey* (Reglin, King, Losike-Sedimo, & Ketterer, 2003).

Identified Problem Categories

The questions on the Modified *Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire* were factored into five categories for analysis (e.g., personal concerns, work, lack of interest, logistics, and teacher/parent relationships). Question one focused on the differences among the problem categories. It was predicted that the parents would rate these problems as *often a problem to always a problem* on the questionnaire. The data indicated that there were significant differences among all problem means. The parents indicated logistics and personal concerns as the most significant problem affecting their interactions with their child's school.

However, all the means for the problem categories clustered in the *not a problem* to *rarely a problem* categories on the questionnaire. This indicates that for this population of African American parents the problem categories don't appear to impact their interaction with their child's school. This finding is contrary to current research focusing on the alienation of African American and their child's school environment (Blumenkrantz & Tapp, 2001; Calabrese, 1990; Davis, Brown, Bantz, & Manno, 2002). It may be that the parents who participated in this study were intimidated by the data collection in the church environment. Perhaps, the parents felt if they responded negatively to the questions it would be a reflection on their parenting. Thus, parents attempted to present a positive picture of their views concerning the impact of the problem categories on their interaction with their child's school.

Special Education verses General Education

Question two focused on the role general education or special education placement had on parent alienation. It was predicted that that parents of children with disabilities would indicate a higher level of alienation than parents of typical children. The data indicated no significant differences in alienation attitudes between the parents (special education and general education) for the problem categories. However, only 83 of the parents indicated that they had a child in special education, while 337 indicated no children in special education. The breakdown of these numbers appears paradoxical. With the current research and federal reports indicating an overrepresentation of African American students in special education (Epstein, 1996; Field-Smith, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2001), the current study indicates that the placement of a child

in special education does not impact a parent's sense of alienation or involvement in school.

Family Economic

Question three focused on the impact of economic factors on parent involvement in their child's education. It was predicted that parents reporting less income would express stronger concerns in the five problem categories than parents reporting higher yearly incomes. The data were broken down into four economic levels: (a) level one (<\$19,999, n = 57), (b) level two (\$20,000-\$39,999, n = 154), (c) level three (\$40,000-\$69,999, n = 120), and (d) level four (over \$70,000, n = 73).

Parents reporting an income of <\$19,999, indicated that personal concerns and logistics created the most significant problems in their interactions with their child's school. Parents reporting an income between \$20,000 and \$39,999 similarly indicated that personal concerns and logistics impacted their involvement in their child's education. Parents earning between \$40,000 and \$69,999 as well as parents earning over \$70,000 indicated that logistics was a concern. However, while these concerns were significant, the means clustered in *rarely a problem* category on the questionnaire. All of the mean averages for the five rating categories on the questionnaire were at or below the ranking of two (*rarely a problem*). This indicates that for this population of African American parents income level does not have an impact on their school alienation.

This finding is in direct opposition to research in the field. Current literature indicates that economic level is one of the major indicators of parent involvement. The literature indicates that the higher the family income the more likely the parent is to

participate in school activities and conversely the lower the family income the less parental participation (Coots, 1998; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). It may be that in this study parents were reluctant to report their true family income. A large portion of the parents, upon completion of the questionnaire, indicated that they felt the economic question was an invasion of their privacy. It is also interesting to note that many parents who indicated incomes over \$70,000 a year also indicated that they were unemployed but looking or not employed.

Family Composition

Question four focused the role that family composition plays in the involvement of African American parents in their child's educational environment. It was predicted that single parents would report experiencing higher levels of alienation than two parent families. In this study, while there were significant differences across the problem categories, there were no interactions between marital status and the problem categories. This indicates that no matter what the marital status of the parent their opinions did not differ. This finding is important in dispelling the myth of the single African American parent and their lack of involvement in their child's education. This study appears to indicate that single parents are no more alienated than two parent families. In fact, their opinions were very similar across all five problem categories.

Educational Level

Question five focused on the educational level of the parent and their involvement in their child's education. It was predicted that the less education held by the parent, the

higher the level of alienation experienced by the parent. In this study, five educational levels were studied: (a) formal schooling, no high school diploma, or GED (n = 28); (b) high school graduate (diploma or GED) (n = 105); (c) some college or post high school, but no degree (n = 139); (d) Associate degree or Bachelor's degree (n = 101); and, (d) graduate degree (n = 48). The demographic information reported that for this population of participants the majority had a high school education or above.

While the pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences between the problem categories and each educational level, the mean responses for the parents in each problem category, regardless of educational level, once again clustered in the *not a problem* to *rarely a problem* ranking. This indicates that for this population of parents educational level was not an alienation factor. It may be that the participants in this study are atypical in that the majority had a high school education or above. In fact, 288 of the participants indicated their educational level to be in the range of some college to a graduate degree.

Employment Status

Question six focused on the employment status of parents and their alienation from their child's education. It was predicted that parents with full time employment would identify fewer problem areas than parents who were unemployed or employed part time. The four employment levels were: (a) employed full time (n = 287), (b) employed part time (n = 23), (c) unemployed, but looking (n = 29), and (d) not employed (stay-at home parent, retired) (n = 82). Even though interactions existed between the four employment levels and the five problem categories, the mean responses of the parents

indicated that, overall, they ranked the five problem categories as being *not a problem* to *rarely a problem* regardless of employment. This indicates that employed parents and not working parents viewed the five problem categories similarly.

This finding is contrary to the research that indicates not working parents view their child's schooling differently than working parents and are less involved in their children's schooling (Bloom, 2001; Coots, 1998; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). An important difference between the current study and other research is that the parents in the current study were drawn from across economic levels and educational levels, while much of the reported research involved participants who all live in poverty or who report little formal schooling. Thus, this study may provide a more accurate representation of African American parents in the United States.

Summary

The six questions posed in this study were formulated from the review of the literature focusing on the reported alienation experienced by African American parents from their child's education. The research literature indicates that alienation is impacted by five problem categories (personal concerns, work, lack of interest, logistics, and teacher/parent relationships) as well as by economics, parent education, parent employment status, family composition, and student educational placement (general education verses special education). While significance was found, it has little interpretive value in that the means for each problem category indicated that most parents did not believe the problems were a concern impacting their school involvement.

The participants in the current study represent a cross section of the African American community in a large southwestern city. This cross section represents all economic levels, educational levels, employment levels, and family composition. This study may differ from previous research in that previous research does not include a cross section of the community. Previous research has focused on schools in which the majority of the children receive free or reduced lunch.

The current study also acknowledged the limitations of the church environment and the non-randomization of participants. It may be that the church environment inhibited the responses provided as participants may have thought they would be judged by their responses. The non-randomization allowed any parent to complete the questionnaire. The only requirement was that the parent currently had a child in school or in the past had a child in school. Thus, some participants were asked to recall incidents in the past regarding their involvement in their child's education.

In light of the findings from the current study, it appears that more research must be conducted to ascertain the reasons for the low involvement of African American parents in their child's schooling. It may be that research is focusing too much on parent characteristics and should refocus on school characteristics. As educational polices in the United States address it existing educational gap among students, it is important to identify the factors that cause low parental involvement for all groups of parents.

Conclusions

Six conclusions may be drawn from this study. They are based on the quantitative data that were collected.

1. African American parent do not differ in their perceptions concerning the impact of the five problem categories (personal concerns, work, lack of interest, logistics, teacher/parent relationships) on their involvement in their child's schooling.
2. The placement of a child in general education or special education does not impact the involvement of African American parent in their child's education.
3. Family economic status does not play a role in the concerns expressed by African American parents concerning their involvement in their child's educational environment.
4. Family composition does not play role in the concerns expressed by African American parents in relation to their involvement in their child's schooling.
5. Parent educational level does not impact the concerns expressed by African American parents in relation to their involvement in their child's school.
6. Parent employment status does not impact the concerns expressed by African American parents concerning their involvement in their child's education.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations are made for further study.

1. Data concerning the alienation of African American parents from their child's education must be collected in multiple environments (e.g. churches, schools, community centers). These data will provide a larger cross section of parental input.
2. Further research should be conducted that compares parental concerns to teacher and administrator concerns. This will provide information from multiple viewpoints concerning the involvement of African American parents.
3. Further research should focus on school-based factors that might impede the participation of African American parents with the school environment. This will provide a multidimensional perspective of factors within the school that may contribute to low parent involvement.
4. This study should be expanded to include parents from all ethnic groups. This will provide information for educators concerning the involvement of all parents.
5. Further research should be conducted that investigates factors that students believe inhibits the involvement of their parents in school activities.
6. Further research should investigate district policies that may interfere with the involvement of all parents.

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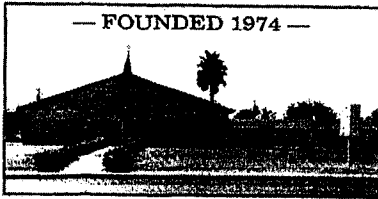
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT
FROM THE CHURCH PASTORS



TRUE LOVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1941 NORTH "H" STREET • LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89106

PASTOR

Reverend Willie Jacobs, Jr.

CHAIRMAN, DEACON BOARD

Ben Winslow

CHAIRMAN, TRUSTEE BOARD

Irid Hooper

CHURCH CLERK

Eva McGough

Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at True Love Missionary Baptist Church

Brenda Durosinmi, MPA, CIP, CIM -Director
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
University of Nevada Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 451037
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1037

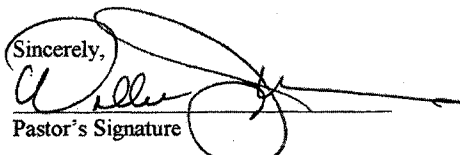
Subject: Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at True Love Missionary Baptist Church

Dear Ms. Durosinmi:

This letter will acknowledge that I have reviewed a request by Regina R. Brandon to conduct a research project entitled, *An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment*, at True Love Missionary Baptist Church.

When the research project has received approval from the UNLV Institutional Review Board, and upon presentation of the approval letter to me by the approved researcher, as Pastor for True Love Missionary Baptist Church, I agree to provide access to the church for the approved research project.

If we have any concerns or need additional information, the project researcher will be contacted or we will contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895 - 2794.

Sincerely,


Pastor's Signature

12-22-05

Date

Willie Jacobs Pastor

Print Representative Name and Title

— (702) 648-3603 —

"A FRIENDLY CHURCH WITH ETERNAL LOVE"

Victory Missionary Baptist Church

Dr. Robert E. Fowler Sr.
Senior Pastor

500 West Monroe Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-648-2286 Fax 702-648-7836

Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at Victory Baptist Church

Brenda Durosinmi, MPA, CIP, CIM -Director
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
University of Nevada Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 451037
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1037

Subject: Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at Victory Baptist Church

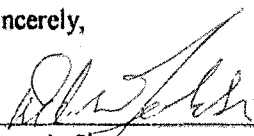
Dear Ms. Durosinmi:

This letter will acknowledge that I have reviewed a request by Regina R. Brandon to conduct a research project entitled, *An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment*, at Victory Baptist Church.

When the research project has received approval from the UNLV Institutional Review Board, and upon presentation of the approval letter to me by the approved researcher, as Pastor for Victory Baptist Church, I agree to provide access to the church for the approved research project.

If we have any concerns or need additional information, the project researcher will be contacted or we will contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895 - 2794.


Sincerely,



Pastor's Signature



Date



Print Representative Name and Title

Second Baptist Church

500 West Madison Avenue
P. O. Box 270267 - Las Vegas, Nevada 89106
(702) 648-6155 Fax (702) 648-8557
www.2ndbaptist.org—— sbclv@yahoo.com

Reverend Willie Davis, Pastor

Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at Second Baptist Church

Brenda Durosinmi, MPA, CIP, CIM -Director
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
University of Nevada Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 451037
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1037

Subject: Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at Second Baptist Church

Dear Ms. Durosinmi:

This letter will acknowledge that I have reviewed a request by Regina R. Brandon to conduct a research project entitled, *An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment*, at Second Baptist Church.

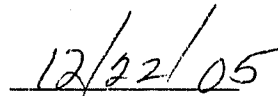
When the research project has received approval from the UNLV Institutional Review Board, and upon presentation of the approval letter to me by the approved researcher, as Pastor for Second Baptist Church, I agree to provide access to the church for the approved research project.

If we have any concerns or need additional information, the project researcher will be contacted or we will contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895 - 2794.

Sincerely,



Pastor's Signature



Date

Willie Davis - PASTOR

Print Representative Name and Title

FIRST

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

God Our Father
•
Christ Our Redeemer
•
Man Our Brother

Ralph E. Williamson
Senior Pastor

Reverend Dr. Howard S. Gloyd
Presiding Elder

Right Reverend John R. Bryant
Presiding Bishop

2450 Revere Street
North Las Vegas, Nevada
89030-3824

Church
(702) 649-1774

Fax
(702) 657-2989

E-mail
famechurch@ame.lvcoxmail.com

Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at First African Methodist Episcopal Church

Brenda Durosinmi, MPA, CIP, CIM -Director
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
University of Nevada Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 451037
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1037

Subject: Letter of Acknowledgement of a Research Project at First African Methodist Episcopal Church


Dear Ms. Durosinmi:

This letter will acknowledge that I have reviewed a request by Regina R. Brandon to conduct a research project entitled, *An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment*, at First African Methodist Episcopal Church.

When the research project has received approval from the UNLV Institutional Review Board, and upon presentation of the approval letter to me by the approved researcher, as Pastor for First African Methodist Episcopal Church, I agree to provide access to the church for the approved research project.

If we have any concerns or need additional information, the project researcher will be contacted or we will contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895 - 2794.

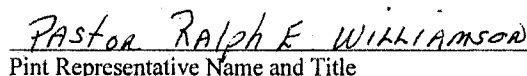
Sincerely,



Pastor's Signature



Date



Past Representative Name and Title

**"... I am focusing all my energies on this one thing:
Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead."
Philippians 3:13 (NLT)**

APPENDIX B

PARENT CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Special Education

TITLE OF THE STUDY: *An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment*

INVESTIGATOR(S): Kyle Higgins, Ph.D. and Regina R. Brandon

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 895-3205

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate African American parent involvement and relationship with their child's educational environment.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are the parent or of a child/youth who attends or has attended public school.

Procedures

If you agree to volunteer to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a demographic information sheet that will consist of answering personal information. This will be followed by completing a parent questionnaire that consists of thirty questions about your feelings concerning your child's education and your involvement in that education.

Benefits of Participation

There *may not* direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn your interactions with your child's educational environment.

Risk of participation

There are risks in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risk.

Cost/Compensation

There *will not* be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 30 minutes of your time. You *will not* be compensated for your time. *The University of Nevada, Las Vegas may not provide compensation or free medical care for an unanticipated injury sustained as a result of participating in this research study.*



INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Special Education

TITLE OF STUDY: An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African America Parents from their Child's Educational Environment

INVESTIGATOR(S): Kyle Higgins, Ph.D. and Regina R. Brandon

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 895-3205

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Kyle Higgins, Ph.D. or Regina R. Brandon at 895-3205. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints, or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV officer for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.**

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of the study. You may withdraw from the study at anytime without prejudice to your relations with the University. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or anytime during the research study.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of this study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be destroyed.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approved Stamp is missing or is expired.

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

**Demographic
Information**

Age: _____

Gender:

Male _____

Female _____

**Ethnic
Background:**

Hispanic American _____

African American _____

American Indian _____

European American _____

Asian American _____

Other _____

Marital Status:

Married _____

Divorced _____

Separated _____

Never married, living with partner _____

Widowed _____

Never
married _____

Education Background:

Formal schooling, no high school diploma or GED _____

High school graduate (diploma or GED) _____

Some college or post high school, but no degree _____

Associate/Bachelor degree (AA, AS, BA, BS, etc) _____

Employment Status:

Employed full time _____

Unemployed but looking _____

Employed Part-Time _____

Not employed (stay-at-home parent, retired, etc.) _____

Family Income:

< \$19,999 _____

\$20,000 - 39,999 _____

\$40,000 - \$69,999 _____

\$70,000 and over _____

Number of People in Household _____

Number of Children in Household _____

Number of Children receiving Special Education Services _____

APPENDIX D

BARRIERS TO SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Barriers to School Involvement Questionnaire

This study is investigating parent involvement and relationships with their child's school. The goal is to identify the factors that impact your involvement with the school your child attends.

Directions: Read each statement and decide how you feel by circling:

1 (not a problem), 2 (rarely a problem), 3 (sometimes a problem), 4 (often a problem) or 5 (always a problem).

Not a Problem: You do not feel that this keeps you from participating in your child's education.

Rarely a Problem: You feel that this rarely keeps you from participating in your child's education.

Sometimes a Problem: You feel that this sometimes keeps you from participating in your child's education.

Often a Problem: You feel that this often keeps you from participating your child's education.

Always a Problem: You feel that this always keeps you from participating in your child's education.

	Not a Problem	Rarely a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem
1. The school does not let me know about the good things my child does.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel very overwhelmed about participating in my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel disinterested about getting involved in my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am always working.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not a Problem	Rarely a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem
5. The general communication between my child's school and me is poor.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The school does not provide the services that meet the individual needs of my child.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Parent/teacher meeting times conflict with my work schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Teachers and administrators are not available when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have too much pressure and stress from life situations at home that take a lot of my energy.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The school does not value my opinion about my child's needs.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My job/jobs do not allow me much time for school involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Child care is a problem when I try to go to school activities.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Child care is a problem when I try to volunteer to help at my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I don't think the teachers and administrators care about me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My time schedule doesn't allow me to participate in my child's class.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The teachers and administrators do not show respect for my family's values and beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not a Problem	Rarely a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a problem	Always a Problem
17. I feel out-of-place at my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The streets in my community are unsafe to walk, especially after dark.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have difficulty finding transportation to school meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I don't trust the educational system.	1	2	3	4	5
21. School activity times conflict with my work schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I don't think the teachers and administrators care about my child.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I am always tired mentally and physically after work.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The teachers use language that I do not understand.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The teachers and administrators are people that I cannot depend on or trust.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I have a difficult time finding the time to get involved in my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I have little energy left to give to school involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I don't feel comfortable at my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I don't care about getting involved in my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I am shy about meeting people, especially teachers and school administrators.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX E

PERMISSION TO COPYRIGHT MATERIAL

Permission to Use Copyrighted Material

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

I, Gary Reglin

holder of copyrighted material entitled Barriers to School Involvement and Strategies to Enhance Involvement from Parents at Low-Performing Urban Schools Survey, 2003 authored by Gary L. Reglin, Ph.D. and originally published in The Journal of at-Risk Issues, 2003 hereby give permission for the author to use the above described material in total or in part for inclusion in a doctoral dissertation at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

I also agree that the Regina R. Brandon may execute the standard contract with the University Microfilms, Inc. for microform reproduction of the completed dissertation, including the materials to which I hold copyright.

Gary Reglin 11/16/05

Signature

Date

Gary Reglin, Ed.D.

Name (Typed)

Title

Representing

VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Regina R. Brandon

Local Address:

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Box 453014
Las Vegas, Nevada 89154

Home Address:

420 Beth Circle
N. Las Vegas, Nevada 89030

Degrees:

Bachelor of Science, Biology 1985
Virginia Union University

Master of Education 2002
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dissertation Title: An Exploration of the Alienation Experienced by African American Parents from their Child's Educational Environment

Dissertation Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Dr. Kyle Higgins, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Tom Pierce, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Nancy Sileo, Ph.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Richard Tandy, Ph.D.