SUCCESS ORIENTED STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY MIDDLE-CLASS AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES: A FOCUS ON POSITIVE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the parenting practices and child-rearing strategies employed by African American families that facilitate the development and socialization of children in ways that promote achievement and success outcomes, with a primary focus on those strategies that foster positive racial identity development and socialization.

Employing a qualitative ethnographic case study approach, including oral histories, this study draws on participant observations and transcribed and coded data collected through in-depth audio-taped individual semi-structured interviews with members of six middle-class African American families (twelve parents and sixteen children) including three extended kinship family members, five social work practitioners and one master's in social work graduate student each of whom were able to provide auxiliary information pertaining to parent/child relationships within the black community, and three elders of the Champaign-Urbana black community. These elder *mothers* of the community shared valuable information regarding their experiences growing up and subsequently raising their own children in the Champaign-Urbana black community. They also added an intergenerational perspective to the developmental and socialization processes involved in parenting successful African American children.

The findings suggest consensus among and across all categories of informants. Achievement and success were measured in terms that reflect internal processes and intrinsic virtues (achieving personal goals, acquisition of new skills, putting forth

one's best effort) as opposed to external circumstances or tangible elements (status, recognition, power, prestige, material wealth, or possessions). Further, the most salient child-rearing strategies that promote achievement and foster success outcomes were categorized as follows: the importance of education, "selective exposure", family and family activities, responsibility and respect for self and others, religion and spirituality, the protection of children, child discipline, and positive racial identity development and socialization. Contested racial authenticity (challenged as *not black enough*) emerged as a yet unresolved dilemma that illuminates the manner in which sociopolitical and cultural contexts influence variations in intra-cultural group responses to matters of race and racism both within and across generations.

This study has implications for developing culturally relevant practice with racial/ethnic minority families and dismantling erroneous conclusions about African American family life based on research designs that employed archaic deficit models.

For my family and especially my beloved husband

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Saturday early evenings were always the same in our house. Following a quick and easy dinner of hot dogs or hamburgers, fries, and sometimes even Nehi grape, orange or root beer pop, we'd settle in the dining room that had long since been converted into a family room/spare bedroom. My brothers would lay fully stretched out in front of our black and white console television set, chin in hands as they gazed up into the faces of the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Gene Autry, or the Cisco Kid and his sidekick Poncho. Our father usually sat on our *let-out-couch* — a tattered old green tone on tone two-seat cushion leviathan that did double duty serving as a sofa during the day and a bed by night until the day we moved to the south suburbs of Chicago. The very tired and worn out old sofa bed was finally laid to rest near the throne shaped concrete structure just off the back alley where our dad burned our garbage once a week.

Saturday evenings in our household was a kind of laid back time when relaxation was mixed with the very important preparation for church the next day. In order to look respectable when going to Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, the Hill clan had to be cleaned and spit polished from head-to-toe. Saturday night meant taking your weekly bath and getting your dress clothes collected, inspected, and laid out just so. Pearl Hill would never allow one of her children to go to church in a wrinkled dress or shirt. My father would never allow himself to go anywhere looking un-kept.

Saturday also meant getting your hair properly coiffed. For the boys and my dad that meant a visit to Mr. Clay's basement. Like my dad, Mr. Clay worked on his full-time job five days a week. All day Saturday he cut hair in his basement to supplement his

factory worker's income. I vividly recall all the men sitting around on mismatched kitchen and dining room chairs swapping lies, gossiping the way men suppose women do all the time, and commiserating over the strained relationships between management and workers — including complaints about the ridiculously meager wages they received for their labor at the Campbell Soup Company. It was in this typically male dominated space that my brothers and I were first introduced to the concept of *organized labor unions* — our father eventually became a shop steward. It was not until many years later that I began to see that this kind of activity was indicative of a family history and legacy of defiance that permeated both my paternal and maternal bloodlines.

For the two Hill women, hair preparation was an all day event. It began early Saturday morning with a trip to my cousin Savannah's beauty shop on 43rd street right off South Park Way (renamed Martin Luther King Drive shortly after the flurry of assassinations of John, Martin, and Bobby). The people all said Mayor Daley knew he had better do something drastic, *else colored folks woulda' burned Chicago down to the ground.*

I loved going to cousin Savannah's. As my mother and I walked past neighborhood taverns with their doors closed and locked tight, I knew by the time we emerged from *the shop* later that day, the street would be washed in the late afternoon sun. Neon signs would glow as they hung in store front windows all along 43rd street. Those same tavern doors that barred even the slightest 'crinoline-slip-just-peeking-out-from-under-the-hem-of-your-best-Sunday-frock' glimpse of what lay inside just a few short hours ago would now be flung wide open to catch whatever breeze might blow in. The open doors served another purpose as well. As you walked by these bastions of

nightlife for the working-class poor of Chicago's black belt community, jukeboxes blared (B.B. King, Bobby Blue Bland, and Etta James). The smell of whiskey and bourbon rolled out into the street enticing the early club hoppin' men and women inside. It was a very short walk to our car, but the energy that swirled about this little black girl during that brief sojourn settled into the very marrow of my bones where it remains even today.

By evening the Hill's were all back home for the night. It was time to finalize the preparation for Sunday worship services. Since these services were spread out over the entire day, it was only fitting that a proper grooming would consume much of Saturday. Dad and the boys donned stocking caps while Mama and I wrapped brightly colored *too old to be worn in public anymore; just right for tying up your hair* scarves around our heads. This was an incredibly important step as my mother and I wished to preserve our freshly washed, pressed, and curled locks of glory. After all, we didn't want Savannah's skilled handiwork to be demolished during the night while we slept. *Go get the comb and grease so I can roll your hair up before you get in the tub. And don't run your bath water too hot. I don't want you sweatin' your curls out.* As I returned with the black plastic comb and the Royal Crown Hair Dressing in the cardboard cylinder of red and green metallic paper with the pressed tin lid, I'd take my usual seat on the floor between my mother's knees. When I think about the little girl almost cradled by her mama's knees that familiar feeling of security and comfort returns even now. As the only girl in the family, being there in that place was reserved specially for me...it was my place.

Sitting in a straight backed kitchen chair, my mother would start running the comb through my shoulder length hair. Family conversations could spring forth from anyone and move in many different directions. I wish to use this backdrop to re-present a

significant family conversation that actually took place during my preteen years. All these years later, I wonder how much the statements made that day may have influenced the different directions the Hill kids' lives would take. The discussion of *what I want to be when I grow up* would have begun something like this. *Mama, I wanna' be a social worker when I grow up.* I can't imagine how I knew such a profession even existed. Without even the slightest hesitation in either words or the very serious task of tying up my hair, my mother responded with *Why would you want to be a social worker? All them folks do is pound the hot pavement goin' from door to door stickin' their noses into other folks' business. Why don't you go into teachin'*? Of course mama's entire response was more of a statement than a question. You see she had been a teacher in Crenshaw, Mississippi as a young woman, and as such she had enjoyed the status, respect, and social position teaching afforded learned women — it was preaching that established black men as revered pillars of the community. Naturally I didn't dare articulate my dismissal of my mother's suggestion. However, our brief exchange launched our family into a discussion of educational endeavors and future career options.

My father, Lucious Hill, Sr., put down his Chicago Sun-Times and said *I'd like one of my kids to become a doctor. Wouldn't that be nice, to have a doctor in the family?* Neither of my brothers or I ever expressed any interest in becoming a doctor. For three little black kids born and raised on the South-side of Chicago in the 1950's, doctors were all white men, usually Jewish like our beloved Dr. Goldberg whose injections of penicillin made our asthma subside so we could once again breath easily. Doctor or not, my parents had a standard speech which they would blithely interject right about now. *No matter what you do for a livin' — if you get a job as a janitor sweeping floors, take pride*

in what you do. Be the best janitor you know how to be. Somewhere in the process of imparting this particular stanza of the work ethic, the messages communicated to me diverged from the one delivered to my brothers. Even the tonal quality of their conversation shifted. There was more of a discernible seriousness in their voices. Their vocal inflections and the way their words got sort of sharp and choppy signaled the arrival of a message of importance. *But one thing I tell you now. As a colored woman, you got two choices. You can go to college and get somethin' in your head so you can earn a decent livin' for yourself that way, or you just might find yourself cleanin' white folks' floors all yo' days. And that ain't no easy job; believe me when I tell you.* Whether you're five or fifteen it seems the choice is pretty clear. No matter who the employer is, I knew I didn't want to scrub anybody's floors for a living....college it would be. While my choice was an easy one to make, my brothers were presented with options that proved more difficult to contemplate. *Now we encourage you boys to go to college too, hope you do. But if you don't well a man can make a good livin' for hisself and his family with a good trade union job. Plumbers, electricians, construction work...they all pay good money and benefits too. Then there's the military. If a man goes in the Army, Uncle Sam'll even pay for your family to live overseas and pay for your kids' college. The military is a good place to find a steady career.*

Actually the armed forces were a viable career option for a black man in the late 1950s. In fact, military men were accorded a certain level of respect by our family. Our neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Brown and their three children were a military family. Mr. Brown was a career service man in the United States Army. The children fascinated us with stories of living in places we considered exotic like Japan. We learned that each of

the Brown children was born in a different location (Eric in Germany, Tracey in North Carolina, Toni in Okinawa). Yes the military was definitely an option to be explored. However, as an adult looking back, I have serious doubts about the feasibility of a black man joining an established trade union at that time — especially in Chicago. I think my brothers would have had a better chance of safely buying and settling into a house in Cicero, Illinois.

I listened to what my parents told the boys and watched my brothers' faces. I don't know what was going on in their minds, but I didn't envy them at all. My choice was so clear cut, while theirs' seemed to involve much more thought. It was the classic W.E.B. Du Bois versus Booker T. Washington debate (education as an intellectual pursuit or for the purpose of learning a marketable trade). This was how I reacted to the future career options proposed by Lucious Sr. and Pearl Hill, and transmitted to my brothers and me on that Saturday evening so long ago.

One final note to end any suspense my story may have created in the reader about what happened to my brothers. Both of them joined the military as young men serving one enlistment period respectively. My oldest brother graduated from college with a bachelor's degree after four years in the Air Force, then worked for the State of Illinois until his recent retirement. The youngest of my brothers attended community college. His career path led him to work for the federal government. Both are doing just fine.

As a young adult woman I had very different questions concerning the messages my brothers and I received from our parents when we were children. Rather than the simplistic questions of a little girl sitting on the floor between her mama's knees getting her hair combed, I questioned whether or not and if so, how the varying messages

affected my brothers' self-esteem. Had they come to believe that when our parents said *you can earn a good livin' in a skilled trade or trade union shop even if you don't go to college* that what they really meant was *we don't know if college is right for you, whereas your sister... well now that's a different story.* What kind of underlying meaning might they have gleaned from these different options, and was the meaning powerful enough to constitute a self-fulfilling prophecy? These were the initial questions that fueled my desire to investigate whether or not African American families inadvertently contributed to the achievement gap (or minimally the economic similarities) that exist between black men and women, with the latter out performing or matching their male counterparts (Clarke, 2002; King-Toler, 2004).

Years have passed since that family discussion in the Hill household. Neither my siblings nor I can now stretch out on the floor in front of the television set, chin in hands watching our favorite *TV* characters for more than a few minutes before our middle-aged joints begin to stiffen. The questions I had about children's responses to their parents' messages (those that emerged during my childhood as well as my young adulthood) have shifted once again. The questions I wanted to answer in this research project are much bigger than those prompted by the messages my brothers and I received from our parents over forty years ago. What I ask myself these days is how did my parents' personal experiences influence the manner in which they raised their children? How did the fact that they were black and both grew up so desperately poor (my mother's family were share croppers while my father's family owned their own farm) influence the way they chose to parent their children? I knew even as a young child my mother and father had very definite hopes and dreams for their children. I knew full well that they wanted them

to be successful in life. The question was how were they defining success? What did that mean to them? How did they plan to support their children's achievement efforts? These two people were born and raised during the Jim Crow era on the Mississippi Delta just two hours north of Money, Mississippi, the town where fourteen year old Emmett Till was murdered in August 1955. How did their lived experiences shape the way they would explain race and racism to their children? Why did they think any of their children could go to college or that their sons could actually have successful careers as African American men in the military or join a skilled trade union?

These were the final questions I brought to this research. They are questions that recognize sociopolitical and cultural contexts as powerful influences on the parenting of children. They suggest child-rearing practices are influenced by multiple demographic factors including race and ethnicity, social class, gender, age, education, individual experiences, and community contexts. They also suggest the presence of similarities as well as differences within the same racial/ethnic cultural group based on variants among such demographic factors.

As my foray into the world of research on black families progressed my understanding and interests changed. Consequently, the focus of my work became more clearly defined. Currently, the parenting practices and child-rearing strategies employed by African American families that facilitate the development and socialization of children in ways that promote achievement and success outcomes is the focal point of my research. More specifically, the primary focus is on those strategies that foster positive racial identity development and socialization.

The Research Problem

There are 36.4 million African Americans living in this country, constituting 12.9% of the nation's population (McKinnon, 2001). But of course people don't just *live in the country*. In general, they form intimate groups that we refer to as families, oftentimes sharing the same residential arrangements, which then get identified by governmental statisticians as *households*. According to U.S. census 2000, approximately 59% of all black children under the age of 18 (14.8% of children in the general population) live with their family (7.5% with married parents, nearly 18% with their fathers, and an overwhelming 33.7% in homes with their mothers) (Lugaila & Overturf, 2004).

Whether we call it family households, *living under the same roof*, or just plain old *putting your feet under the same table*, the family serves as the primary socializing agent for children. It is within the family context that children are nourished, their individual character is formed, social, cultural and moral values are transmitted, and significant social roles are learned (Harkins & Ray, 2004; Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, 2002; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990; Zimmerman, 1980). It is important to note however, that children are not passive recipients of parental input. They are actually quite actively involved in the construction of their own social role concepts. According to Bussey and Bandura (1999, p. 689) "they construct generic conceptions from the diversity of styles of conduct that are modeled, evaluatively prescribed and taught by different individuals...for different activities in different contexts" (as cited in Gelman, Taylor, & Nguyen, 2004).

Parenting practices as the methods whereby children's development and socialization occurs have been studied exhaustively by social science researchers. Intended to promote healthy development and positive socialization, child-rearing practices vary widely across diverse communities. Family configuration, structure, functions, and processes are influenced by its heritage and the cultural contexts in which it is enveloped (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1999; Harkins & Ray, 2004). However, the social science community's track record as it pertains to exploring diverse family systems and the fact that they socialize children from a distinct culturally informed perspective has fallen short of the mark since its early beginnings (Du Bois, 1898).

There has been a surge in the amount of research devoted to exploring parenting practices of African American families since the late 1990's (Peoples, 2003). Some of the more recent studies have been critical of the earlier reports, identifying them as negatively skewed. Between 1940 and 1990, the research community generally relied on a comparative approach in the study of black families. With middle-class white families' "parental roles, family structure, and parent-child interactions" as the benchmark standard for evaluating family function, differences that we have come to at least consider as reflections of culturally prescribed nuances were simply chalked up to pathological deficiencies (Glanville, 2002; Ogbu, 1981). Such views by social scientists played out in the mental health practice community perhaps even more dramatically. Harris, Felder, and Clark suggest African Americans were seen "by mental health professionals as nonverbal, hostile, unmotivated, intellectually inferior, and....African American family and child rearing practices were viewed as chaotic and psychologically destructive" (p. 227).

The depth and degree of bias in what was accepted as legitimate, substantive, evidentiary social science research disregarded the possibility of a discourse that recognized the significance and importance of culture on parenting practices and behavior as well as family form and function. Therefore, a meaningful and contextually sound understanding of a healthy, culturally normative, positively functioning African American family has yet to be fully uncovered. I do not intend to dismiss the strides in scientific inquiry that have been made over the past ten years. However, when one considers the current body of research, the question of whether or not parenting practices generally associated with African American families are legitimate, remains largely unanswered (Hurd, Moore, & Rogers, 1995; Peoples, 2003; Whaley, 2000).

This study aims to identify child-rearing practices used by middle-class black parents in their efforts to motivate their children to become achievement oriented, move them onto pathways that facilitate success outcomes, and encourage them to develop the skills and abilities to productively maneuver within the larger sociocultural context, while still maintaining their racial/ethnic identity, and a sense of efficacy as people of African ancestry. Of primary concern is the process of positive racial identity development and socialization among middle-class African American families.

The issue of middle-class socio-economic status among these families is an important element for the purpose of this research for several reasons. First, middle-class African American families are underrepresented in the research literature (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Trosper, 2002). Second, the preconceived notion that middle-class status automatically ensures racial/ethnic minority families will be entitled to the same social privileges as their middle-class white counterparts is erroneous. Institutional racism

continues beyond the boundaries of middle-class status in lower median family income, segregated housing, culturally biased standardized testing, fewer neighborhood resources, and enduring discriminatory treatment (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Finally, black middle-class families oftentimes find themselves situated such that they function as *buffer zones* between middle-class white and impoverished black neighborhoods (Robin Jarrett, personal communication, 2000). Positioned in this physical context, middle-class African American parents may find themselves challenged to keep their children's attention focused on achieving success through legitimate opportunities when the lure of *gangsta'* images glamorized in pop culture is visible from their bedroom windows. While this final proposal may not be a prominent feature for middle-class black families living in Champaign-Urbana, there is a potential threat which will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The perception of cultural variance as pathological has notable historical and sociopolitical origins. Over 60 years ago, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits began their classic debate in which they questioned whether or not any vestiges of West African culture survived middle-passage and the subsequent enslavement of Africans in the Americas. Frazier postulated the effects of slavery were so devastating that black people were virtually stripped of any remnant of cultural elements traceable to an African origin. Herskovits opposed Franklin's position and conducted a nascent study of the presence of Africanisms (ambient factors originating in African culture) in America (Holloway, 1991). He concluded that in fact one could not understand blacks in the United States, without understanding the influence

of West African traditions on the thought, speech, motivation, behavior patterns, and family dynamics of African Americans (Hale-Benson, 1982).

Unfortunately, Herskovits' views were generally disregarded in favor of Frazier's thesis by most contemporary social scientists of the time. In other notable research, Frazier's proposition was reiterated in statements such as, "the Negro is so much an American, the distinctive product of America. He bears no foreign values and culture that he feels the need to guard from the surrounding environment" (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, p. 53). Thankfully, more enlightened social scientists have rejected such fatalistic conjectures.

> The consequences of viewing blacks without their own language or culture was to see their different behavior as distortions of white behavior,...or as pathological responses to the oppressive forces of caste and class...No search for an underlying structure to black behavior was undertaken, because none was presumed to exist (Kochman, 1981, p. 8).

The effects of slavery and ongoing oppressive external sociopolitical forces such as segregation, disenfranchisement, and restrictive educational and occupational opportunities are undeniable. However, as stated by Schiele (1996) some of those very experiences aid in the retention of sapient African assumptions and fuel the dedication to maintain those traditions within the African American community. Further, according to Afro-centric theorists, Africanisms have persisted with enough sufficiency to establish African Americans as a distinct cultural and ethnic group. Consequently, the employment of Anglo-American theories of human behavior to explain the ethos and behavior of black Americans is inadequate.

Afrocentrism Meets Feminist Theory

This proposed research project is grounded in two separate but complementary theories. First, the *Afrocentric theory* is one that suggests no "...one theory or paradigm can be used to explain social phenomena among all people and in all cultures" (Schiele, 1996, p. 285). Consequently, rather than labeling cultural variance as deviant and/or pathological, Afrocentrists perceive these variations as indicative of the "cultural and ethnic group's ethos" (Schiele, 1996, p. 285). di Leonardo's (1984) work reflects aspects of an Afrocentric theoretical conceptualization in the suggestion that there is no one model that fully explains the experiences of ethnic families in general.

The Afrocentric theoretical paradigm, as proposed by authors such as Akbar and Nobles, is based on three major assumptions: (1) the individual cannot be fully understood separately from others in their social group; (2) there is a universal and spiritual connection between all people that deserves recognition in social science inquiry; and (3) the affective approach to knowledge (feelings or emotions as a source of knowing) is epistemologically valid (Schiele, 1996). This third and final assumption upon which the Afrocentric theoretical framework is based segues into the second theoretical/conceptualization that under girds this research project.

Feminist theory, which proposes as a foundational assumption the inclusion of "the experiences of...persons who have been excluded from the dominant discourses in the human disciplines" (Denzin, 1997, p. 55), promotes "concrete lived experience" (Denzin, 1997, p. 65) as the most viable perspective from which to view and begin to understand contemporary racial/ethnic minority families. Hill Collins (2000) discusses "finding a voice" as a consistent theme in black feminist thought (p. 99). At the core of

this theme is the persistent struggle to "express collective, self-defined Black women's standpoint" (p. 99). While Hill Collins' discussion is directed toward black women and black feminist thought, I propose that the concept is similarly pertinent and applicable in the study of racial/ethnic groups specifically and oppressed populations in general.

Based on Hill Collins' argument, the premise here is that the African American lived experience involves "a series of negotiations that aim to reconcile the contradictions separating our own internally defined images of self...with our objectification as the Other" (p. 99). Echoing Du Bois' reference to blacks in early 1900s American society being "One [who] ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unrecognized strivings; two warring ideals" (1961, p. 45), Hill Collins elucidates on the experience of black people as living two lives, one for the elusive *them* and one for themselves, where tension is created in the attempt to construct self-definitions within a hostile environment that devalues individuals on the basis of race. However, the black community provides numerous primary relationship systems and contexts including the immediate and extended family, the black church, and various community organizations where "safe discourse potentially can occur...[and] they form prime locations for resisting objectification as the Other" (p. 101).

These safe havens reiterate bell hooks' (1990) description of the "homeplace" as both a place of resistance and a place where family members are valued. It is in these places that viable studies of black family life must begin. In these spaces we can participate in discourse that conveys lived experience as heard through voices previously excluded by rules of the hegemonic traditions. It is from the inclusion of these voices that we are enabled to study racial/ethnic minority families relative to their own unique

sociocultural context. If our goal is to comprehensively understand the realities of "*the Other*" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 101), in this instance African American families, we must begin with their concrete lived experiences.

Research Questions

This investigation asked the following three key research questions:

1. What are the success oriented strategies employed by African American families including how they define, promote, and support achievement efforts that facilitate success outcomes in their children?

Of particular interest was the various child-rearing practices and parenting techniques the participant families employed that fostered achievement and success pathways. My hope was to gain an understanding of the ways in which these families defined success, rather than project my own or someone else's definition onto their unique systems. I also wanted to discover the ways in which family goals, strengths, values and beliefs, experiences, and interpersonal interactions influenced the young people's development and achievements thus far. I was interested in the kinds of expectations parents had for their children and how they both communicated those expectations as well as supported their children's efforts to rise to the occasion.

2. How do African American parents socialize their children to understand race and ethnicity, respond to racism, develop a healthy racial identity, and through positive racial socialization, attain a level of racial maturity?

One of the most important aspects of child-rearing for African American families is to prepare their children to understand, recognize, confront, and subsequently challenge racism and ethnocentrism. Racial socialization is the process by which children are

prepared to cope with the realities of racism in America (Billingsley, 1992), and develop the means for racial maturation — a process that allows them to "substitute internal definitions and standards of racial-group identity for external or societally imposed definitions" (Helms & Piper, 1994, p. 126). This is a critical task for black children because it involves multiple and varied points of contact with the majority culture, which can be a hostile environment where personal rejection emerges out of prejudices — it seems skin pigmentation can be quite threatening. The final complexity inherent in this task is avoiding the loss of one's primary racial/ethnic cultural identity (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 1985).

3. How do changes in sociopolitical and cultural contexts affect the intra-group similarities and differences in the way people construct meaning and come to understand race, ethnicity, and racism within and across generations? The assumption is these meanings and understanding shape racial identity development and socialization processes.

Sociopolitical and cultural contexts shift over time. As powerful external social forces, it was important to consider how changes in these contexts influence the parenting practices that facilitate the racial identity development and socialization of children intergenerationally. Further, within generation cohorts unique personal lived experiences contribute to and color how we understand and respond to race and racism. The contrasting personal experiences of informants help illuminate these intra-group variations.

The influence of social class and gender are undeniably important ancillaries in the study of African American parenting practices that deserve comprehensive

exploration. However the most salient issues to be addressed by this study were child-rearing strategies that promote healthy development and socialization as a means to promote achievement and success outcomes in black children. Therefore, while social class and gender are discussed, they are treated as secondary to the main themes and/or categories of parenting practices with an emphasis on ways in which social class and gender might interact with racial identity development and socialization in middle-class African American families.

Social Class and Gender

Social mobility does not provide a fail proof shield from personal or institutional racism and discrimination. The fact that diligence, hard work, and even the resultant success from such efforts do not ensure transcendence beyond racism and ethnocentrism is an extremely powerful and sobering dichotomy. Despite the promise of the American democratic dream, African American parents must address this harsh reality with their children. Further, several significant sociopolitical and economic events experienced by the country in general and the African American community in particular (the Great Migration into northern and western regions of the country, World War II, the death of Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Act of 1965) resulted in the rapid and unprecedented growth in the black middle-class. The question of how African American families were affected by such monumental events — including how they defined and determined viable paths to success, their redefined expectations for themselves and their children, how they subsequently chose to parent their children, and what constituted child competency (Ogbu, 1981) was explored in this project as well.

Research suggests gender-specific expectations are transmitted to children during the socialization process. It has been proposed that the black family tends to value flexible gender roles, sharing male/female relationships in a more egalitarian manner rather than abiding by strict adherence to conventional gender-specific roles (Hill, 1972; Kikoski & Kikoski, 1996). However, the question that remains and forms the basis for an ongoing debate is whether or not and how gender is constructed in the African American family (Hill & Sprague, 1999). This question is also briefly discussed in this research.

Significance of the Study

One of the goals of research is to generate new knowledge and build upon what we already hope or think we know. While pure science certainly is a lofty and valuable enterprise, applied research requires the investigator's work be translate-able into some action that will benefit at least some albeit small segment of society. To that end, this study has significance in four communities: 1) the community of families and their children, 2) to the practice community that serves those families, 3) to the multiple levels of policy makers whose decisions affect both the practitioners and the families they serve, and 4) to the social science research community that has the potential to decidedly and dramatically influence social policy by informing policy decision makers directly or indirectly.

Families and Children

Presumably parents wish the best for their children. However, undoubtedly there are those parents who are so completely unprepared for the task of raising children that sometimes the only way they can endure their circumstance is to project their inadequacies onto the very child they may have inadvertently harmed. By approaching

parents who have been able to gather, analyze, synthesize and integrate child-rearing practices into a coherent and useful configuration such that their children and young people are achieving levels that surpass the majority of their in-group peers despite powerful factors such as racism, sexism, and class, their specific child-rearing techniques can be harnessed and packaged for consumption by those who continue to struggle with how to pull it all together.

The Practice Community

The aim of this research is to explore salient parenting strategies that contribute to the development and socialization of African American children. The acquisition of such culturally embedded knowledge is vital if practitioners are going to be better prepared to meet their responsibilities in a rapidly changing world where significant demographic shifts are occurring (Kikoski & Kikoski, 1996). Crucial tasks including the recognition, identification, assessment, and evaluation of family configuration, functional roles, important child competencies, concepts of intelligence, emotional well-being and mental health, mechanisms for coping with adversity, techniques for imparting life lessons to children, and overall family strengths may be completed with a higher degree of sensitivity, awareness, understanding, and accuracy.

The Research Community

This study will build on the existing body of knowledge generated by the research community. Additional knowledge and awareness will be gleaned pertaining to certain child-rearing practices that are grounded in the historical experiences of the black community (experiences that demanded strict attention to very real threats to the families themselves). Fundamental aspects of these parenting practices have been passed down

through generations as culturally sanctioned techniques for raising children. The illumination of these long-standing strategies will contribute to disentangling erroneous findings and conclusions drawn from those findings concerning the viability of culturally prescribed and sanctioned child-rearing practices within racially and ethnically diverse family and community systems.

Policy Makers

The practice and research communities share a common role as it pertains to the development and implementation of social policy. From the micro organizational level to the macro level of state and federal legislation, the development, interpretation and implementation of policy decisions are informed by members of the practice and research communities respectively. Having access to a broad body of evidentiary and experiential knowledge enriches the contributions to policy development made by members of these communities. The collaborative role practitioners and researchers play in the development of key social policy decisions is part of our combined traditions and remains unquestionably vital in today's global community environment.

In summary, this research will build on existing knowledge, which is necessary if we are to improve the quality, delivery, effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of research, programs, and policies committed to serving the needs of children, youth, and families.

A Narrative Format in the Cultural Tradition

In recognition of the long-standing and valuable African American storytelling cultural tradition, the remaining chapters of this dissertation will be presented in a narrative format. It is the goal of the author that the reader will hear the uniquely distinct

and powerful voices of the parents, young people, and especially the elders who so graciously shared their stories. The reader will also hear the author's voice as well, but only as it seems appropriate to the enhancement of these richly textured and generously offered lived experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Various constructs of dimensions, styles, and characteristics of parenting proposed by the literature has received considerable attention by the research community. The most controversial discourse revolves around the question of whether or not these studies and their resultant parenting typologies are applicable across sociocultural contexts. Frequently based on data derived from observations of middle-class two-parent white families, questions were raised concerning how the sociopolitical and cultural experiences of racial/ethnic families would influence socialization requirements and parenting styles and practices (Mandara & Murray, 2002). Consequently, an exploration into the literature on parenting in African American families is in order.

According to Mandara and Murray (2002), all families share certain universal needs and practices. However, as stated above, the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural experiences of various social groups greatly influence the values, beliefs, and aspirations adopted by the family system. Further, these significant external forces and internal schemas influence the shape, form, structure, functions, and strategies the family units find viable and meaningful. Therefore, studies of African American family life and parent-child relationships that utilize a comparative approach in the research design using middle-class white families as the model will fail to capture important culturally-specific nuances of black families.

Clarification of Relevant Terms

There are several terms that are integral to a discourse on African American parenting dimensions, styles, and characteristics. To begin, "*culture* has been defined as a

way of life or the framework by which a group makes sense of the world or interprets reality" and can be further understood in terms of *primary* and *secondary cultural values* (Johnson, Jaeger, Randolph, Cauce, & Ward, 2003, p. 1228). Americans operate out of both sets with *primary cultural values* relating to values and beliefs, attitudes, norms, language, socialization, and parenting practices that reflect a given ancestral homeland. These defining attributes give meaning to one's life and influences their behavior.

Secondary cultural values develop as a result of the experiences of a particular social group with various institutions. As a consequence of these interactions certain relevant primary cultural norms may be modified (Johnson, et al., 2003). For example, the impetus for using physical punishment among segments of the black community may be found in parents' need for their children's unquestioned obedience during the years when lynching black men and women for even minor breaches of social decorum was so rampant. According to Ogbu (as cited in Johnson, et al., 2003), involuntary groups such as African Americans, may feel a stronger connection to specific secondary cultural values which reflect the group as a whole than voluntary groups more interested in seeking assimilation (Johnson, et al., 2003).

Another term that further clarifies the various aspects of culture is the concept of *adaptive culture.* As social groups become cognizant of systems that are either *promoting* or *inhibiting* of their concerns or welfare, they will respond accordingly. Sociopolitical and historical experiences inform *cultural legacies* which in turn creates adaptive culture (Garcia Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik, & Garcia, 1996, p. 1904; Johnson, et al., 2003, p. 1236).

There are several more terms that should be clarified since they will help set the ground work for discussing parenting in African American families: *socialization*, *parenting practices*, *parenting styles*, and *acquisition*. *Socialization* is defined as the process whereby children acquire the skills and attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that will ensure their successful integration into the family system and larger social group (Spera, 2005). *Parenting practices* refers to the actions parents take that will facilitate the completion of the socialization process, while *parenting styles* is defined as the "emotional climate" parents create in the home environment (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). There is a "bidirectional nature of the parent-child interaction" (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000, p. 206). *Acquisition* refers to the manner in which children respond to their environment, thereby becoming active agents in their socialization processes. Influencing characteristics include the child's intellect, readiness to make use of the information being presented, their temperament, mood, emotions, and interpretations of parental behaviors and actions (Grusec, et al., 2000). With these salient terms defined and clarified, we can now look further into the research literature on parenting practices in African American families.

African American Parenting Practices

Allen (1995) suggests patterns in black family life become more evident and can be better understood when viewed in context rather than through evaluations based on simplistic comparisons against white families. "Differential adaptive demands shape the consciousness of a people, giving rise to distinctive cultural features affecting child-care tasks, community heterogeneity, multiple caregivers, family role assignments, and so forth" (Baumrind, 1993, p. 1300). According to Allen researchers would come

considerably closer to hitting the proverbial mark if they began to view black families "through the lenses provided by their special circumstances and experiences...[including] systematic approaches that unravel the effects of sociocultural and economic-ecological context on African families in the United States" (Allen, 1995, p. 578-579). As originally argued by sociologist and scholar W. E. B. Du Bois in 1898, an accurate, factual, and just understanding of black families is not possible without considering the influence of significant "historical, cultural, social, economic and political forces" on African Americans (Hill, 1998, p. 16).

A number of researchers have investigated socialization practices in black families based on such an approach (Billingsley, 1992; Carter-Black, 2001; Forehand & Kotchick, 1996; Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Haight, 2002; Hale-Benson, 1982; Hill, 1972, 1998; Hudley, Haight, & Miller, 2003; Hurd, Moore, & Rogers, 1995; Jarrett, 1997; Peters, 1985, 1997; Ogbu, 1995, 2003; Stack, 1974). In a seminal work that continues to influence researchers over thirty years later, Hill (1972) identified five primary attributes necessary for the survival and stability of a functional black family including 1) strong kinship bonds, 2) a strong work orientation, 3) adaptability of family roles, 4) a high achievement orientation, and 5) a religious orientation. This influence can be seen in the following article on racial/ethnic minority family ecologies.

Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel (1990) employed an ecological framework to investigate the relation between ethnic minority family ecologies, adaptive strategies, socialization goals, and developmental outcomes for children. An ecological orientation as proposed by Bronfenbrenner refers to the dynamic interrelatedness that

exists between the individual and various environmental systems and the complex interactions between these systems.

Defined as "observable social behavioral cultural patterns that are interpreted as socially adaptive or maladaptive within the social nexus" (p. 347), commonly shared *adaptive strategies* include extended families, flexible roles, ancestral worldviews, and biculturalism (retention of certain beliefs and behaviors rooted in ancestral culture and worldviews). As such, these strategies influence and inform the choice of preferred socialization goals and child developmental outcomes among racial/ethnic minority families.

While the authors suggest the mechanisms for transmitting culture are the same across various social groups, ethnicity as an influencing force should not be underestimated. The diverse *socialization goals* for children within ethnic minority families create significant variations in child-rearing practices. Informed by adaptive strategies, these goals include 1) a positive racial/ethnic group orientation (facilitated through emphasis on ethnic pride, self-development, awareness of racism, and egalitarianism toward other racial/ethnic groups), and 2) socialization that encourages interdependence over a competitive individualism (a sense of connectedness to family and the larger racial/ethnic community as demonstrated through cooperation, sharing, reciprocity, and obligation.

Harrison, et al. (1990) also discussed children's *developmental outcomes* in their article on the ecologies of ethnic minority families. Following a cautionary note against making broad sweeping generalizations about developmental outcomes (disregarding intra-group differences) the authors referred to concepts proposed by Vygotsky as a

framework for exploring the importance of culture to cognitive development. As active agents in their socialization, Vygotsky suggested the study of developmental outcomes in children needed to begin by understanding "two principally different entities, the biological and the cultural" (Harrison, et al., 1990, p. 356). Ultimately, minority families were said to be concerned with teaching their children how to maneuver in their own racial/ethnic community as well as the larger majority world (requiring cognitive and social flexibility).

Building on the premise that all families share a range of common needs and socialization practices is the proposal that while most researchers acknowledge the existence of commonalities across social groups, there is a simultaneous recognition of ethnically prescribed influences as well (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003; Mandara & Murray, 2002). *Ethnic equivalence* and *cultural values* are two models developed for the purpose of understanding the role ethnicity plays in parenting practices and adjustment in children. The *ethnic equivalence model* focuses on mainstream or universal parenting practices. Parenting practices such as parental warmth, control, and autonomy characterize this model. The *cultural values model* refers to the set of parenting practices that evolve in racial/ethnic families based on an alternative set of values and parental preferences.

Lamborn and Felbab (2003) conducted a study in order to evaluate the usefulness of a joint model in understanding the role of ethnicity on parenting. The joint model combined Baumrind's parenting styles model (1991) and Harrison, et al.'s (1990) racial/ethnic minority family ecologies framework.

Baumrind's parenting typology (1971, 1978, 1991, 1991b, 1993) included four primary styles including 1) *authoritarian*, 2) *permissive*, 3) *authoritative*, and 4) *neglectful*. The *authoritarian* parent values obedience, tends toward punitive disciplinary measures for behavioral infractions, and discourages child autonomy; preferring instead unquestioned acceptance of parental authority. The *permissive* parent acquiesces to the demands of the child. The thinking behind the method is minimal restriction will result in better child adjustment. The *authoritative* parent appropriately directs the child's activities. Children are encouraged to participate in verbal exchanges and voice their concerns openly. Discipline is based on firm control without becoming overly restrictive or punitive. The *neglectful* parent conveys less warmth, is critical, and their approach to discipline is more authoritarian. Further, the home environment tends to be highly conflictual (Baumrind, 1978; Mandara & Murray, 2002). In Lamborn and Felbab's study (2003) the *ethnic equivalence model* representing mainstream parenting was based on Baumrind's parenting styles typology.

The second model used in Lamborn and Felbab's (2003) joint model study was the ethnic minority family ecologies framework (Harrison, et al., 1990), which as described above included discussions of the relations between family ecologies, adaptive strategies, socialization goals, and developmental outcomes for children. The family ecologies framework represented the *cultural values model.*

The researchers conducted a study in which they recruited 14 and 15 year old black high school students (all 93 were enrolled in a college preparatory program). The students were asked to identify qualities that described their parents. The study was designed to identify the adolescents' responses regarding family socialization practices

using both an open-ended interview protocol and a survey. Both data collection instruments were organized into broader categories of the parenting styles model (warmth, behavioral control, and autonomy) as well as the family ecologies model which considered dimensions and their subsets more frequently associated with black families: 1) interdependence (depending on family and kinship networks), 2) family obligations (including family responsibility and respect for elders), and 3) ethnic socialization (ethnic pride and religion) (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003).

The results of the study suggest the adolescents' descriptions of their parents reflected both models. In the participants' reports, warmth and behavioral control as well as interdependence and family obligations as per the family ecologies model emerged as central themes. According to the study findings, the family ecologies model was a better predictor for racial/ethnic identity, while "the parenting styles model was a better predictor of self-esteem" (p. 612).

The investigators concluded the racial/ethnic minority family ecologies framework is appropriate for investigating ethnic family functioning. However, they also concluded the "mainstream models of family functioning, such as the parenting styles model, [which] have been criticized as being less meaningful for ethnic families....is [also] appropriate for African-American teens" (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003, p. 613-614). While many researchers may recognize the presence of secondary cultural values and the significance of culturally informed nuances in African American parenting practices, there seems to be an ongoing effort to legitimate the use of parenting typologies developed on the basis of middle-class white families across racial/ethnic minority family

groups, particularly Baumrind's parenting styles model as suggested in the above conclusions presented by Lamborn and Felbab (2003).

There are certain family characteristics that seem more often associated with African American family life, several of which reflect aspects of African culture, therefore, further supporting the ancestral worldview dimension of the ethnic minority family ecologies framework (Harrison, et al., 1990). Some of the more common parenting styles and characteristics identified in the literature on African American family life and child-rearing practice include 1) the collective responsibility for raising children, 2) the importance of the immediate family as well as the extended kinship system, 3) a preference for flexible gender roles, 4) to raise children to be obedient and respectful, 5) respect and reverence for the elders, 6) the significance of religion and spirituality, 7) maintaining a sense of responsibility for the whole, and 8) the importance of being resilient in the face of adversity (Carter-Black, 2001; Forehand & Kotchick, 1996; Hill, 1972; Thomas, 2000).

It is all but impossible to discuss parenting practices in African American families without discussing discipline. A crucial parenting task discipline is the focus of numerous parent-child interactions throughout the day (O'Brien Caughy & Franzini, 2005). It is also a parenting task that receives considerable attention from the social science research community. Various styles of discipline have been identified and categorized ranging from "external-control discipline, such as threats, punishment, or harsh punishment, [to] internal-control discipline such as reasoning, restitution, or problem solving" (O'Brien Caughy & Franzini, 2005, p. 120; Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

Group experiences which shape adaptive culture and the accompanying cultural prescriptions are proposed as wielding significant influence on multiple parenting practices, not the least of which is discipline (Baumrind, 1993; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Ogbu, 1981). As is the case in many other dimensions of middle-class African American family life, the research community knows very little about their disciplinary beliefs and practices. What has been suggested is there is actually considerable within-group variability particularly across SES and parent education (Horn, Cheng, & Joseph, 2004).

The parenting style and discipline in African American families has consistently been characterized as authoritarian, harsh, punitive, and overly physical (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996; O'Brien Caughy & Franzini, 2005; Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). However, Deater-Decker, et al., (1996) concluded the authoritarian parenting style is not associated with poor child outcomes in African American populations as they are among white youth.

O'Brien Caughy and Franzini (2005) found that physical punishment was no more prevalent among the African American than the Euro-American respondents when they controlled for parent education. In another study by Horn, et al., (2004) the researchers investigated the impact of SES on disciplinary practices among black families. Their findings suggest little difference in beliefs about discipline across lower and middle to upper SES families. They also found a preference for teaching as a disciplinary measure as opposed to spanking. Harsh physical punishments were uncommon across all SES levels. It should be noted however, that the middle and upper class African American respondents in their study were still more likely to believe and/or

practice spanking than the white respondents of the same SES level in an earlier study by Socolar and Stein.

Numerous researchers argue the outcome effects of corporal punishment. Flynn (1994) made a clear pronouncement stating with sufficient knowledge, parents might come to "see spanking as counterproductive to achieving...elements [that]....promote greater individualism and equality" (p. 322-323). Straus (as cited in Flynn, 1994) is adamant in his proposal that spanking produces negative outcomes and the cultural norms that legitimizes its use are little more than unsupported *myths*.

Conversely, there are those investigators who suggest while there could be problems associated with physical punishment, when folded into the authoritative parenting style (warmth and control attributes) these potential difficulties may not occur and in some instances may even facilitate developmental outcomes (Baumrind, 1993; Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005).

Other pertinent child-rearing practices have been discussed within the African American family research literature. Among parenting practices observed in African American families is the parent-child communication pattern. Some researchers suggest black parents tend to talk to their young children less than white parents. However, rather than a feature of race, Peters proposes this may in fact reflect a difference based on social class and maternal education (Peters, 1997).

Parental teaching style within the black family is another child-rearing practice that has been investigated by several researchers including Hess, et al., (1968, as cited in Peters, 1997). Hess, et al., identified two teaching styles preferred by African American mothers (*personal-subjective* and *status-normative*). However, only the former style was

preferred by middle-class black mothers. Reflective of the parenting dimension referred to as *warmth* (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), which suggests a parent who expresses affection and regard for their child, as well as a sensitivity to their child's needs, the personal-subjective teaching style is more responsive to the child's needs, interests, mood, preferences, and stage of development. Conversely, the status-normative teaching style is more directive. Conformity is important to this mother, therefore this style is chosen when the intent is to teach a specific task or when behavioral conformity is the goal.

In a prevention trial based on the Strong African American Families Program (SAAF), researchers identified four elements of a *regulated, communicative home environment* (Brody, Murry, Gerrard, Gibbons, Molgaard, McNair, Brown, Wills, Spoth, Luo, Chen, & Neubaum-Carlan, 2004). The program targeted a very specific population (rural African American mothers and their pre-teen children). The prevention intervention was designed to protect youth from premature alcohol use and sexual activity. However, the parenting practices identified in the intervention to be employed by the treatment group were selected specifically for black families. Therefore, the application of the practices across socioeconomic status (SES) and family parental configuration (two-parent families) seems appropriate. The regulated, communicative home environment is characterized by the following: 1) *involved-vigilant parenting*, 2) *clearly articulated parental expectations*, 3) *communication*, and 4) *racial socialization*.

Involved-vigilant parenting requires high levels of monitoring and supervision accompanied by emotional and instrumental support. According to Brody, et al., (2004)

involved-vigilant parenting protects children in high risk contexts, deters involvement in antisocial activity, encourages watchfulness, and promotes self-regulation.

Articulated parental expectations along with *communication* of vital information provide emotional support to children. The researchers identified the positive correlation between communication and parental support as a powerful protective factor for youth. Another dimension of parenting described in much of the parenting research literature is *demandingness* (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), which pertains to the degree and manner in which parents exert control over their children's behaviors. Like Brody's, et al., (2004) involved-vigilant parenting, articulated parental expectations, and communication, *demandingness* includes the appropriate monitoring and supervision of children and setting expectations that facilitate positive integration into the family system (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003).

Racial socialization was included as an element in a regulated, communicative home environment because racism is a feature of daily life for African Americans. The failure to address race and racism such that children are able to understand and confront each respectively, sets the stage for any number of externalizing and internalizing behaviors including substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and anger-responses (Brody, et al., 2004). The discussion of the SAAF program provides a segue into the literature on racial socialization. Three more issues of importance as they pertain to parenting practices in African American families should be addressed first — the influence of social class, the influence of the child's gender on parenting practices, and discipline in the black family.

Racial Identity Development and Socialization

Vital to the understanding of parenting in African American families is the recognition that racial identity development and socialization are crucial. Varying strategies are employed by African American families to bolster the resilience of their children against the potential deleterious effects of racism and the tensions inherent in race-related stress. Harrell (2000) defines these tensions as "The race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being" (p. 45). Inculcating children during the early stages of development heightens the likelihood that they will internalize certain key protective mechanisms.

The manner in which parents positively socialize their children to understand race, recognize and develop strategies to confront racism, and develop and maintain a positive racial identity involves the employment of adaptive and protective practices that will foster their children's ability to function in a race conscience society (Hughes, 2003). African American parents report their efforts to promote racial/ethnic cultural pride in their children. They further teach them African American history and heritage, and instill cultural practices, which reiterate biculturalism and the ancestral worldview in the ethnic minority family ecologies framework (Harrison, et al., 1990).

Sanders' (1997), definition of positive racial socialization involves embracing one's intra-cultural group and experiencing the development of a healthy racial identity while at the same time acquiring an awareness of and set of viable responses to racism. Under girding this often times daunting developmental milestone is the requirement that parents' efforts must promote the child's racial identity, awareness of race and racism,

and acquisition of coping skills while simultaneously fostering respect and acceptance of other racial/ethnic groups. Tolerance, acceptance, and respect for others must evolve despite the reality that out-group members will often times perpetrate racist and discriminatory acts against the person as an individual and their particular group as a whole.

Positive racial socialization contributes to higher functioning in a variety of environmental contexts, thereby promoting more enhanced developmental outcomes. For example, a positive correlation was found to exist between African American children's expressed awareness of race and the accompanying racial barriers and the child's racial identity and academic achievement. A large study investigating academic achievement among African American youth was conducted in an urban city in the southeastern United States. The aim of the study was to explore the effects of family, teacher, and the church community on attitudes toward school, behaviors, and the academic achievement of African American middle-school students. Consequently, 826 students completed questionnaire's related to students' perceptions of support from teachers and parents, church involvement, behavior while in school, and self-concepts regarding academic achievement.

From the larger project, Sanders (1997) conducted a smaller qualitative study. Data from interviews with a sample of 28 students resulted in three categories of racial awareness including 1) minimization or denial of racism and racial barriers, 2) moderate to low awareness of racism and racial barriers, and 3) high awareness of racism and racial barriers. One out of seven students who fell in the minimization category was a high academic achiever. Eleven students fell into the moderate to low awareness to racism and

racial barriers category. These students were evenly distributed among the high, medium, and low academic achievement levels. Ten students fell into the high awareness category, six of whom were among the high academic achievement level.

The author concluded a high level of awareness of racism and racial barriers may promote greater effort to achieve academically in some instances. Sanders further suggested the students in this study expressed a strong racial identity and perceived racism as a challenge to be disproved through their own personal success. According to the author, the parents of these students had communicated their racial attitudes and coping strategies to their children as witnessed in the following statement. "I will never forget who I am....When I was little, my Dad said,..."It is important to remember. Even though Whites and Blacks are different, they still have to interact." I think that he gave pretty good advice [Mark, 13 years old, 3.5 GPA]" (Sanders, 1997, p. 90).

As noted by Wade Nobles, if black children living in contemporary America are to experience the kind of healthy development that promotes achievement and success outcomes, families must strengthen them through appropriate developmental structures and a complex dual socialization process (Hale-Benson, 1982). Duality of socialization refers to a process, whereby African Americans learn how to live and function in "the ambiguity and marginality of living simultaneously in two worlds — the world of the Black community and the world of mainstream society" (Peters, 1997, p. 173). Therefore, parents must direct their initial efforts toward helping their children develop a healthy identity through positive racial socialization techniques.

"Modeling of behaviors and exposure to culturally relevant material and activities are some of the methods that parents can use to facilitate this process" (Miller,

1999, p. 495). However, regardless of the methods employed, "the critical message is that race will affect available options and chances of succeeding in life, and competencies to navigate a sometimes hostile environment must be developed" (Miller, 1999)(Miller, 1999, p. 495).

Failure to adequately prepare children to not only survive but thrive in an environment historically characterized by racism, sexism, patriarchy, and social class orientations results in an increased risk for a host of physical, emotional, psychological, and social stresses, many of which impede healthy development and social functioning.

According to the results of a study by Utsey, Payne, Jackson, and Jones (2002) institutional racism alone may have served as a significant predictor of mental health functioning among African American elders, impacting on both their quality of life and life satisfaction. As they concluded for many African Americans, the Jim Crow era of segregation in the south and de facto segregation in regions of the northern United States resulted in numerous personal "encounters with rigid racial segregation, both de facto and de jour" (p. 232). However, it is important to recognize differences in socio-demographic factors such as personal experiences, gender, age, social class, and regional context contributed to intra-group variability among these individuals as well. The next two sections of this chapter will discuss the influence of social class and gender as influencing socio-demographic factors in the investigation of African American family life, success oriented parenting strategies, and positive racial identity development.

Social Class

Impoverished African American families experience very different problems than their middle-class counterparts (Mandara & Murray, 2002). The War on Poverty

influenced a number of social science researchers to initiate studies of low-income black families (Peters, 1997). However, despite the dramatic increase in the number of African Americans moving into the middle-class SES during that same time period, this group was omitted from scientific investigation (Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

Some suggest the dearth of research on this segment of the black community may be attributable to the paucity of research on African Americans in general. For example, reportedly, only 15% of the articles published in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* from 1939 to 1987 pertained to black family life (Trosper, 2002). Others have proposed that the absence of studies on middle-class African American families simply didn't register as necessary among mainstream investigators because the black community was perceived of as a kind of monolithic one-size-fits-all convergent group, devoid of any significant variation (Peters, 1997; Trosper, 2002). While it is factual that middle-class black families' problems are considerably different than those of families living in poverty, there are issues that need to be addressed by the social science community nonetheless.

The research that is available on middle-class African American families suggests there is a high correlation between parenting practices and social class and the parents' level of education (Trosper, 2003). For example, parents with higher SES are more likely to view themselves in collaboration with their children's teachers (Hill, Castellino, Landsford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004; Lareau, 1989). Parent-child communication rates are higher (Peters, 1997), the more child-centered personal-subjective parental teaching style is preferred (Hess, et al., as cited in Peters, 1997), gender equality is emphasized more emphatically (Hill, 2002), and harshness of

discipline is negatively correlated to higher SES levels (O'Brien Caughy & Franzini, 2005). However, the transcendence to middle-class SES does not eliminate all the risk factors for African American families and their children.

The size of the black middle-class has grown significantly since the 1940s. However, being predominately positioned in lower middle-class occupations, their financial status continues to be tentative rather than reflective of substantial and/or stable wealth.

As discussed in the previous chapter, middle-class black families residing in large urban metropolitans may find themselves sandwiched in between middle-class white and impoverished black neighborhoods placing them in close proximity to areas of high poverty concentrations (Robin Jarrett, personal communication, 2000). This in turn creates a potential vulnerability to the effects frequently associated with poverty (inflated crime rates, inadequate community resources, and risk for exposure to adverse events) (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). When these *buffer zone* effects take place, parents may find themselves competing for their children with the illusionary attractiveness of high risk elements. A combination of factors makes this an untenable position for these families.

Media generated images of pop culture heroes who at times glamorize illegitimate opportunities for achieving institutional goals can be extremely alluring for young people. Pop culture artists frequently exalt a black sub-culture that may well conflict with the values parents are attempting to transfer to their children. Further, there is a compounded effect of such media created heroes and the non-conforming residents of neighboring ghetto census tract areas who reject conventional modes of behavior.

Pattillo-McCoy (1999) reported an incident in which middle-class sixth graders attending a private Catholic school received an assignment to create murals espousing a drug-free theme. Displayed in the hallways of the school, one of the murals was signed "Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy Dogg" rather than the students' actual names. At the time, Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg had a chart-topping song which included the lyrics "Rollin' down the street smokin' indo, sippin' on gin and juice" [indo is another term for marijuana]. The ironic twist portrayed in the pre-teens' gesture suggests the inculcation of "gangsta" and "thug" images in the youth sub-culture.

These dual images of media generated "gangsta" hip hop rappers, cinematic heroes, and portraits of young black men stereotypically depicted in newsprint along-side the "gritty urban reality" are clearly visible, easily identified, and recognized by children (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999, p. 122-123). In turn, these images create powerful distractions with the potential to significantly deter young people from the achievement orientations and success pathways promoted by their families.

What this all means for African American parents raising their children in black middle-class enclaves often bounded by poverty and more to the point, neighborhoods that reflect "ghetto-life", is they must double their efforts to provide protective mechanisms for their children and young people. They must be vigilant and they must develop strategies that increase their children's coping skills and promote a high level of self-regulation in order to reduce the risk of harm.

Does Gender Influence Parental Expectations?

Gender as an influencing variable on parenting practices in African American families has been argued repeatedly in the research literature. Despite the attention it has

received over the past few years, the question remains open. One would be hard pressed to deny any influencing effect of the child's gender on the manner in which the families set at least basic expectations — those that bespeak gender role socialization such that the child will not meet blatant rejection by peers, family, or community systems. Nonetheless, the verdict certainly is not yet in. Consequently, reflective of the ongoing debate, the following section on gender, as it does or does not influence parental expectations, is presented from two different perspectives as reported in the research literature.

According to Hill (2002) most black scholars suggest that historically, African Americans had no opportunity to adhere to gender norms as prescribed by the dominant group. The image of the strong black woman is one in which she is expected to be independent, obtain an adequate education in order to secure a legitimate career, and not to expect marriage will guarantee financial security. In one study, Hill (2002) explored what parents teach their children about gender and how it influences the division of household labor. She cited several other studies in which the authors suggested girls are expected to get an education, work outside the home, maintain their responsibilities to the family and larger community, and be as independent, authoritative, and financially self-sufficient as the boys in the family. These researchers seemed to suggest that "age and competency, rather than biological sex, shape the behavioral expectations of black parents" (Hill, 2002, p. 495). Hill reported that all of the parents in her study expressed their endorsement of gender equality to some degree, and the issue of gender equality was strongest in two-parent, dual-income earning families, of middle-class SES (2002).

Hale-Benson (1982) paints a more traditional picture of gender socialization in African American families. By the age of three black children are required to "step down from 'the throne' to either begin assisting with a younger child" (p. 64) or join the older (child)ren of the family. Socialization for males involves a range of competencies that must be master such as gaining control over their body movement (including athletic skills), expression of sexuality, and income earning ability. Additionally, African American males are expected to develop a kind of sophistication commonly referred to as *street-wise* behavior and develop "attitudes and strategies that enhance their survival in a hostile environment" (p. 65). Finally, male socialization focuses on the quality of his presentation of self to others — how he is perceived by family members, peers, and various other micro level systems.

On the other hand, the thrust of female socialization seems to revolve around her ability to care for others. There is an expectation that the young girl will care for younger siblings and she is also expected to contribute to the running of the household, receiving kudos for mastery of such skills. Since the American standard of beauty excludes physical characteristics normally associated with women of African descent, there is less emphasis on facial beauty (Hale-Benson, 1982). The family and larger community tend to stress the virtue of a variety of attributes such as personal style and "verbal ability, personality, wit, strength, intelligence, speed, and so forth" (Thomas Kochman as cited in Hale-Benson, 1982, p. 67).

It seems clear there is a continued need for further research devoted to understanding whether or not and how gender of children influences parental

expectations. As the comparison between Hill and Hale-Benson's work suggests, the definitive answer eludes us still.

Although the answer to the question of gender in the African American family remains on the table for debate, there are other challenges to the study of black families and children that need to be addressed. One such challenge is the scientific community's tradition of disregarding variation among racial/ethnic minority populations. A strategy for resisting the research community's long-standing tendency to perceive African Americans as monolithic is to illuminate intra-cultural variability. Several typologies have been developed that address the issue of racial identity development and socialization as well as the accompanying messages about race that contribute to understanding the variances that abound in social groups who share a common sociopolitical, cultural, and historical experience.

Boykin and Toms (1985) developed a seminal typology classifying African American families according to three distinct contextual categories. The domains include the *black mainstream*, *minority socializing*, and *black cultural* designations, each of which characterizes a set of racial socialization processes. Encompassed in the black mainstream classification are those families who embrace and promote Eurocentric values and beliefs, courtesy of the "American Dream". Racial socialization strategies and messages tend to adhere to standards established by the white middle-class, and include a set of criteria for determining achievement and success. The minority socializing category suggests some black families may select strategies that at first glance appear passive and accepting of certain dominant group perceptions (even those that mirror stereotypical racist ideology). Development of coping mechanisms and strategies such as

assimilation, may appeal to parents who subscribe to this racial socialization process. The black cultural socialization process is based on an Afrocentric value and belief system. Emphasizing spirituality, harmony, communalism, emotional expressiveness, and respect for the oral traditions (Boykin & Toms, 1985), these values are "expressed through behaviors displayed in everyday interactions" (Thomas, 2000, p. 319).

Bennett (2004) identified five domains germane to racial socialization processes found in the research literature on African American families including: 1) parental perceptions of the importance of racial socialization, 2) child/adolescent perceptions of the importance of racial socialization, 3) parental racial socializing behaviors (verbal and non-verbal), 4) child/adolescent receptivity to parental racial socializing, and 5) family communications regarding the prevalence and importance or racial socialization (p. 36).

Several earlier studies (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Jones-Thomas, & Speight, 1999; Peters, 1985) suggest to us that families' choice of a particular type of socialization process is made in accordance with and reflects the content of the messages about race that they are most likely to convey to their children. For example, Bowman and Howard (1985) developed a model for categorizing racial socialization messages. The messages that stress pride in one's African heritage, race, family, culture, and history were categorized as *racial identity messages*. *Self-development messages* emphasize education, achievement, and the value of hard work, while *racial barrier messages* highlight the existence of racism and prejudice. *Egalitarian messages* hold with the concept of a single universal human race, promoting fairness and equality despite the absence of mutual reciprocity.

Murray and Mandara (2002) developed yet another model describing various racial socialization processes which included four separate typologies. The *racial empowerment* designation describes families who emphasize racial identity development and perceive racism and racial oppression as a challenge to be confronted and vanquished. The *racial awareness* typology stresses the importance and absolute value of developing a sense of racial pride, while *race defensiveness* constitutes a disdain for racial out-groups in general, but may encourage imitating Euro-American behavior to one's own advantage. Finally, the *race-naiveté* designation disregards race and race matters altogether.

While racial identity typologies are useful frameworks for considering stages of racial identity development, they lack the capacity to explore the intricacies of individual nuances of racial/ethnic identity development. What cannot be ascertained using identity development models is how one's unique understanding of race and personal responses to racism evolves. They are inadequate as structures for understanding how shifts in the micro to macro level sociopoltitical and cultural contexts affect the manner in which one grapples with race-related tensions and stress and hopefully comes to resolve. In order to glean such personal and individualized material, one must be prepared to explore the lived experiences of within-group members.

Regardless of the models constructed to describe and categorize racial identity development and socialization processes for African American families, it is vitally important to focus on the context in which individual families are embedded if factually accurate and comprehensive understanding is to be achieved. Further, the end result must be healthy well adjusted young black men, women, and children. bell hooks (1990)

describes an adaptive strategy developed and frequently maintained by black mothers and fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins that involves converting the "homeplace" into "a site of resistance" (p. 43). A political arena, the homeplace ensures the black child, diminished by the dominant society and injured by racism, can return home to a place where s/he is elevated to a position of great value. This is a virtuous goal.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This research design constitutes a qualitative ethnographic comparative case study approach. An ethnographic design permits the location of "specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context" (Barbara Tedlock, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 455). Furthermore, Tedlock states ethnography "combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives...(primarily as a useful methodology) to cultural studies...[and] in a number of applied areas" (p. 455). Finally, by entering into interactions with people in their everyday lives, one is able to acquire a better understand the "beliefs, motivations, and behaviors" of those under study (p. 456). An ethnographic approach permitted the investigation of success oriented parenting strategies similarly employed by middle-class African American families.

A comparative case study approach was chosen in order to permit comparative analyses within and across cases. According to Stake (2000), instrumental case study provides insights into a particular issue using in-depth scrutiny of the context and details of activities particular to the specific case. The primary benefit of employing a case study approach is the opportunity to examine both the similarities as well as the variations within the case. Facilitated by details such as the nature of the case, historical background, physical setting, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts, narrative descriptions may be rendered such that the experiences of the case will become visible to the reader (Stake, 2000). Succinctly stated "How we learn from the singular case is related to how

the case is like and unlike other cases (i.e., comparisons)....We come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience" (Stake, 2000, p. 242). Ultimately, through this process, "propositional and experiential knowledge" is increased (p. 242). A comparative case study approach using oral histories provided the means to illustrate intra-cultural group variations in child-rearing strategies with a specific focus on positive racial identity development and socialization within and across three generations of African American informants.

The Champaign-Urbana Black Community

There is a definite uniqueness about the Champaign-Urbana black community making it a particularly interesting site for this research project. In 1865 the first wave of African Americans made Champaign-Urbana their home when many recently emancipated blacks fled the southern states seeking to relocate in the north. The Great Migration of the 1930s and 1940s marked the second wave of African Americans to settle in this community.

Historically there has been and continues to be a significant population of working class poor and impoverished families living in Champaign-Urbana. However, there is also a black middle-class that has been present at least since the 1930s and 1940s. The presence of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign has played an undeniable part in the evolution of the large and ever-growing black middle-class in these twin cities. At a time when predominately white colleges and universities routinely denied admission to African Americans, five siblings from a single prominent black family from this community attended and graduated from the University of Illinois.

During the late 1960s a third but much smaller wave of African Americans

arrived in Champaign-Urbana. Choosing to make this community their home, many of these new arrivals quickly moved into the black middle-class. It is the descendants from the first two generations of black settlers along with this last group that provide such a rich source of individuals and families to inform this study.

I have lived, studied, and worked in the Champaign-Urbana community since 1968 when I arrived on the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign campus as an incoming freshman student. A major research university with a student population topping 30,000, the sociopolitical events of the day created a tension that was almost tangible. Similarly, the surrounding community of the Champaign-Urbana twin cities felt the wave of change as well. As a young adult I was able to secure employment in a private residential child welfare agency and spent the next twenty-one years serving abused and neglected children and youth. As a thirty-seven year resident of the area, I have become immersed in the community despite being a *transplant* myself. This immersion experience contributes greatly to my understanding of the middle-class black community of Champaign-Urbana.

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois is a midsized community situated in East Central Illinois. Surrounded by rich and fertile farmland, the twin cities host several significant employers. The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and Carle Clinic are among the community's largest employers. Additionally, there are numerous privately owned and operated businesses that are quite lucrative and contribute to the cities' overall resources.

As mentioned above, the Champaign-Urbana black community has a long and unusual history. One of the more unique characteristics of the Champaign-Urbana African American community is its multi-generational character. Often times brought by

rail, many families have lived in the area for more than 100 years. In fact, not only was one of the informants who agreed to participate in this research born in this community, but her father was also born just a few miles southeast of Champaign-Urbana in 1892.

Carol Stack's seminal work *All Our Kin*, (1974) was set in the historical black community located on the north edge of Champaign-Urbana, an area more familiarly referred to as *the North End*. While the North End remains home to multi-generational African Americans, numerous social, political, and economic factors have resulted in a more racially heterogeneous larger community than in previous decades. At the hub of one such influential dynamic is the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The black community and the university have a long history which could be characterized as a love-hate relationship. The university maintained an exclusionary housing policy prior to the 1940s which denied university housing to African American students. Offended members of the black community responded in a show of support by opening their homes to students who would not have had access to adequate housing otherwise.

In 1968 the university implemented an innovative initiative to increase the number of disadvantaged students; specifically targeting economically poor African Americans, through the Special Educational Opportunities Program (Williamson, 2003). The largest recruitment effort of its kind, the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) had as its goal the recruitment and admission of 500 economically disadvantaged students. This highly ambitious initiative came to be known as *Project 500*. Admissions staff and black Student Association (BSA) student volunteers serving as recruiters approached hundreds of high school students, primarily from inner city communities

around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Holmes County, Mississippi, and of course the State of Illinois. Approximately 1,300 students applied to the university through SEOP, and over 750 students were offered admission. An unanticipated 565 of the admitted students actually registered to begin classes; 502 as freshman, during the first year of program implementation. The university had not expected SEOP students to constitute 10% of the incoming freshman class until 1972 (Williamson, 2003). Another unexpected turn of events led to a breach in the formerly welcoming and supportive acceptance of black students by Champaign-Urbana's black community.

The successful recruitment and admission of over 500 incoming African American and other racial/ethnic minority students from throughout the country resulted in members of the black community feeling as if their own young people had been overlooked in the recruitment process. Several individuals from the North End emerged as leaders among the community's young people, and made no apologies for the feelings of resentment and what eventually turned into outward hostility toward the newly arrived black student body. Before the 1968-69 academic year came to a close at the end of the spring '69 semester, the eruption of violent episodes during social events were anything but unexpected. Eventually, a truce of sorts seemed to develop so that the black student presence on the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign campus was not compromised.

The number of African American students attending the university was positively correlated to the growth of the black middle-class in the Champaign-Urbana community as former students chose to remain in the area becoming permanent residents. However, unlike many of the multi-generational community members who continue to maintain

residence close to the North End neighborhoods, the transplanted African American population, dispersed throughout the two cities.

The turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s certainly created chasms between the university, the black community, and black students. However, it appears enough time has passed and sufficient effort has been made by most segments of these communities to allow some of the old wounds to heal (John Lee Johnson, personal communication, October 18, 2003). It is through this healed relationship that my entrance as a researcher into the lives of families selected for this study has been fostered.

Participants

This chapter addresses the methods employed in the collection and analysis of research data. Several categories of informants were selected as the units of analysis. The participants chosen for this project comprised six middle-class African American families, three members of their extended kinship systems, and three prominent community elders familiar with the historical evolution of the black middle-class in Champaign-Urbana formed another very special informant cohort. Finally, six auxiliary informants were invited to contribute a valuable dual perspective of viable parenting practices that facilitate the healthy development of African American children and youth. These participants approached the question of parenting resilient, achievement oriented young people from both a personal and professional point of view.

Recruitment

Six middle-class African American families were recruited to participate as the primary unit of analysis in this study. A pilot study preceded this research project, and the data from the original pilot is included in this data set. Since I am a long term resident in

this community, I was able use my knowledge and familiarity with the black community to recruit families for participation in this project. The selection criteria for inclusion in the study were as follows:

- Couples had to be married at least 10 years
- They had to be a two-parent family
- The parents had to be raising/have raised both sons and daughters
- The children had to be at least 8 years of age with no upper age limit
- The children had to function at a developmental level that facilitated inquiry concerning family dynamics, beliefs, values, and parental expectations.

Several criteria were used to determine the socio-economic status of the participating families. A demographic questionnaire was developed to ensure the families invited to participate in the study met the preferred selection criteria (See Appendix F). The questionnaires were completed during the initial family meeting, which preceded the first individual interview session. Participant selection criteria included the following:

- A minimum family income of $60,000 annually
- Homeownership in an established middle to upper middle-class neighborhood
- At least one parent possessed a minimum of an associate degree
- At least one parent occupied/had occupied a professional position
- The children attend/attended academically sound and resource rich schools.

Seven families were approached for participation in this study. Six families accepted the invitation. Two of the families had served as informants for the pilot study conducted in the spring of 2001. The preliminary data collected during the pilot study did not address discipline of children by the two families. Therefore, these families were

asked to participate in follow-up interviews so their experiences concerning this significant topic could be obtained. Out of four additional families asked to participate, three accepted the invitation, while only one declined.

The sixth family who actually participated in the final project allowed me to test the interview protocol. I chose members of my family for this purpose. I administered the interview protocol and solicited feedback on several aspects of the instrument including how well the questions were organized, clarity and ease of understanding what was being asked, and length of time required to comprehensively answer all the questions. Their feedback helped strengthen the set of questions and was incorporated into the final interview protocol. Additionally, the data they provided was so rich in detail that I decided to include their interviews in the final data analysis.

Because of my familiarity with segments of the African American community in the Champaign-Urbana area, I was able to identify families who could easily satisfy the participant selection criteria. Therefore, I solicited six of the seven families initially invited to participate in the study.

The importance of the extended kinship system in the African and African American cultural tradition has been cited innumerable times. The addition of these voices only served to enrich the data collected from the families themselves. However, since most of the participant families relocated to the Champaign-Urbana community, many of their extended family members live in communities outside Champaign County and/or the State of Illinois. Consequently, interviews with members of the participant families' extended kinship systems were limited.

The opportunity to interview extended family members was facilitated through a combination of snowball, purposive, and convenience sampling. Participating families were asked to refer members of their extended kinship systems who might be willing to participate in this study. As extended kin were identified initial contact was made. The process permitted access to two the mothers of the parent informant group and the brother of another family group parent.

Three individuals were invited to participate in this study as auxiliary informants for their ability to provide information concerning child-rearing practices and parenting strategies from a dual perspective: 1) they are middle-class African American parents who are raising/have raised their own children, and 2) they possess professional expertise in the area of intervening on behalf of at-risk children and families. These individuals are well known and respected professionals in the child welfare and family therapy practice communities.

One additional informant is currently a graduate student at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. By sharing personal experiences beginning in elementary school and continuing through her middle and high school years, this participant was able to illuminate the struggles sometimes faced by young black males and females on academic achievement and success oriented trajectories. The inclusion of this final individual brought the total to six auxiliary informants interviewed for this study.

Consistent for each informant group, initial contact came in the form of a phone call either to one of the parents from each family or the individual informant. After a preliminary explanation of the research topic, I indicated I would mail a written proposed

research project statement to their home for review and discussion by the potential participants (See Appendix A).

The second contact was also by telephone after ensuring sufficient time for the families and individual informants to receive and review the proposed research project statement. During that contact we arranged an initial first meeting, which was held in the homes of all the informants with the exception of two. This meeting allowed me to further explain the study and answer any questions they might have about the process. When all the family members and each individual informant agreed to participate, informed consents were distributed to each adult (See Appendix B). Minors were asked to read and sign assent forms (See Appendix E), and parents also reviewed and signed a parental permission form for each minor child (See Appendix D). The informants were assured that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary, they could refuse to answer any question(s), and they could choose to withdraw from participation at any time without any consequences to themselves or their family.

Participants were informed their confidentiality would be maintained through multiple methods including the assignment of pseudonyms. Codes for actual participant names would be kept in a locked unit accessible only by me. Audio-tapes would be labeled with pseudonyms and kept in a separate locked unit as well.

Unique to the participating families, parents were then asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which contained items that indicated whether or not the family met the selection criteria (See Appendix F). Additionally, each child was asked to complete a questionnaire, which required them to list various events, opportunities, and

activities to which they had been exposed (See Appendix G). The last agenda item for the initial family meeting was to begin scheduling individual interviews.

Meet the Families

The families presented in this dissertation share many similar characteristics, some of which formed the criteria for participant selection. On the other hand, despite the common demographic factors of race and ethnicity, middle-class socio-economic status, college educated, married two-parent families, raising sons and daughters, and currently living in the same Midwest community, these families demonstrate intra-group variability in the midst of their commonalities. In this section I will introduce the families who so generously contributed to this project of study. Of course pseudonyms have been substituted for the families' actual names, and I have taken care to obscure any information that could betray the families' confidentiality.

The Akbar Family

Patricia and Ahmad Akbar live in a neighborhood situated on the north east of the Champaign-Urbana community. I was thrilled to have the chance to meet with this iconic family. Patricia Akbar is a middle-aged woman who exudes subtlety. When you meet her, the first thing you notice is her soft brown eyes, calm and soothing voice, and ease of movement. She is the walking manifestation of a gentlewoman. Patricia's husband Ahmad is her male double. He too possesses a quiet calm that is absolutely captivating. Ahmad's entire face smiles, not just his mouth and eyes. It is clear why this couple has the respect of not just the black community, but that of most people who come into contact with them. The Akbars raised six children and they are proud of every single one of them. I had the opportunity to interview two of the Akbar clan.

First, I was privileged to spend several hours with the couple's eldest son, Nassar and met his wife Ami. Nassar, an engineer, and Ami, an economist, currently reside abroad. However, in one of those inexplicable twists of fate, the young couple was here for their annual trip to the United States to visit family and friends as well as take care of personal and work related business. Like his parents, Nassar has a contagious calm that you sense as soon as you meet him. He smiles like his father and is as unassuming as his mother. Then I met Azar, one of the Akbars' daughters. It seemed I had met an Akbar whose stature betrayed her assertive character. An attorney whose work requires frequent jaunts into Chicago, Azar is both devoted to her family and to her community. Like her parents, Azar feels a sense of responsibility toward her community. "My parents instilled at a very early age volunteerism and philanthropy within our own community.

The Anderson Family

Scott Anderson has an unusual quality about him; he always has. I say this because Scott is a member of my own family. He has a deep connection to his spiritual nature and tremendous love for his wife and children. Scott takes his responsibility to keep his family safe quite seriously. It is the place where this verbose man draws the line in the sand. Esther Anderson, Scott's wife, presents a polar opposite to Scott's demeanor and affect. However, her level of compassion for particularly those in need best characterizes this woman who very quietly goes about the business of living her faith and religious convictions.

The Anderson's have three children who participated in this study. Melissa is the oldest child and left the family home as an independent 20 something. Although she projects someone you expect to be in one of the helping professions, she instead chose to

pursue a career in the business world. Melissa is a critical thinker and knowledge seeker who seems to have inherited her mother's compassion. Danny Anderson is an only son. Despite the stereotypes of brash young black males that intimidate people just by being in the vicinity, Danny has a smile that could allay the most calloused among us. His blond, blued-eyed best friend lives in a small town in southern Illinois, where Danny would like to attend college. Theirs is an enduring friendship that has survived well over 15 years. The mascot of the Anderson family is the youngest child Alexis. Bright, funny, and articulate, Alexis adores her oldest sister. In possession of a maturity beyond her years, she decided on a career path at the age of 8... professor of language arts.

Mrs. Mary Anderson is Scott's 90-year-old mother. Born and raised on the Mississippi Delta, Mrs. Anderson was affectionately called *Sistuh* by her immediate family and the community she knew as home. The nickname Sistuh had a more practical meaning to it as well. It indexed Mrs. Anderson's birth position, role within her family, and the type of contribution she was expected to make on behalf of her family. As the oldest child and daughter in a sibship of five girls and one boy (the boy died as an infant of undetermined illness), Sistuh was expected to be a very responsible child. Among her many chores around the home and working in the fields, she was expected to look after the younger children when her parents and grandmother were otherwise occupied. The social position and sense of responsibility cast when she was just a child herself remains intact. Despite her years she is regarded as a bulwark (even if mainly symbolically) for her large and extended family.

The Barnes Family

Simon and Margot Barnes are as similar to each other as the Andersons are

dissimilar. Simon is a gregarious, socially adept, outgoing middle-aged man who has earned his way into the ranks of the *movers and shakers* in the Champaign-Urbana community. He has high expectations for his children and models the very attributes he tries to instill in them. Margot, while a bit more subdued in her mannerisms, is a mirror image of Simon. An energetic, physically active administrator, Margot presents a bastion of professionalism, elegance, and stature.

The Barnes children reflect aspects of both their parents in interesting blends and combinations. The oldest and only son, Kyle looks the typical student on a big university campus. He too decided years ago on a career in the banking industry and has not waivered. Kyle is his mother's son in that he even carries himself very upright...just like his mom. Brianna is a beautiful young woman who enjoys an active social life with friends who she has known since a child in elementary school. Like her peers, Brianna is a high academic achiever not just because her parents demand it. Academic competition and achievement is a way of life for Brianna and friends. Brianna seems to have characteristics that place midway between Simon and Margot. Darcy Barnes, like both her parents and older siblings, is an athlete and scholar. She seems quite at ease amidst a more diverse group of peers, and has a slightly mischievous glint in her eyes...Simon's daughter it seems.

Margot Barnes has a brother, Michael Myers who participated in this project as both a member of the family's extended kinship system, but also as an auxiliary informant. Michael has over twenty years experience working with children and families. He is also a father raising two daughters and a son. An artist and a storyteller, this physically imposing man with the calm easy going voice and demeanor of certainty that

can disarm even the most guarded youth also has a gift for conceptualizing complex family dynamics. His expertise was extremely useful in helping me decipher a critical theme which will be discussed at length in Chapter Eight: Contested Racial Authenticity.

The Blair Family

The Blair family is the youngest of all. From different parts of the country, David and Jeanine Blair together constitute a formidable unit. Jeanine is a rather small woman who makes up in intestinal fortitude and intelligence what is missed in terms of physical height. This five foot wife and mother came from a very poor family in the south, attended one of Chicago's foremost universities as a graduate student, and served in a position of authority in the U. S. National Guard. David Blair is similarly a tower of strength and resilience. Born into a poor family living in a Chicago ghetto; described by David, his family relocated to Champaign-Urbana when he was a young pre-teen. Through diligent struggle he compensated for the inadequate Chicago public school education that ill prepared him to compete with his new peer group. A tall slender young man, David is devoted to his family, his God, and manages crises with a quiet and still aplomb that can be somewhat disconcerting if it is directed toward you.

Jackie Blair is an incredibly gifted young girl. Tall and slender like her Dad, she articulates her spirituality and Christian religion. An athlete coached by her Dad, Jackie takes pride in her maturity and her accomplishments. She has learned to accept compliments with grace and freely seeks her parents' advice in times of stress and conflict. Jackie sees herself as a role model for Ev, her 8-year-old brother. Ev epitomizes positive energy. He too loves sports, makes up his own rap songs, and enjoys performing

in the many after school and community-based programs his parents make available to him.

The Howe Family

I have known the Howe family for a number of years. Larry and Becky Howe are practicing Christians both very busy in their church, in the lives of their children, and their extended families. Larry considers himself Becky's biggest fan, in that he encourages her professional development even when he thinks she is overdoing it and stretching herself too thin. He is quite the storyteller and spends an incredible amount of time teaching his children through discussion, using biblical scripture and his own life experiences to support his premise. Becky is a generous woman dedicated to her family, her church family, and her young students (Becky is an elementary school and Sunday school teacher). The Howe's tend to confront family challenges together, each one taking on the role they are best suited to play.

The Howe clan includes three daughters and one son. Lana is tall and statuesque. Although she would not describe herself this way, when I did she gave me a big hug. Lana has a set of life-long friends primarily through her church, and she tends to struggle over making a final career choice. The struggle is not because of perceived limitations but because as she says "there are so many options out there". Mia is also very bright, articulate, and tends to like having things done in a certain way. Watching her prepare for a homecoming dance at her high school conveyed her meticulousness as well as her patience. Josh is a father's son. He talks with a certain pride about the work he and his Dad do to keep things around the house in working order. Sometimes when Larry and his daughters are having a lively debate, Josh will seek the quiet of his own room or the

basement family room rather than engage in the discussion. Kristen, unlike Josh, is always game for a family debate. She realizes how smart she is without appearing to be arrogant. Kristen very casually described her relationship with God by saying, "God and I used to be like that" as she crossed her entwined index and middle fingers suggesting they were like two inseparable best friends.

Mrs. Patricia Howe (Larry's mother) is a rather amazing woman who survived the Jim Crow south, the Great Depression, and moving to Chicago, Illinois. Mrs. Howe is a Christian woman who loves God, her family, and young people. She is also a storyteller. She believes it is her duty to teach young people so they will know their heritage and she does this by telling stories from her own life. She also believes she has finally been able to release all the anger she once harbored toward white people and that she now judges each individual on their own merits.

The Huxtable Family

By virtue of the *Huxtable* pseudonym it seems someone in this family has a sense of humor. Actually Mark chose the name. However, everyone in this family has a sense of humor. Mark and Linda met when Mark was in college and they still celebrate Sweetheart's Day (Mark and Linda are in their late forties, early fifties). Music fills the Huxtable residence and it is generally Mark who starts things. Linda has certain oldies that she refers to as "my jam" and their daughter Rachel loves to "grab" her Mom for a dance around the kitchen. Linda is a working mother who keeps her family's home immaculately clean. She delegates chores and they get done; not just because mom said to do it, but as Rachel put it "I'm used to this house being a certain way and I like it". Mark and Linda's son T.J. is a delightful young teen. He loves watching and going to

sports events with Mark, and would probably like to buy stock in Skateland someday.

These are the wonderful families I had the pleasure of working with during data collection. As the voices of the informant families are heard in subsequent chapters, I hope these descriptions will resound in you and that you will say to yourself, "Of course, what else would Jeanine Blair say in such a case".

Summary of Family Demographics

Six families participated in the dissertation studies. Two of the families (33% where n = 2) consisted of two parents and two children. Another two families (33% where n = 2) were comprised of two parents and three children. The fifth family (17% where n = 1) included two parents and four children, and the sixth family (17% where n = 1) consisted of two parents and six children. The sum of the six families (including extended kin) totaled 31 members. Twenty-eight family members (parents and children only) were interviewed across the pilot and/or dissertation research project.

The distribution of family demographic characteristics are configured and displayed in Table 3-1 including the number of years the couples were married, family size, and the neighborhood context of the family residence (categorized as lower to upper middle-class). The participant selection criteria required a minimum family income of $60,000 annually. Each of the participating families' incomes exceeded this minimum requirement.

Table 3-1. Distribution of Family Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	N	%
Years Married		
10-15	1	17%
16-20		
21-25	1	17%
Over 26	4	66%
Family Size		
4	2	33%
5	2	33%
6	1	17%
7 or More	1	17%
Homeownership		
Yes	6	100%
Neighborhood Context		
Lower middle-class	2	33%
Middle-class	2	33%
Upper middle-class	2	33%
Annual Family Income		
Over $60,000	6	100%

Table 3-2 provides the distribution of the characteristics of individual family members interviewed for this study (N = 28). These characteristics include the ascribed role of each member within the family, the ages and education levels of both parents and children, and the profession of parents and adult child where applicable.

Table 3-2. Distribution of Individual Family Members' Characteristics

Characteristic	N	%
Ascribed Family Role		
Mothers	6	21%
Fathers	6	21%
Sons	6	21%
Daughters	10	36%
Ages		
8-17	7	25%
18-27	7	25%
28-37	2	7%
38-47	2	7%
48-57	10	36%
Current Grade Level (children only)		
Grade school student	1	4%
Middle school student		
High school student	7	25%
Undergraduate student	4	14%
Graduate student		
Highest Education Level Achieved (parents and adult children)		
GED		
High school diploma	2	7%
Associate degree	1	4%
Undergraduate degree	8	28%
Graduate degree	5	17%

The professions of the parents covered a wide range of occupations. They included a chief executive officer for a local social service agency, a licensed practical nurse, educators, an administrator in the area of industrial hygiene, a counselor in a correctional facility, the director of a business development center in an area community college, a rehabilitative services coordinator in a local mental health agency, a bank manager, and a social worker. Two of the parents currently maintain jobs as semi-skilled

workers; one of whom works for the U.S. Post Office and the other is a production worker for a large international food manufacturing company.

One additional criterion included in the demographic questionnaire (See Appendix F) asked parents to describe various activities in which family members are or have been involved. The families' level of activity outside the home and work environments; such as volunteerism, civic or political activism, church-related, or community-based activities, was not only used to establish the families as middle-class, but also served as an important indicator of success outcomes and achievement among the parents in this study. Social class appears to influence "...the nature of the families' social connections, and the strategies used for intervening in [various social] institutions" (Lareau, 2003, p. 240). The acquisition of middle-class status may contribute to a heightened sense of personal agency that increases the likelihood of becoming actively involved in one's community.

These parents consistently serve on numerous and varied boards of directors for social service organizations, and actively participate as board members and committee members of organizations that serve the Champaign-Urbana communities in general such as the Community Collaboration for Economic Development, and the City of Champaign Police/Community Relations Committee. Participation in a wide range of church-based activities included teaching Sunday school classes, singing in the choir, serving on the usher board, providing leadership as a trustee or deacon of the church, and directing children and youth programs and ministries. Membership in business oriented, political, and/or civic groups included Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, the Urban League, and assisting in voter registration efforts. Participation in various school-based activities, events, and

committee work, as well as involvement in the Champaign Park District, the Urbana Park District, and Douglass Park, both as program participants as well as volunteers, were reported as being among the many activities maintained by these parents.

The children of the informant families were also asked to self-report on the various activities, programs, and events in which they have participated, including school sponsored activities, community-based youth programs, church-related activities, cultural events, and sports programs. Similar to their parents, these children and youth have experienced and participated in a wide range of activities.

Typically, these young people are involved in church sponsored activities such as praise dance teams, choir, and tutoring programs. Active participation in service projects such as the Appalachian Service Project in which church youth volunteer their services to impoverished, rural, often isolated Appalachian communities was reported by one family of children.

Most of these youth participate in a variety of sports programs, activities, and events including basketball, baseball, soccer, track and field, and football. Frequently sponsored and/or hosted by the local Champaign County Y.M.C.A., schools, park districts, and a number of other community organizations, involvement in these kinds of programs and events were listed by nearly all of the youth.

The informants also reported being exposed to various culturally focused and/or civic oriented activities through the community in general and the schools in particular. Their lists include participation in the African American Club, the Minority Enrichment Program, the Brothers-to-Brothers and Sisters-to-Sisters programs, and membership in the youth arm of the NAACP. One informant in particular was quite deliberate in

highlighting her membership in her high school's student council, student senate, and the Young Achievers Society. Several youth noted how much they enjoy the activities and events offered through the Multi-Cultural Center. Often facilitated by a well known and readily recognized community figure, this program includes folktales and stories that reflect the African and African American cultural tradition of storytelling.

The career goals of the children of these parents reflect expectations and aspirations for professional occupations as they move into adulthood. The children identified professions that included becoming the president and chief executive officer of a bank, a nutritionist, a news anchor, a university professor of language arts, an attorney, a psychiatrist, and a medical doctor. Two children (one male and one female) expressed their dream of becoming professional athletes. However, both added an alternate career choice involving the training and/or management of professional athletes. Three of the adult children interviewed were already well into their professional careers as an insurance underwriter, an attorney, and an engineer.

Specific criteria were chosen to determine the level of success achieved thus far by the children of the participating families. Current grade point average (GPA), involvement in extra-curricular and other organized activities, and education goals were among the most pertinent indicators of achievement and success orientations. These characteristics are displayed in Table 3-3 titled Success/Achievement Orientation Indicators.

Table 3-3. Success/Achievement Orientation Indicators: Children

Indicator	N = 14*	%
Current/Most Recent GPA (reflects a 5.0 grading scale)		
Under 2.0		
2.0-3.0	3	21%
3.1-4.0	5	36%
4.1-5.0	5	36%
Satisfactory	1	7%
Extra-Curricular Activities		
Yes	14	100%
No	0	
Organized Activities		
Yes	14	100%
No	0	
Educational Goals Identified		
Yes	14	100%
No	0	

*The two oldest adult children did not complete the child/youth/young adult environmental factors questionnaire

The Keepers of the History

The last three informants solicited for this study proved to be a unique and valuable resource indeed. Referred to as *Informal Community Historians*, these informants are all African American women in their 80s and 90s. One of the participants, Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson, moved to Champaign-Urbana with her husband in the 1940s. The other two women (Mrs. Connie Foreman and Mrs. Evelyn Bowman) were born and raised in this community. Because of their long and rich histories in Champaign-Urbana, the experiences of these women was sought to provide a historical context for the evolution of the black community in general and the middle-class African American community specifically.

Meet the Elders

Mrs. Connie Foreman

Born and raised on the North End of Champaign-Urbana, Mrs. Connie Foreman and her husband continue to live in the traditional Black community. The Foremans are long-term residents of Carver Park, which suggests they were among a rather elite group of citizens able to purchase housing in the newly constructed community during the mid 1940s when suitable housing for Black families was scarce. Mr. and Mrs. Foreman raised a son and daughter, both of whom have been extremely successful in their careers as a naval officer in the U.S. Navy and an associate professor respectively.

Mrs. Foreman is a very tall woman with a big voice. She laughs very easily and has a wonderful sense of humor. As we met on the enclosed front porch of her modest home in the Carver Park subdivision, we ate deluxe mixed nuts (special ordered by Mrs. Foreman who says they are of the best quality), laughed, and I listened as she talked about raising two children of whom she is so very proud.

Mrs. Foreman described the neighborhood of her childhood as one where everyone knew everyone else. As a child she and her siblings enjoyed numerous activities and events sponsored by the community such as skating in the park, cooking classes and book clubs, even competitive sports with children from other parts of the community (white children who they rarely if ever saw in school). She talked about Sunday mornings sitting on a neighbor's front porch with the other kids, listening as the neighbor read the newspaper comics.

It was clear Mrs. Foreman was very serious when it came to her children and their education. She was quite expressive as she told of an incident in which her son was being

dismissed by his teacher, the results of which was a drop in his academic performance. Mrs. Foreman met with the teacher and school principal, who suggested her son might be inappropriately placed in school (college preparatory track). Mrs. Foreman's daughter had a similar experience when she came home after school one day with her courses for the next semester. Absent from the schedule was science, replaced by home economics. In both instance after Mrs. Foreman's visits to the schools, the difficulties were rectified to her satisfaction. She had an absolute determination that her children would receive the best education she could secure and nothing would deter that goal.

Mrs. Evelyn Bowman

Mrs. Evelyn Bowman was born and has lived in Champaign-Urbana her entire life. Her father was born in 1892 in a small farm town southeast of the City of Urbana. The Bowman family has a long history in this community and is known by most residents of Champaign-Urbana at least by reputation. A woman of substance Mrs. Bowman speaks with a calm and even voice. The mother of three successful adult children, since her husband's death she now lives alone but maintains an enviable level of daily activity.

Mrs. Bowman is not very tall, but she truly commands attention when you are in her presence. Her reputation as a community elder and leader precedes her wherever she goes. Mrs. Bowman epitomizes a civic-minded individual who has been instrumental in the development of the Champaign-Urbana black community for many years.

I have taken to calling Mrs. Bowman *Mrs. B.* to both mark of her uniqueness and the awe and admiration I have for this incredible woman. When Mrs. B. tells stories about her life as a child growing up in this community, you can almost imagine being there with her. Sitting at her dining room table on a clear and sunny fall day, I heard

about instances of racism endured by this pillar of the community. She tells of being in high school swim classes at a time when classes such as these were segregated. All of the black students were registered for the last swim class of the day. This ensured the white students had access to the swimming pool before any of the black students.

Mrs. B. was another of those unusual African Americans who attended the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign during the late 1920s or early 1930s. Fortunately, residence during her attendance at the university was not an issue since she was from this community. Other such students found themselves at the mercy of the black community since university residence halls were restricted to white students only. However, as mentioned earlier the African American community was both generous and welcoming to these pioneering students.

Like Mrs. Foreman, Mr. and Mrs. Bowman were determined that their children would attend college. Having sons who had very definite ideas about their career directions, Mrs. B. required all of the children to attend college at least one year before finally deciding whether or not they would leave or continue their education. Two of her children attended for a year or two, but decided to pursue their dream careers (which turned out to be extremely rewarding for both of them). The third child completed her graduate studies and is a well respected professional living and working in the Champaign-Urbana community.

Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson

Mrs. Wilson is the third elder who participated in this project as an informal community historian. However, because Mrs. Wilson is comprehensively introduced in

Chapter Six Racial Identity Development and Socialization: The Elders Speak, I will reserve having you meet her until then.

An additional benefit gained by interviewing community elders who have successfully raised their own children and often helped raise their grandchildren as well, was the opportunity to hear them tell the story of how they parented. In this way, I was able to garner knowledge of child-rearing practices among African American families that span two generations.

These three women are well known, respected, and even revered elders of the Champaign-Urbana black community. Aware of their reputations, and because I have enjoyed a familiar association with the adult children of two of the women (Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Bowman) I made a conscious decision to pursue access to them by first approaching their adult daughters. The third community historian (Mrs. Foreman) was referred by Mrs. Wilson's daughter Jamie.

I began my contact with the informal community historians by calling their daughters on the telephone to explain my research goals and why I wished to interview their mothers. Since these women are in their mid-80s and early 90s, I wanted to show respect for their age and recognize the boundaries established by the elderly mother/adult daughter relationship often practiced in African American cultural tradition.

Like mother/daughter relationships observed in various other cultural contexts, the adult daughter frequently acts as caregiver for her elderly parents. This care giving may come in the form of ensuring any venture presented to their elderly parent is legitimate and poses no threat to their well-being. Therefore, my initial attempts to gain access to the women were made through their daughters. I am certain that my status as an

'insider' also greatly facilitated my ability to gain access to these women with such ease.

The daughters believed that in all probability not only would their mothers be willing to participate in the project, but that they'd most likely enjoy the process. They then suggested they should contact their mothers first. In this way, they were able to explain who I was, what I was attempting to do, and why I wanted to interview them. Additionally, they were able to explain to their mothers what they could expect (multiple visits, use of a tape recorder, jotting notes), since all three of the adult daughters hold graduate degrees themselves, including one doctorate degree and one doctoral student. Therefore, they are all quite familiar with the research process. Once the daughters had spoken with their mothers, they let me know it was alright to contact their parents by phone and arrange an initial meeting to further discuss the project, provide the women with the proposed research statement (See Appendix A), and obtain their informed consent (See Appendix C).

These three elders of the African American community provided a wealth of richly textured, unique, and invaluable information based on their lived experiences as long-term residents of the Champaign-Urbana black community. They also contributed tremendously to the discussion concerning parenting strategies and child-rearing practices from an intergenerational perspective. All of the adult children of these informants fulfilled the criteria defining successful, middle-class, African Americans selected for the purposes of this study. Consequently, the experiences of the participating families group and these women and their families created a congruent and seamless fit. First, these women live in the North End, the heart of the traditional Champaign-Urbana black community. The area constitutes a multiple decades old neighborhood where

families have lived for many generations over. When entering this neighborhood one feels a sense of community stability and continuity. Driving literally and figuratively over the proverbial railroad tracks, one becomes rather keenly aware of their status as an *'outsider'*. This is a residential community in which neighbors know their neighbors — they know who belongs and who is *'just visiting'*.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

The interview marks our "attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 653).

As I began contemplating the interview process, I took comfort in my years of experience working with children and youth who were often times extremely hesitant to share anything about themselves. I believed my experience as a social work practitioner with a long work history of counseling and interviewing clients would serve me well. I knew I would be able to employ my clinical skills and expertise to conduct meaningful and productive in-depth interviews with the participants selected for this study.

A deliberate and concerted effort was made to maintain a conversational tone throughout the interviews. To this end, the primary interest of hearing the informants tell their own stories, based on their lived experience, and told from their own perspective was of premier importance. I consistently stressed that there were no 'right or wrong' answers to the questions being posed because their answers were located in the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the informant.

Interview protocols of semi-structured open-ended questions was developed and tested before administration to the informants. Developed for each informant group (See Appendix I, Appendix J, Appendix K), the interview questions revolved around child-rearing practices and parenting strategies middle-class African American families incorporate to encourage and promote achievement and success outcomes in their children with a specific focus on positive racial identity development and socialization. All of the interviews were conducted using a face-to-face, semi-structured interview question format. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim by one of four transcribers.

A majority of interviews took place in the families' homes. The same structure was used for the interviews with members of the families' extended kinship system. Having access to interior living spaces helped me construct an initial impression of the unique characteristics and idiosyncrasies of each family. However, several interviews were conducted in alternate locations as determined and agreed upon by the informant and interviewer. Four interviews took place in a private office at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, one convened in a classroom at one of the local high schools after the end of the school day, and two others were conducted in participants' private business offices.

However, the most unique interview occurred in my private residence, a location that was actually suggested by one of the informants. Due to the longevity of our association, I felt certain that if anything, the quality of the interview would be enhanced given the increased level of privacy. Therefore, I chose to comply with the participant's suggestion. The resulting outcome was an extremely candid and rich discussion of the

research questions. Prior to the actual interview, this individual chose to share a personal experience involving unresolved emotions around a long-held family conflict that resurfaced with the unexpected death of a family member. Consequently, I was able to provide a degree of reciprocity by being sincerely interested in what she shared with me and being in possession of appropriate and genuinely empathetic listening skills.

The audio-taped interviews varied somewhat depending on the particular informant and averaged 1½ to 2 hours in length among the family and auxiliary informant groups. However, the individual interview sessions with the three informal community historians (which also took place in their homes) lasted approximately 2-2½ hours on average (1 ¾ to 4 hours in actual time). In general the interviews focused on the following primary content areas:

1) Fostering healthy development and socialization, encouraging achievement, and promoting success outcomes in children

2) The importance, influence, and contribution family support (including extended social support systems) plays in promoting parent and child goals concerning achievement and success outcomes

3) Expectations, beliefs, and subsequent child-rearing practices and socialization strategies employed by parents who are intent on encouraging achievement and success

4) Racial socialization practices and messages employed by families that help deflect the impact of racism and discrimination. (See Appendix I, Appendix J).

The Families in Context from a Participant Observer's Perspective

Observation is a common method of conducting qualitative case study (Stake, 2000) and is "the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise" (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987, p. 257 as cited in Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, p. 673). This research project entailed making observations in one of the most intimate and personal environments available to a researcher...the family home, thereby affording the opportunity to contextualize the families. As a long-term resident of the Champaign-Urbana community, I have the privilege of being a part of the middle-class African American community. Therefore, as I approached families as potential participants in this study, I was welcomed in some instances immediately. The opportunity to meet with entire family groups in their home was oftentimes extended before I had a chance to explain my willingness to meet with the family in a location more comfortable, convenient, and conducive for them.

My first face-to-face contacts occurred in the homes of 35 out of the total 37 informants. During these initial meetings I was able to conduct the formal business of explaining the project, answering questions, obtaining informed consents (including signed assent forms and parental permission forms for minors), and discussing interview schedules. However, in each instance, an informal data gathering opportunity presented itself as I was able to spend time in the participants' homes drinking coffee, sharing meals, looking at family photos, and just generally observing how the family members conducted themselves when a *guest* was present in the home as opposed to someone *doing research*.

For example, I was invited to have dinner with one of the families in their home on a typical weekday. The main entrée was turkey, served with a side dish of pinto beans, and cornbread. Breaking bread with the family created a much less formal, more relaxed atmosphere that allowed me to observe the family during one of its routine daily activities. I was able to observe first hand the manner in which the family talked about their day at school and work, discussed their individual and family activities for the remainder of the evening, and how they organized, arranged and sorted out the logistics of their full and rather complex schedules for the next few days.

On another occasion the formal pre-arranged interview session with the mother of one of the families became an opportunity for more informal observation. The father in this family expected the interview would be followed by an informal visit between his wife and me, so he and their two teenage children more or less orchestrated enough time for both the business of the interview and a relaxed and unharried visit afterwards. When I entered the home through the attached garage (the normal entry route for family members and friends), one of the first things Mom told me was her husband and children were out for the afternoon. Dad had taken the children to a football game so we could conduct our interview uninterrupted. With a familiar wink Mom then added, once the "important business", was concluded, we could begin our "girl friend" afternoon.

An example of a highly unusual and completely unanticipated observation opportunity occurred during a very special visit with another family. The eldest son and his wife live abroad but were here for a brief visit. It was truly my fortune to be able to meet these remarkable young people. Our after interview conversations revolved around educational opportunities, upcoming plans for a change in career directions, and an

opportunity for me to share sources of information (a small gesture of reciprocity) that he and his wife might find useful as they investigate potential career options.

It was during these kinds of events that participants sometimes brought out family photographs. Other times just being in their homes afforded the opportunity to see collections of photographs displayed on the walls and bookshelves throughout the house. Being privy to these pictorial histories facilitated informal conversations with these keepers of the family histories and traditions, which they generously and graciously shared. One of the elders that I was honored to interview was born and raised in Sevierville, Tennessee. The ensuing discussion about her birthplace led to a perusal of the family photos, a published manuscript of the family's history authored by the informant's niece, and the rare and considerable contribution this intriguing African American family made to the development of Sevierville, Tennessee as documented in an historical society publication.

Observing family members in an assortment of venues outside the boundaries of the interview session provided further glimpses of participants in various contexts requiring a range of skills and interactions. The potential for achieving success outcomes is associated with competence in multiple social situations. Indeed, the positive youth development (PYD) perspective suggests social competence, achieved through participation in well constructed community based activities, not only aids in the prevention of undesirable behaviors, but contributes to desired outcomes for young people as well (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). The variety of observation sites made available to me as a participant observer included Urbana High School, the Urbana Free Library, a Sunday worship service, while giving a ride to one of the

children, and supervising one the youngest participant's for his parents (another act of reciprocity).

A number of other such occasions provided me with rare and extremely valuable opportunities to visit and consequently observe families and auxiliary informants in their natural environments including their homes. I was present when the young people filled the house with music as an accompaniment to our visit, when discussions turned to reminiscing about family outings around cultural and educational events, and even during times when parents shared their concerns for the well-being of their children in a more explicit and heartfelt manner. Made both during and beyond the formal interview sessions, around these more familiar and informal events, these observations created opportunities for inquiry that resulted in thick descriptions that were richly textured, candid, and very personal, all of which afforded a deeper level of trustworthiness and credibility to the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was collected in two stages. An initial pilot study provided preliminary data followed by a larger data set which was obtained by expanding both the number of participant families and expanding the categories of informants to include extended kin, auxiliary informants, and informal community historians. In order to identify categories a single synthesized coding system was developed based on the complete set of transcribed interviews.

Ethnographic data was systematically organized, managed, and analyzed using methods appropriate for qualitative data. The constant comparative method of data analysis permitted the identification of categories and subcategories. Open and axial

coding facilitated the identification of categories and patterns of meanings across informant groups as they emerged from the ethnographic data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories were defined, their properties delineated, and the causes and conditions under which they operate were identified (Charmaz, 1983). Coded categories were constructed in order to organize and manage data, and promote content analysis of the transcribed interviews. The coding process further aided in the development of conceptual themes through memo writing (Charmaz, 1983).

An inductive approach was utilized for the purposes of both the preliminary and subsequent studies. The coding and analysis of the informants data resulted in the emergence of ten themes, all of which described the child-rearing strategies and parenting practices perceived of as viable and utilized by the families to promote, encourage, and motivate their children to move onto achievement oriented pathways and success outcome trajectories.

Comparisons within case analyses based on the oral histories of two African American elders (Mrs. Lydia Wilson and Mrs. Mary Anderson) and one couple (Jeanine and David Blair) was made in order to illuminate the similarities and distinct differences in the lived experiences of these four individuals. A third generational cohort was represented by five of the youngest informants which allowed yet another within case comparison and analysis. Finally, the oral histories of these informants provided a comparison across intergenerational cases. The benefit of such an approach allowed the exploration of the manner in which individuals' personal experiences embedded in a particular sociopolitical and cultural context contributed to their understanding and response to race and racism. A common thread permeating each individual's life and each

age cohort, the comparative analyses helped to tease out the certain unique intra-cultural variations that occurred within and across these three generations of informants.

Trustworthiness of the Findings

Trustworthiness in qualitative research has been established according to the criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The manner in which these criteria have been met in this study begins with the issue of establishing credibility.

First, the credibility of the findings was enhanced through prolonged engagement and the use of persistent observation employing multiple formal interview sessions as well as informal observation opportunities. One of the advantages of having *'insider status'* is the researcher may be able to access informants with relative ease such as that which I experienced when invited into the homes of the families, elders, and auxiliary informants.

Triangulation was also used as a process for establishing and enhancing the credibility of the data, the research findings, and the subsequent interpretations. The multiple data collection methods used in the study included individual interviews, a single couple interview, completion of demographic and environmental factors questionnaires, and participant observation. Reliance on multiple sources (household family members, extended kin, community historians, and auxiliary informants) served as another important mode of triangulation that establishes credibility. Finally, Afrocentric theory and feminist theory as the theoretical and conceptual lenses through which the observed phenomenon was viewed contributed to the credibility of the data, findings, and interpretations as the third mode of triangulation.

Member checking further established the credibility of the data, findings, and subsequent interpretations. Two strategies were used to facilitate member checking. First, throughout the interview sessions, I periodically summarized and/or paraphrased the informants' accounts for accuracy, thereby permitting the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings and/or misperceptions, and obtain consensus in meanings and understandings. Second, follow-up interviews were conducted with a pool of informants, representative of and drawn from the original sample population.

Approximately 33% of the parents (n = 4) including two mothers and two fathers, 25% of the children, youth, and young adults (n = 4) including two sons and two daughters, and 33% each from the auxiliary informants (n = 2), the extended kin informant group (n = 1), and informal community historians (n = 1) were included in the follow-up interviews as part of the member checking process. These interviews, which entailed asking the participants to review the emergent themes and accompanying interpretations of the themes, were used as a formal process for gaining informants' feedback and input concerning the accuracy of the findings, interpretations, and the representativeness of the research.

Peer debriefing served as the last technique utilized for establishing trustworthiness and credibility in this study. Ongoing debriefing sessions with an objective colleague occurred regularly. These sessions not only allowed me to review the soundness of my data collection methods and procedures, but they also required processing and thinking through meanings and interpretations in a clear and organized manner. The sessions provided a forum for the clarification of meanings, categories, and patterns as they emerged from the data, allowed an arena for testing out and defending

emerging conceptualizations, and afforded an audience capable of challenging findings and interpretations.

Transferability requires the researcher to possess knowledge of "*both* sending and the receiving contexts" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 297). The authors further suggest the responsibility of the original investigator ends with providing adequate descriptive data regarding the sending context so that subsequent comparisons may be possible for the purpose of transferability.

In this study, two questionnaires were administered to the participating families. One questionnaire was used to collect demographic data for each family unit such as age of family members, number and gender of children in the household, annual income, homeownership, parents' education levels, couples' marital status, and community involvement. The second questionnaire served to collect data pertaining to the various demographics and environmental factors descriptive of the sociocultural contexts of the children, youth, and young adults who participated in the study. My familiarity with and access to the preliminary findings obtained during the pilot study (representing knowledge gleaned from the sending context) coupled with the depth of descriptive data acquired through administration of the questionnaires developed for use in the larger project (constituting knowledge of the receiving context) facilitates transferability inferences of these findings.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) "a demonstration of the former [credibility] is sufficient to establish the latter [dependability]" (p. 316). However, the same authors suggest the use of an audit trail as a viable means for establishing both dependability as well as confirmability as criteria for evidencing trustworthiness.

The audit trail that accompanies this dissertation is comprised of a number of documents including but not limited to the entire collection of audio-taped interviews and the subsequent verbatim transcriptions, results from the questionnaires, and preliminary project task completion schedules (initial contacts and meetings, individual interviews, fieldnotes, etc.). A separate researcher's journal was maintained as a way to record personal observations, feelings, and thought processing about the research experience throughout the project.

This collection of raw data also included extensive fieldnotes utilizing the following conventions: observational, theoretical, and methodological notes, and observer's comments. The observational notes provide a specific account of the activities that took place in the field, while the theoretical notes reflect attempts to garner meaning from observations. The methodological notes indicate personal reflections on the activities or events being observed, and the observer's comments represent my own responses to these field based observations. Additionally, the organization of the fieldnotes included descriptions of individual informants, and notations regarding possible future research triggered by the field work experience.

Intersubjective Agreement

"Now the naturalist much prefers this second, qualitative definition of objectivity...[which] removes the emphasis from the investigator...and places it...on the data themselves" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300). In order to achieve intersubjective agreement, training and orientation preceded the employment of an independent coder, who coded for the emergent themes present in all the transcribed interviews utilizing the codebook developed by the researcher. Fifteen percent of the coded interviews (N = 41;

where n = 3 for families [the parents' n = 2 and children's n = 1] and among the extended kin, auxiliary informant, and community historian groups [n = 1 per group] so that overall n = 3 across these groups) were then randomly selected and again coded by a second independent coder. The degree of consensus and agreement was high. The dissonance that did occur was addressed through discussions and further review of the verbatim transcriptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Success Oriented Strategies

The ethnographic data gathered from interviews with the families who participated in this study is presented in this chapter as an introduction to the success oriented socialization strategies in middle-class African American families. The informants' responses resulted in the identification of the following themes, each of which are presented in subsequent sections of the current chapter: 1) defining and achieving success, 2) the role of education, 3) the contribution of selective exposure, 4) the importance of family and family activities, 5) the acceptance of responsibility and respect for self and others, 6) the importance of religion and spirituality, 7) the protection of children, and 8) child discipline as a crucial parenting task. The coded transcriptions for the participants show a high degree of consensus around each of these themes.

Defining and Achieving Success in Contemporary America

The first step in exploring strategies that encourage achievement and foster success pathways for children involved establishing definitions of success from the perspectives of the informants themselves. It is important to note the presence of a common thread that permeates the various definitions of success that were independently offered by the participants.

Several open-ended general questions were asked around this issue of defining success, including but not limited to: 1) In your opinion, what does it mean to be a success in contemporary America; 2) How does education affect one's quality of life?; and 3) How does career choice affect one's quality of life? The informants' answers to these questions provided insights into how they personally defined success and the

criteria that served as their benchmarks when assessing whether or not they had achieved success at any given point in time. Follow-up probes were employed to further the participant's responses (See Appendix I, Appendix J).

The degree of consensus within and across each informant group was very high. Their personal definitions certainly reflected the individuality of each respondent including characteristics such as their individual personalities, age, and achieved levels of education. The clear majority of informants reported feeling they'd achieved success whenever they experienced personal goal attainment, developed a new set of skills, accomplished specific tasks, performed to the best of their ability, and/or achieved a level of excellence according to standards they set for themselves as well as those set by individuals whose opinions held some significance for them. Instead of gauging achievement and success according to some arbitrary set of criteria devised by forces external to self, these individuals derived their understanding of what it means to be successful from their own personal standards for achievement, the measure of which seemed to reflect internal processes of assessment and evaluation.

The following short excerpts are examples of the ways in which several of the respondents defined success, expressed the meaning they attach to the concept of success, and reported the criteria they apply when assessing achievement and success oriented endeavors.

> Success is going after something and fulfilling it. What ever you set as your goal to do and achieving your goal; that's what I think success is. You get out of life what you put in.
>
> Kyle Barnes (son)

> The first would be to always do their best, be their best regardless of the kinds of measures that other people put on them. 'This is good for them' kind of thing, we don't accept that kind of thinking, that mentality. You know, just because *they* said it was o.k. then its o.k. It may be o.k. for the teacher but if it's not our best it still needs some work.
>
> Margot Barnes (mother)

Notice that the overwhelming majority of the informants' definitions of success did not include the acquisition of *things* or *material wealth*. Material wealth, power, and prestige as primary benchmarks of success were only mentioned by 4 out of the 37 participants.

The Role of Education in Achieving Success

Traditionally, education has been held in the highest esteem by the African American community. The dramatic increase in the number of former slaves who learned to read within the first five years of the post slavery era is offered as evidence to the importance ascribed to education by those who were prohibited from acquiring even a rudimentary education during the antebellum.

The U. S. government's post civil war plan to facilitate the transition of more than three million emancipated men, women, and children included the creation of schools to educate the former slaves. A primary task assigned to the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, (the Freedman's Bureau) was to oversee approximately 3,000 black schools including Howard University and the Hampton Institute (Irons, 2002; Jackson, 1996). By 1880 over 700,000 black students (nearly a third of the entire 1863 emancipated population) were enrolled in schools spanning ten states (Franklin & Moss, 2000).

Nearly a millennium later, despite the tensions that developed between the African American community, educators, and the public school systems during the 1960s, the role education was expected to play in the success and achievement of black children remained a cultural mainstay. Without exception the participants in this project concurred with this sentiment.

The interview protocols included open-ended questions pertaining to the importance of education. For example, the parent/child and auxiliary interview protocols asked *"How does education affect one's quality of life and success in life?"* The informal community historians were asked *"How has...educational opportunities ...for the black community in Champaign-Urbana changed over the past 50 years?"* Responses were followed up with additional probing questions.

Whether talking with parents, extended kin, auxiliary informants, community historians, or the children (from the youngest to the oldest young adult), reports concerning the importance of education were highly consistent. The extent to which parental expectations, investment, and participation in the academic affairs of their children occurred (from the adult point of view as well as that of their children) also reveals a considerable degree of consensus.

Keenly aware of the parental, extended family, and larger social community's expectations that they perform well academically, most of these young people understood and accepted the fact that college was a non-negotiable expectation. Among the youth (all males) who expressed the possibility of choosing to abstain from attending college, the only eight year old informant wasn't sure if his parents would insist that he attend college. Another was planning on attending but thought he might still have other options.

The last two young men who stated the chance to defer college did or may exist for them were both college students already. There were several parents who suggested they might be willing to discuss alternates to college such as the military or pursuit of certain employment opportunities.

In several instances participants' actual definitions of success and what it means to achieve success included parental expectations, academic achievement, and educational outcomes. For example, when asked to *"talk to me about what you thought would constitute success, and as parents, how you wanted your sons and daughters to turn out as successful achieving people"*, one parent responded by saying:

> The first thing I would have is education. From the time they were born...[a]nd not necessarily coming from a point of education for income but a point of education for a whole human being.
>
> Patricia Akbar (mother)

The following excerpt further conveys the importance the informants placed on education as a crucial constituent in the achievement of success among African American children and youth.

> Education was always heavily emphasized...It wasn't an option to slack off or not take education seriously....In the summer when all of the other kids were out playing in the neighborhood we would be in the garage going over math problems or something related to academics. My parents always made it a point to say "This is not the time to forget everything that you've learned and have to try to relearn it".
>
> Azar Akbar (daughter)

These responses clearly indicate the informants' perception of education as a valuable factor in the healthy development and socialization of black children and youth. In the historical tradition of African American families and the larger sociocultural community context, the hope for black children to experience success outcomes in adult life continues to hinge in part on their academic achievement. In the rather poignant words of one mother:

> [T]hey've just got to [get an education]. My words have always been to them..."I pray that you have a voice in life and a choice in life." You cannot have a voice and a choice or its limited if you don't place yourself in position, and education is gonna' give you that opportunity.
>
> Jeanine Blair (mother)

Selective Exposure as a Means to an End

Bell, Edmondson, and Stella (1998) coined the term selective exposure to reflect a deliberate and systematic practice employed by parents who recognize the value in exposing their children to strategically chosen activities and events. The families in this study voiced their belief that this practice was in fact a powerful parenting technique. Intent on guaranteeing their children were exposed to productive and developmentally stimulating themes, the families often times chose events and activities that were educational in nature. Similarly, the parents tended to select events in which the performers, presenters, and/or participants themselves were African American. The goal was to select events in which people of color were actively involved and positively presented, thereby providing children and youth with positive racial images of African Americans. Further, the parents expressed the importance of paying close attention to the

available options to ensure the content of the performances conveyed constructive, positive, and affirming messages that would enhance their children's learning skills and "reinforce [their] self-images" (Bell et al., 1998, p. 290).

There were seven dimensions that emerged from informants' responses to questions around the concept of selective exposure including: 1) they should be developmentally stimulating, 2) educational, 3) reflect the child's cultural background, 4) project positive adult images, 5) project positive racial images, 6) reinforce positive self-images, and 7) contribute to success outcomes.

By purposefully selecting specific events and activities, these parents were able to influence the kinds of images imprinting their children's development, including those that bolster knowledge of the larger social world, and facilitate an expanded awareness of possibilities for future endeavors. The end result is to create experiences that better inform children about potential success options that may be open to them. They were able to select images that presented African Americans as heroes and leaders capable of achieving success despite issues of racism and oppression, thereby reinforcing the perception that these two social ills are challenges to be faced. By inculcating children with powerful, positive, accomplished adult images who reflect their racial phenotype, the self-images of these children are strengthened. This in turn aids them in the struggle to resist the internalization of negative and derogatory stereotypes of African Americans.

The following comments indicate the strength of selective exposure as a viable strategy for enhancing the development and socialization of the children represented in this thesis.

I've always felt like the more things that we can get out and do, the more things you introduce them to, then that's the more selection that they have...[W]e've involved them in activities...such as principal scholars....challenging academic programs....We try to push learning about their heritage and their culture.

David Blair (father)

When [my child] reads *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she doesn't just have to read...our tour was led by the great-great grand daughter of Josiah Henson. That's history.

Jeanine Blair (mother)

[She would take us to] downtown Chicago...to the opera house...the museum...the planetarium or the aquarium....So what Linda and I try to do with our kids is the same...expose them to as much as possible....To help them form their own identity...interests...hobbies...activities and their own careers...you need to expose a child to a lot of things to let them figure out who they are or what they want to be when they grow up.

Mark Huxtable (father)

The Importance of Family and Family Activities

Every society has some mechanistic process for grouping individual members into the structure most often referred to as the *family unit*. However, despite this universal phenomenon, there is considerable variation in the configuration of these units across and within groups. The particular design of these socially constructed units of familial affiliation tends to be functionally driven. Procreation, socialization, and care of the

young constitute one of four primal functions of the family. They serve as a primary source of intimate relationships, micro-level units of economic cooperation and consumption, and both the assignment and commensurate status of social roles within a given community (Strong, DeVault, & Sayad, 1998).

The structure of family units tends to be organized around the assignment of family roles, which often times dictates the individual's position and rank within the system itself. Family affiliation affords each member certain privileges and obligations, enduring recognition and familiarity as a family member, the ability to maintain proximal connections with each other, and the right to share in the distribution of family resources (Strong et al., 1998).

The significance of family in the African American community is well documented. It includes the immediate family, "but...[is also] equivalent to the 'extended family,' networks of *functionally* related individuals who reside in *different* households" (Hill, 1998). African American family systems have traditionally been constructed along both biological and affiliated kinship lines. The evidence of these frequently indistinguishable types of kinship is traceable to the historical and contemporary African sociocultural context, and supports the purported strength of these relational ties. African conjugal units comprised of mother, father, and biological children are not solely responsible for the socialization, economic sustenance, or emotional support of the children alone. Unlike the nuclear family as defined by western standards, African family functions are carried out by the family of procreation in concert with the extended kinship system (Sudarkasa, 1980).

Informants were asked to respond to interview questions such as 1) *How often does your family engage in activities or events that involve the relatives; aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, close family friends?*, and 2) *How important are these gatherings to you as a person and your family as a whole?*. Pertinent follow up probing questions were also asked. As represented by the following excerpts, the informants' responses replicate the kinds of family configurations described by Hill (1998) and Sudarskasa (1980) with absolute accord.

> We're amazingly close even today, and I can't imagine it any other way...my immediate family as well as my extended family....Our aunts, uncles, cousins, they were just an extension of our immediate family.
>
> Azar Akbar (daughter)

> [S]omebody was telling [my child] they didn't know their grandparents...I just hadn't thought about what it would be like to have kids who wouldn't know the grandmothers...and the grandfathers.
>
> Jeanine Blair (mother)

Intricately related to the significance of family is the importance of family oriented activities. Family activities constitute interactive theaters where a multitude of societal prescriptions get played out. These varied activities afford opportunities where appropriate relationship dynamics can be reinforced and the family can be seen together and recognized by larger social groups. They provide opportunities to create and participate in family rituals and customs which reinforce familial bonds and connections. They create conditions that permit children to practice and parents to evaluate the degree to which their children have learned and integrated behavioral expectations and norms, as

well as opportunities for children to explore their social worlds while still under the auspices of parental guidance and protection. The following quotes illustrate the significance of family and family oriented activities for the informants.

> [O]ur best friends were each other...My husband calls us the Brady Bunch family. We'll all get together and we'll do family game night.
>
> Azar Akbar (daughter)

> [O]nce a year in Chicago there is a family gathering...everybody gets together; brings like a dish of food...we say prayer, we eat, we converse.
>
> Jackie Blair (daughter)

> [We] both...help with homework...[My daughter] decided to do her own project. My husband helped her build little replicas out of foam; to carve out the buildings on those sites, even the grave markers, it was all in there.
>
> Jeanine Blair (mother)

One can readily see the way in which the long-standing cultural tradition of family and family activities is reflected in the informant family group interviews. It is important to note how consistently this theme emerged attesting to the ongoing value and influence of family and family activities to the healthy development and positive socialization of black children.

The highly structured routines of parents and children so often reflected in the phrase "soccer Moms" have not displaced the deliberate integration of family activities for the respondents who informed this research, as verified by the following excerpt. The following quote was taken from a 16 year old high school student.

> [P]eople assume that because we all have busy schedules and we're all in different places that we don't really stick together much. And that's not true.
>
> Jackie Blair (daughter)

Family and family oriented activities play a critically important role in the African American sociocultural tradition. Its significance in the healthy development of a child's identity and sense of belonging is reflected in this passage from a parent who expressed the importance of family continuity and familiarity in this manner:

> [My daughter] got to see several generations; how Big Mama dressed and how Big Mama looked, how Big Mama had her own little way of grinnin'...Ma Dear always had the big beds down home, you got 3 or 4 mattresses stacked up there...And she got a chance to see what that's like...and just having that sense of some history, some foundation from whence we come is good for her.
>
> Jeanine Blair (mother)

The Acceptance of Responsibility and Respect

Responsibility and respect emerged as interrelated themes. The interview protocol designed for the children was nearly identical to the one developed for their parents with the exception of a single question. Children were asked to talk about the household responsibilities they assumed that in some way contributed to the family as a whole. The question was designed to solicit information about how parents teach children the value of sharing in the division of household tasks, contributing to the daily functioning of the family household, whether the children perceived their assigned chores as a contribution

to the family unit, and whether or not there is a preference for flexible gender roles in which household chores are distributed equitably. One of the young people described a particular method for learning how to perform certain tasks. She also explains her tendency to take responsibility for those newly acquired skills this way:

> You can learn lessons just by doing things or watching other people do jobs and then taking on the responsibility. And some kids don't get that chance...on a regular basis.
>
> Rachel Huxtable (daughter)

One adolescent informant reported a tendency to perform better when the significant adults in her social systems set higher standards and expectations as suggested in this quote:

> [W]hen I was younger I'd forget...and I'd leave my book bag at home or I'd leave my lunch...But...since I'm older..., my parents expect me to know more and to do more for myself...You know it's more responsibility.
>
> Jackie Blair (daughter)

The importance of instilling and developing a sense of personal responsibility and respect for self and others emerged as unsolicited data in the majority of the parent and child interviews. Several questions elicited responses that included discussions around this theme. Questions pertaining to individual definitions of success and the accompanying criteria used to determine at what point one actually achieves success prompted responses around the acceptance of responsibility. When asked which lessons parents most wanted their children to learn, among those reported as crucial and

identified as most salient in raising children to become successful productive adults were self respect, respect for others, and the importance of accepting responsibility for one's own self. Whether the responses were reported by parents or their children, the emergent theme remained consistent.

> I more or less told [my son]..."I'm trusting you to respect me as your father and respect the rules that we have and I'm trusting you to be the man that I know you to be".
>
> Ahmad Akbar (father)
>
> For me — my education definitely! I look at it all the time and I say if I don't do this for anyone else it should be for me.
>
> Jackie Blair (daughter)

Going beyond responsibility for self, Azar expressed a sense of responsibility for others. Her commitment manifested itself in actions that contributed to the well being of others, reflecting a sense of duty and responsibility to and for the larger community. This excerpt provides an exemplary summation of these commitments.

> My parents instilled...volunteerism and philanthropy....I remember at a very early age volunteering....I'm part of a couple different organizations whose primary mission is service in the community....[T]his is my responsibility....[J]ust that sense of community and what you owe to your community....[you] have a debt to pay to your community...I find myself even now in everything that I have going on still finding the time and the necessity to do volunteer work.
>
> Azar Akbar (daughter)

The tendency for parents and children to discuss respect and responsibility during the same response period was so frequent that independent peer reviewers recommended collapsing them into a single interdependent theme as opposed to two separate but highly correlated themes. Member checking during follow-up interviews confirmed the strength of the association between the two phenomena.

The Role of Religion and Spirituality

The church continues to be at the forefront of the African American community's effort to influence the future of its families. Another long-standing tradition, the church has been identified as the strongest institution in the African American community (Billingsley, 1992). The influence of religion and spirituality was presented as a mainstay for a number of the families interviewed. There are several prominent features of religion, spirituality, and the church worthy of comment.

First, "spirituality has to do with the search for life's ultimate significance. Religion on the other hand, is a system of symbols, beliefs, rituals, and texts shared by a community of believers" (Hudley, Haight, & Miller, 2003, p. 47). In the following excerpt, one informant's description of her upbringing and that of her siblings reflects the concept of "spiritual precepts" (Hudley, et al., 2003, p. 47) as a compass for moral and ethical behavior, as well as the creation of a sense of church family and community through the vehicle of religion and spirituality.

> Spirituality...[t]he moral, the ethical, through religion. That foundation we received and that was just ingrained...just having that moral foundation and secondarily just a sense of family and a sense of community.
>
> Azar Akbar (daughter)

Another characteristic of the black church is the manner in which it seems to function much like the extended kinship system for several families. The familial role and function of the black church is so much a part of the African American cultural tradition, *church family* is a term commonly used to convey the intimate relationship that exists between the individual and their church community. It mirrors the perception of the black church as a bedrock institution, around which some individual families' lives are constructed, as well as an extension of their fictive kinship family systems.

A positive correlation was noted between the degree to which family members were actively involved in church sponsored activities and the frequency of unsolicited comments regarding the importance of spirituality and religion in their lives. Further correlation appeared to exist between the level of church-related activities and the constancy of responses around spirituality and religion across parent/child(ren) dyads. For example, the Blairs attend church sponsored activities and events between ten and fourteen times each week while the Howes' and the Andersons' church activity level is somewhere between five and nine events per week. These three families were the most articulate regarding their faith and commitment to their church community.

Conversely, while the Barnes are active members in their place of worship, their attendance at church sponsored events is between two and four times a week. As suggested above, the Barnes and Huxtables were much less vocal about church, religion, or spirituality than the other three families. In fact, the only mention of church or any religious affiliation by one of the Huxtables was made by Mark as he described his experience attending an all boys' Catholic high school in his youth. The final comment on this correlation pertains to the Akbars. Although they did not mention attending

multiple activities or worship services at a mosque, all four of the Akbars talked quite freely and openly about the place of spirituality in their lives.

Religion and spirituality appear to provide the basis for how some of the families determine whether or not they are living successful, productive, achievement oriented lives as expressed by David Blair who said "I would say success is, is being able to incorporate into your life as a family, all those things that are pleasing in God's sight; in the sight of God, based on the instructions that he's given us". The role of spirituality, religion, and church is such a presence in the African American family and larger cultural community that several informants expressed its aura in these heartfelt terms.

> Spiritually I want them [her children] to have a higher sense of being other than themselves. I want them to acknowledge...to have a sense of who God is and the direction of their guidance. I always tell them ..."You know you choose which one you're gonna do"... [A]s long as they have a spiritual connection they will know right from wrong and be able to conduct themselves so they can make the right choices.
>
> Jeanine Blair (mother)

> [T]he Bible speaks about how kids are you know, going to be wiser and you know our daughter's prophesizing...so, we're talking about a new type of child here. First being able to be a productive citizen in the world...being a Christian....[T]he Bible says...rejoice when you're going through those tribulations...just think of what Jesus would do...We're Christians, which means we're supposed to be Christ-like....I really feel

that if they stay on the right [spiritual] path...they'll make some mistakes, but they'll know right from wrong.

David Blair (father)

Protection of Children

Like most other families, those who contributed to this study were quite adamant about ensuring the safety and protection of their children. While the families all live in safe neighborhoods as is more common to middle-class socioeconomic status (SES), the parents stringently expressed the importance of this theme. Their concern that their children might fall prey to unsavory individuals or dangerous events was stressed in the set of expectations they presented to their young people and formed the basis of many of the decisions they made.

I fear every day that somebody will call me and tell me somebody has done something specific to my children just because of their own unstable minds and may want to...just out to get somebody else. And it's only so far that you can go you know that you can protect them from... And I know that there are those kids out there, and I just pray that I don't get those type calls.

Jeanine Blair (mother)

We don't want you selling drugs. We don't want you drinking....we're not stupid. We know he's going to get out there with his peers and he's going to try, but hopefully we've put enough stuff in him that even if he tries marijuana or if he tries smoking cigarettes, he can say this isn't for me.

Linda Huxtable (mother)

One additional theme that relates to safety and protection of children as understood by the participating families is that of discipline. This next section is devoted to the presentation of beliefs, values, and strategies of child discipline as reported by the informant families. Additionally, a single family case — the Andersons, is featured in order to comprehensively address this long-standing controversial parenting practice.

Child Discipline

A myriad of studies have looked at discipline of children. Among earlier studies middle-class white families served as the prototype for assessing and evaluating effective child discipline, often times comparing parental beliefs and practices of upper SES whites and lower SES black populations. Adherence to the gold standard set by the Eurocentric family type implied appropriate socialization practices and a healthy, more positively functioning family system — at least in the area of discipline of children. Conversely, families who selected and practiced a variant culturally sanctioned form of discipline were held in question by child and family experts alike. African American families often found themselves at the epicenter of debate and controversy around the issues of acceptable versus unacceptable, effective versus ineffective forms of discipline, as evaluative labels such as harsh, punitive, reactive, and parent oriented were commonly applied.

More recently, researchers have challenged the previous studies and are sometimes quite pointed in their refutations. In an article by Whaley (2000) in which "Specifically, the consequences of ethnocentric biases in generalizing from White samples to African Americans are explicated", the author suggests there is a prevailing assumption that spanking "leads to the development of conduct disorders or disruptive

behaviors in children" (p. 6). Furthermore, according to Johnson, Jaeger, Randolph, Cauce, and Ward (2003) arguments are being put forth that suggest strict as opposed to *harsh* discipline may in fact function as a "positive cultural adaption" given the oftentimes hostile environment in which black families are embedded (p. 1237).

Like most child-centered and decidedly involved families, those who participated in this study considered child discipline of paramount importance within the range of tasks essential to good parenting. The participant families were similarly insistent that discipline is one of the most difficult, time consuming, and anxiety producing tasks required of them as attentive and supportive parents. In the words of Scott Anderson "[D]isciplining your kids is not pleasant...it takes a lot strength and a lot of concern or commitment".

The styles of discipline employed by every one of the informant families for this project represent a child orientation as opposed to a parent orientation — the distinction lies in the need for children to learn respect and responsibility rather than obedience to parents as the ultimate goal (Whaley, 2000). Each set of parents expressed how absolutely necessary it was to ensure their children understood the expectations for behavior and were clear about family as well as societal rules. Otherwise, regardless of the particular disciplinary technique they employed the value of imparting lessons for life was abrogated. The disciplinary measure then simply became a form of punishment as opposed to a strategy intended to teach and instruct. Therefore, attending to the behaviors immediately before them while necessary, was not the final point of instruction. These parents understood the importance of learning and following viable social norms. They wanted their children to understand how and why adherence to rules, norms, and

behavioral expectations is directly related to achievement and more desirable outcomes both now and in the future.

Contrary to the opinion and supposition of some researchers that black families tend to preferentially resort to corporal punishment the families informing this study incorporate a range of techniques in their repertoire of disciplinary measures, only one of which involves spankings. Further, these parents and their children indicate physical punishment has limited instructional value and should not be used as a form of punishment or discipline with older children or adolescents. In fact, these families espouse the belief that punitive discipline, regardless of the form it takes (removal of privileges, restriction, negative reinforcement) should be confined to those times when a child exhibits "willful disobedience" — indicating they are well aware that their actions were in direct violation of family rules and behavioral expectations.

There is a body of research that suggests disciplinary beliefs and practices in African American families are more heterogeneous than previously believed (Horn, Cheng, & Joseph, 2004). What have often been overlooked in the research on discipline in black families is the intra-cultural differences. To that end, much can be learned by restricting the discussion of discipline to a single family case (Stake, 2000).

As previously stated, the values and beliefs about discipline and the use of a range of disciplinary strategies and techniques practiced by the participant families were presented as a whole. Focusing on a single family allows a more in-depth look into the details of how a particular family constructs and implements their strategy for discipline, thereby providing the opportunity to discern resemblances and variations between the individual and collective cases.

Further, the more detailed presentation of one family's child discipline strategies allows a more meaningful glimpse into the struggles black parents experience in attempting to fulfill a very tall order. All parents must develop disciplinary strategies and techniques that will facilitate their children's growth and development, and also impart lessons that will foster achievement and success. Among African American parents this must be done while simultaneously keeping their children safe in a world that may perceive them as a potential threat on the basis of their racial/ethnic identity.

Lastly, by presenting the discipline process in a single family unit as reported by all members of the family allows an intergenerational perspective to emerge. The significance of viewing discipline from a multiple generation perspective is three-fold.

It allows us to discern whether or not the parents have succeeded in conveying the issues that shape their values and beliefs about discipline (why it is such a crucial parenting task, what it should accomplish, what motivates their choice of disciplinary measures) to their children. Hearing from parents and children in a more comprehensive way facilitates the opportunity to identify common words, phrases, and messages that denote successful conveyance of parental values and beliefs.

Additionally, by presenting the reports of all the family members, we are able to determine whether or not the children accept their parents' beliefs, values, and motivations around discipline as legitimate and/or viable. The opportunity to investigate the level of consensus versus dissonance between those receiving the discipline and those providing it was intriguing indeed.

Finally, presentation of a single family case enabled a more exhaustive discussion of discipline, thereby shedding light on the controversy of black parents' preference for

harsh, punitive, and physical disciplinary measures such as spanking. Presenting examples of the various forms of discipline used in the household as reported by both the parents and all the children in one family helps convey whether or not the parents in fact have a range of disciplinary measures at their disposal, and which measures they use most often (suggesting a preference).

As I contemplated the families who participated in this project, one seemed to jump off the page as an exemplar of the various aspects afoot in the controversy over African American parenting styles and in particular the methods of discipline most often associated with black families. I categorize Scott and Esther Anderson as parents who employ an authoritative parenting style. They are an affectionate family that expresses emotions easily. Their home exudes a warm, supportive, and nurturing environment. At the same time, the parents retain responsibility for establishing and maintaining behavioral control within the family. They encouraged critical thinking in their children. However, they also exerted a considerable amount of control over the kind of information made available to their children when they were young, thereby limiting the children's exposure to ideas that might have conflicted with the parents' personal values and beliefs.

The Andersons reserved the most serious decision-making for themselves, altering the process as their children gained in age and maturity. Scott and Esther used spanking along with many other forms of punishment when their children were young. However, as they grew older, the form and structure of their discipline was modified to reflect what these parents considered more age appropriate.

I found the Anderson family to be far and away the most articulate in their reports of discipline within their household. Their willingness to be so transparent afforded a rare

opportunity to explore and present some of the individual and collective nuances of discipline in middle-class black families raising achievement and success oriented young people. Additionally, an important facet of the Anderson's child discipline strategy is just that — it is a planned and deliberate strategy over which Scott and Esther discuss, dispute, and confer in their attempt to fulfill this critically necessary parenting chore. While they readily acknowledge that they frequently miss the mark, they continue to wrestle with the obligation. This couple was willing to share their very personal struggle to develop an appropriate and beneficial strategy for discipline as well as the errors they feel they made in retrospect.

Like their parents, each of the Anderson children report the absolute necessity for consistent and age appropriate discipline. However, they openly expressed their desire to employ alternative forms of discipline when they become parents. Further, the Anderson children clearly articulated their awareness of their parents' expectations and rules, and therefore, suggested their belief that in their household discipline is meted out to teach life lessons. Finally, as I observed the dynamics in the Anderson household, I was reminded again of Johnson's et al., (2003) claim that firm discipline may actually serve a culturally adaptive function given the harshness of racism (an ever present threat to racial/ethnic minority families). It is for all of these reasons that I chose to present the Anderson's as the single family case in this discussion on child discipline. Furthermore, in order to do justice to this highly controversial and often debated topic, I have presented the Anderson family's reports on discipline in a more narrative format.

Scott Anderson began his discussion about discipline by expressing how difficult he finds the task, preferring to be "the cool dad...to get those real warm fuzzies".

> [Discipline] is a shared responsibility....A lot of times I don't want to be the one to do [the disciplining] because...it's not a pleasant experience....[I]t's always nice to be viewed as the cool dad or the cool mom...to get those real warm fuzzies....when you do discipline the kids....[you] will say, "Well I'm doing this for their own good"....you are doing it for their own good, at least that's what you're hoping.
>
> Scott Anderson (father)

Esther Anderson mirrored her husband's acknowledgment that despite a parent's best intention to act in ways that are "for their [child's] own good", there are times when they make decisions around discipline that effectuate less than optimal results. Unfortunately, the decision produced an unexpected effect.

> I know we've [made mistakes] in some cases, especially in the case of our son who has ADHD....some things that we've done....I would do differently....His teacher felt that Danny was not givin' it his all, and we accepted her opinion....We weren't willing to accept less than his best effort....[W]e said this boy gotta' at least try to get those grades up...we took him off the [baseball] team....that was a big mistake because it left him isolated from his peers....a pretty good group of kids that he was building some positive relationships with....Due to our misjudgment he was left with not a whole lot to feel good about....That was a big mistake...big mistake.
>
> Esther Anderson (mother)

I asked Scott to share his thoughts on corporal punishment as opposed to other forms of non-physical discipline. To this query Scott responded:

> [C]orporal punishment is functional at times and at times it's really not. And some of the worst experiences I've had was when I used corporal punishment....To this day a certain memory will come up when I used corporal punishment and it can really bring tears to your eyes. I mean it can hurt you....you know you ask yourself, "What the hell were you thinking?
>
> Scott Anderson (father)

Scott's discussion became almost diatribe in nature as he described his response to potential threats to the safety and well-being of his children. As a parent who offers no apologies for his authoritative stance in such situations, he clearly articulated his willingness to take on the role of a protective parent.

> [I]f you don't poke your nose in their business. If you don't get all involved in their business, then you're going to have to pay the consequences....the kids have their own room. "That's your private room. Whatever you do in there is your own business." That's crap you know...."I can't invade their space"....You can invade their space...."[Y]our space is not a force field where I'm concerned....Now the issue is when they get to a certain age, then you've got to back off you know. And you know that. But while they're living in your house and while they're still in their early teens...you go into their private areas and

know their business and where they're going and phone numbers and who's going to be there.

Scott Anderson (father)

Given the intensity and decidedness of Scott and Esther Anderson's philosophy around discipline, I was anxious to discover how their children felt about their parents' style of discipline. I wanted to discover their understanding of and the meaning they attached to the words *discipline* and *corporal punishment*. Scott and Esther's oldest adult daughter Melissa, their only son Danny, and their youngest child Alexis each provided their own richly textured account of discipline in the Anderson home. My discussions began with Melissa when I asked her to discuss discipline of children from her own point of view.

[T]o me discipline has to do more with...teaching verbally and just letting them know...the difference between right and wrong and then....[A] willful situation...when it becomes...an act of defiance or rebellion or something like that, then you'd have to use more physical force.

Melissa Anderson (daughter)

Melissa had several thoughts about corporal punishment based on past observations. As she explained it there is a definite down-side to spanking children. These are situations where the act of spanking seems to be born of habit or what she calls "tradition". Melissa questioned the legitimacy of punishment for things like forgetfulness or minor unintentional mishaps as opposed to "a willful situation...an act of defiance". In this next excerpt she shares some of her concerns with what she seems to consider a misuse of punishment.

> I've known people to say, "I'm gonna whip you when I get home" if somebody lost their hat or mittens or something like that....I just really didn't agree with that. And I don't think that I will agree with that type of discipline....Because number one, we all forget....Do you get punished for forgetting? No. So why should the child?
>
> Melissa Anderson (daughter)

When I asked whether or not she perceived a difference between discipline and punishment, Melissa was quite clear that there was indeed a distinct difference between the two phenomena. I also wanted to determine whether or not Melissa agreed or disagreed with the idea of discipline being *providential* in nature — in this sense providing instruction and guidance, whereas punishment is usually administered as a *deterrent*.

> I think teaching and discipline is a lot more effective because it's more permanent. I think punishment...you're just trying to avoid fear. It's temporal because after a while you get over the fear....You look forward to the day that you are going to be big enough to not be controlled anymore....And then when that time comes, where are you?...I mean have you learned from it? That's the point I think. You have to learn from it and that's why teaching is discipline.
>
> Melissa Anderson (daughter)

Danny Anderson provided another perspective on the discipline of children in general and the specific disciplinary measures employed by his parents. He offers a young black adult male point of view. Like his older sister Melissa, Danny believes there

are less "harsh" forms of discipline that are just as viable as corporal punishment. However, he is adamant that for the well-being and functional development of children discipline must be more than just consistently and reasonably administered. It must also be firm and unwavering. His interpretation is consistent with Greif, Hrabowski, and Maton (1998) who proposed firm discipline with teaching as one of several parenting strategies used by African American fathers whose sons were high achievers. In describing his father's approach to discipline, Danny makes reference to a "tough love" approach.

> He [uses] tough love I guess for disciplinary areas....[S]ometimes you have to tell [children] "no" so they don't get too used to hearing "yes"....because if you hear "yes" too often, "no" will be like a shock....Dad doesn't want the "no" response to be foreign to us. "Like a foreign language...."Where'd that come from? What are you talking about? Could you please help me out here? Translate please"....So, it helps that he's that way.
>
> Danny Anderson (son)

In the above excerpt we hear Danny expressing the need for children to be able hear the word "no". Scott used "no" in a similar manner when he stated "it's important because the *no's* that you use, the discipline that you use...will be less severe than what the world does."

Since Esther Anderson described various disciplinary measures she and Scott used as part of their child-rearing practices, I wanted to know how the Anderson children perceived their parents' repertoire of discipline strategies. I asked Danny "what kinds of discipline and punishment did your parents use over the years from the time you guys

were little?" To this line of questioning Danny listed a varied range of disciplinary techniques from restriction and removal of privileges to corporal punishment.

> When we were little it was mostly, "You can't go outside and play"....There was the taking away of video games when the homework wasn't done or T.V. privileges or just going out and doing things with friends...or they may take away just watching a movie or..."You can't have dessert", cause that's always the best part of dinner!...The other one was the spankings. It all seemed kind of harsh at the moment, you know. But as you think about it now the only one that was probably harsh were the spankings.
>
> Danny Anderson (son)

Scott and his son both employed the term *harsh* in reference to some forms of discipline in the Anderson household. Scott expresses his own ambivalence and concern following spankings he has administered. It is in this next excerpt that he refers to himself as sometimes being harsh.

> [S]ometimes we come off as being harsh, unforgiving, intolerant, and in my case that's probably true....But you know if I feel that they're threatened or there's something that can threaten them, then I'm inflexible. I'm not tolerant.
>
> Scott Anderson (father)

The Anderson's youngest daughter Alexis provided rather thoughtful and insightful responses, some of which mirrored that of her older brother Danny and her

parents. In this excerpt, Alexis describes her parents' age appropriate disciplinary techniques.

> When we were younger...they would just spank us or they would put us on punishment. Now it's more like, now they don't [spank] us....we will get on punishment and restriction....it's a good method that they use because they understand that we're getting older.
>
> Alexis Anderson (daughter)

The next question I wanted Alexis to address based on her own opinion and recollection was which form of discipline her parents seemed to rely on the most. I asked the following. "Since there are multiple kinds of or forms of discipline which one do you think was used the most"? Her response is presented in this excerpt.

> Probably restriction...when you get a spanking it's done, it's over with....But it's like when you're on restriction....we have whole days of punishment! So, its worse with restrictions but it also teaches us a lot more in that time....you're gonna think about why I'm being punished.
>
> Alexis Anderson (daughter)

It seemed the more questions I asked this young 16 year old, the more complex her responses became. Alexis mentioned the family dialogue around the occurrence of some infraction deemed deserving of disciplinary action by her parents were often conflictual and generated heated discussions. When I asked her to elaborate on this issue she answered in a way that seemed to suggest her capacity to empathize with her parents and eventually acknowledge her own responsibility in both the misdeed and the pursuant disagreement.

> [I]f my parents don't know where I am at a certain time, they're scared and they're angry because they're scared. They don't know what's going on. So a lot of emotion is passing between the two people....[Y]ou don't want to hear what [your parents] are trying to say. You don't want to admit that you scared them. You don't want to admit that you made them afraid. You don't want to admit that you've hurt them....And so it's like, you get angry and you get on the defensive....But we do get the point....we know they're usually right.
>
> Alexis Anderson (daughter)

Finally, I asked Alexis since these family discussions can sometimes get really heated, if she felt there was any value inherent in the exchange. She replied in this manner.

> It is valuable because we do get to see their emotions....I don't want to have them sittin' here and have them wondering "where's Alexis?"....[W]ith all the dangers in the world your child could be next and they think that way. They're very protective and they're very cautious of [our] surroundings....So it's like, when I see that they're angry I know they're afraid....So I think there is value in that exchange.
>
> Alexis Anderson (daughter)

Summary and Discussion

Several themes emerged from the data that directly reflects the more commonly identified perceptions and norms of the families who participated in this project. There was significant consensus among and across the parents and their children.

The first question addressed the manner in which the respondents defined achievement and success, the criteria used to determine the point at which success has been achieved, and the meaning attached to the concepts of achievement and success based on the participants' lived experiences. The results of this area of investigation revealed achievement and success are measured in terms that reflect internal processes much more often than external circumstances or tangible elements. The acquisition of professional status and recognition, material wealth, power, and social prestige as the predominant criteria for assessing the level of success was noted by just over ten percent of the participants.

Conversely, informants reported the importance of intrinsic virtues such as achieving personal goals, or developing new skills nearly ninety percent of the time. They further reported how important it is to know you have consistently put forth your best effort when attempting to complete a given task, and the achievement of excellence according to standards set by both the individual and significant others. In the majority of cases the informants' conceptualizations of the meaning of success included a personal dimension, reflecting internally situated standards for achievement and accomplishment.

Second, the themes identified as critical for the development of children and facilitating success outcomes among middle-class African American families in particular remained consistent regardless of the characteristics of the particular respondent group. The subsequent child-rearing strategies and parenting practices grounded in traditional African American sociocultural value and belief systems were similarly employed by the adult participants currently raising children as well as those

who have successfully completed their child-rearing responsibilities (such as the Akbars) as predicated on the achievements of their adult children.

Additionally, the thematic child-rearing strategies and parenting practices were reported as crucial in encouraging and promoting the overall healthy development, socialization, and achievement of children. Among the themes identified by each family was the role of education in achieving success, the consistent use of selective exposure as a viable parenting strategy, and the importance of family relationships, connections, and family oriented activities. Furthermore, a healthy respect for self and others and the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own actions were identified as critical to the development and positive socialization of children and youth. Religion and spirituality remain a strong influence among African American families and the larger community. Finally, families stressed the absolute necessity to situate their children in a home and community environment where risk of harm to children is minimized and to willingly and consciously take on the crucial task of disciplining their children.

As one scans these success oriented strategies they may appear fairly unremarkable. We might expect to find similar success oriented strategies and parenting practices emphasized among most parents and families invested in raising healthy, well-adjusted, responsible people motivated to achieve and become successful young adults, racial/ethnic membership notwithstanding. On the other hand, there are two more parenting issues that are crucial to the development of racial/ethnic minority families and their children 1) positive racial identity development and socialization, and 2) the problems associated with a phenomenon conceptualized as contested racial authenticity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, oral histories based on interviews with Mrs. Lydia

Burdett Wilson, Mrs. Mary Anderson, Jeanine and David Blair, and five of the adolescent and young adult informants will allow both within and across generation comparisons. It is in these comparative case analyses that the matters of positive racial identity development and socialization and contested racial authenticity will be addressed in chapters five, six, and seven.

CHAPTER FIVE

Racial Identity Development and Socialization: The Elders Speak

Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson and Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson both grew up in the south. Both women are able to recall with vivid clarity the reality of living in communities where adherence to decidedly rigid social barriers such as those established by de jour segregation between whites and Blacks was the law of the land. Nonetheless, these two elders' lives were peppered with differences that in dramatic fashion shaped and influenced significant variations in how they each responded to the realities of growing up black in America during the heyday of Jim Crow.

The profundity of intra-group differences — even around the collectively shared social phenomena of race and racism, exists and is resoundingly reinforced when one is privileged to go beyond theoretical models of racial identity development and explore the more complex intricacies of the ways in which individuals develop within their own varied sociopolitical and cultural contexts (W. L. Haight, personal communication, September 15, 2005). As I listened to Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Anderson tell their own stories in their own voices, witnessing the unfolding of small corners of their lives, I was graced with the opportunity to be present as the diversity of their unique experiences was revealed. The wonderfully rich and vibrant stories they shared paralleled each other in so many ways. But then again, there were also completely unique and unanticipated variations that both surprised and amazed me.

Our understanding of how and why one's life experiences affect their racial identification schema, attitudes about race, behaviors, preferred racial socialization processes and practices, and racial messages is enhanced when we are able to learn at the knees of these elder mothers. To this end, by comparing aspects of these two women's

lived experiences we find that indeed there are very definite intra-group differences in racial identity development and socialization processes, and that these processes are context dependent — that is influenced by various socio-demographics including gender, age, region, marital status, and neighborhood composition (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). We also find that the plethora of correlates of racial socialization are truly unique and brilliantly varied.

Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson

Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson was born into a financially privileged family during the Jim Crow era. As a result of the family's social position in the community of Sevierville, Tennessee, Mrs. Wilson's childhood experiences with racism were rather unique. These differences appear to a great extent to be informed by the proximity of family members to the Smoky Mountain homestead and the privileged social class and position they enjoyed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries — simultaneously representing features of social class, neighborhood context, and geography.

During an informal conversation, Mrs. Wilson's oldest daughter Jamie shared that even now she is still amazed when she visits Sevierville. She marvels as she walks down streets named for so many of her family members, strolls through buildings constructed by her grandfather and uncles so long ago, or visits with her ancestors in the various private Burdett family cemeteries. The magnitude of her family's accomplishments during that particular time in our country's history is certainly not lost on her. Instead it has contributed to her sense of self and personal agency. Jamie Wilson feels an absolute connection to this community in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee where she is able to see the contributions made to the area by her ancestors.

Jamie is very certain the Burdett family legacy of hard work, individual effort, and achievement, as well as the messages that emphasized taking pride in one's family and history that she and her sister received from their mother are attributable to the very same privileges of social class, neighborhood, and geographical contexts.

While symbiotically connected, Jamie's family lived apart from the poor white community where the men who worked in her Grandfather and uncle's factory lived. The Burdett homestead was situated atop a hill overlooking the poor white neighborhood with its tin roofed shanties. The symbolism of the disparate livelihoods between the Burdett family and the working class poor white community and the place of privilege, status, and protection afforded this very unusual black family over multiple generations is apparent in this composite narrative provided by Jamie as she talks about visits to Sevierville, Tennessee as children this way.

Walking on Hallowed Ground

> When Chris and I were kids we'd go visit our grandparents in the summer. Sometimes we'd walk down to the bottom of the hill...our house was at the top of this big hill....It was a beautiful three story red brick house with this amazing woodwork detail everywhere you looked. It was just amazing.... [W]hen Chris and I would go down the hill to either go into town or just look around, we'd get to the bottom of the hill and see these, I mean shacks....They were so poorly constructed you could see into the house through the spaces between the boards...and sometimes we'd see a white kid or sometimes some of the adults would see us and say "Ya'll are Burdetts ain't you?" They knew our family, and they knew we were

related in some way to the men who used to be their employers. Even as kids we knew that was some wild stuff....I go to the family cemeteries and just look at all those grave sites where our family has been buried for more than three generations....[I]t's both humbling and truly awesome to know you're walking on the very same ground your great grandparents walked on....you know it really makes you feel as if you're walking on hallowed ground, 'cause if it had not been for those old souls, our family's history would have been so different....[T]hen you think, how would my life have been different? What kinds of opportunities would have been available to Chris and me...and even our boys? It is truly humbling.

This exceptional account of the Burdett clan created the backdrop for a family and more specifically a maternal legacy to subsequent generations that elevated hard work, endurance, stamina, achievement, education, pride in oneself, one's family, and family history above any other challenges one may encounter. It was a legacy born out of the unique and privileged social class of a black family whose social status and position allowed them to metaphorically look down from "the top of this big hill" and see the homes of the poor white families. It was also a legacy forged in a community located in the mountains of Tennessee, a southern state recognized as the birthplace of the first Jim Crow laws. This legacy formed enduring roots for the particular racial identity development and socialization processes that would inform generations of Burdetts for years to come.

While keenly aware that some of the white residents, particularly among the older white citizenry, harbored attitudes and feelings of prejudice and bigotry, Mrs. Wilson's

exposure to racism came in the form of institutional racism — specifically, the racially segregated school system. She and her brothers, like most other African American children who were raised during the Jim Crow segregated south, attended all black schools. However, Mrs. Wilson reported she was barely aware of racism or segregation during her youth. She good-naturedly reported that her daughters even claimed their mother knew nothing about racism because of their grandfather's financial success and the economic contribution their family business made to the town of Sevierville, Tennessee. In her own words Mrs. Wilson explained her childhood experiences this way.

I Was Never Involved in It

> I was never involved in it [racism directed toward herself] other than knowin' that the schools were segregated and havin' to walk to school and that sort of thing and I know there was segregation in the town.

As a child Mrs. Wilson was protected from any personal encounter with racism. The social position of the Burdett family as one of the important employers for the town of Sevierville elevated them to a status of privilege that transcended the socially accepted standards and norms for daily interactions between Blacks and whites at the time. The Burdett brothers, Mrs. Wilson's father and uncles, were accorded a level of respect and recognition rarely afforded most African American men of their generation. Even as a young child, Mrs. Wilson was aware that being 'a Burdett' meant there was something special about your family, which translated into there's something special about you. Mrs. Wilson's life experiences were significantly shaped by the Burdett family's abundant resources. Consequently, these extraordinary circumstances influenced the specific nature and form of racial identity development and socialization practices she

would eventually select as a parent raising two little girls in a midsized university town beginning in the 1950s.

As I listened to Mrs. Wilson's oldest daughter Jamie talk about her family, I was struck by how strongly she identifies with the Burdett family legacy, which informed the generations of children in the following manner:

The Necessary Elements

> [A]nything is possible if you have the necessary elements. You've got to have a strong and unwavering commitment, be willing to work hard, recognize your own innate intelligence and talents, and be prepared to stay the course regardless of the adversities life may throw at you — and you know they're coming (J. Wilson, personal communication, March 12, 2005).

The family legacy served as a powerful impetus for the multigenerational achievement and success of the Burdett clan accounting for two attorneys, a successful career in the lucrative west coast based entertainment industry, and two teachers, all of whom were proceeded by a matriarch who still speaks with pride about her acceptance into an undergraduate program of study at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign during the late 1940s — a rare event indeed. Although bitterly disappointed over not being able to attend university, Mrs. Wilson remains extremely proud her accomplishment. She still has her official letter of admission 60 years later.

Jamie Wilson's description of her inherited legacy reflect the family's messages to their children which included hard work as a prerequisite to achievement, pride in

one's individual capacities, and the ability to cope with adversities such as discrimination.

The Burdett brothers were able to defy all contemporary social prescriptions and create a lucrative business at a time when black men were being lynched all over the southern part of the United States for infractions as insignificant as making direct eye contact with a white man or woman. The multigenerational Burdett family legacy and socialization process inculcated their children with the belief that racism and discrimination are obstacles that can and should be challenged, and the most viable method for successfully confronting racism is through individual effort and achievement as illustrated in the following quote by Mrs. Burdett Wilson.

"Within That Length of Time I Had Proven Myself"

> I saw this ad in the paper where the Urbana Schools were looking for a secretary....I had to go into the Central office to apply...when the business manager...saw my resume I suppose where I'd done all this work in New York...for Internal Revenue....she hired me....it was temporary, but within that length of time I had proven myself and most everybody liked me....they were good to me. And everybody after they knew me, the principals and everybody, they gave me good recommendations...and I advanced to working with the [man] in charge of teachers' affairs...they found out I was good in math and I helped them with setting salaries....I was in charge of insurance for a contract, making sure they had Workman's Comp....So then I advanced to....payroll...they asked me to take it over. And....in all I worked for 23 years and about 20 of those was

> in payroll. I thoroughly enjoyed it....I did the payroll. I had all the taxes to pay. I paid the pensions, and everything that was the withholding out of the salaries. I had all of that to pay...W2s to print...all of that and I truly enjoyed it.

As is reflected in this pride filled excerpt, Mrs. Wilson was offered several promotions within a segregated Urbana school district. Hired to work for a white administrator in an all white office, with the exception of herself, she occasionally came under attack by other African Americans. "Of course people talked about me saying I was an Uncle Tom bein' over there with them...a man said that, but they were good to me".

This personal account conveys Mrs. Wilson's belief that even when faced with adversity in the form of racism — "And this was during the time the schools were having so many problems, segregation problems and all the upheaval and whatnot and I saw my business manager goin' through all of these", and criticisms from members of the black community, adherence to her family legacy provided what her daughter Jamie calls the "necessary elements" to achieve and succeed.

Perhaps the strength of the Burdett family legacy contributed to the interpersonal style Mrs. Wilson would adopt in her professional interactions with white co-workers and administrators. She consistently referred to the fact that the people in her workplace environment "were good to me", "most everybody liked me" and that she "had proven myself" all during a time of racial tension and social unrest. When conflated with Mrs. Wilson's proclamation that "We had enough relations with white people that to me I didn't know there was segregation you might say", the timbre of these comments suggest

the manner in which the unique qualities of her life shaped her racial identity development.

Mrs. Burdett Wilson's transcriptions contained only a few of the race content socialization messages that she might have communicated to her children. However, one of the stories she shared involved a problem one of her daughters experienced. As a student at University High School Mrs. Wilson's oldest child Jamie was faced with a conflictual situation that was brimming with racial overtones. Racial prejudice and bigotry — the presence of which has been publicly noted by the former Miss America, Erika Harold who also began her high school experience at this same school, played a primary role in Jamie's decision to transfer schools. Like Ms. Harold one generation later, Jamie found it impossible to continue at University High School due to the level of racial hostility that prevailed.

> [Jamie] went to University High School for two years to three years and it was quite stressful for her because of — I think at that time she was the only black there. And I think she felt the difference. I remember 'cause her hair always had to be; she wore braids where the other girls had hair just flyin' everywhere. I think somehow she felt — that bothered her I think. And then when she came home and she had so much homework and whatnot to do, she never had time for the kids, the neighborhood kids. So after about 2 years or it might have been 3, she just had had it so we took her out....after she came out she went to Champaign Central and graduated. But she still, she always gives credit to Uni High for teaching her how to study.

Mrs. Wilson never directly attributed Jamie's struggle to racism, prejudice, or bigotry. However, she was wholly aware of the fact that as "the only black" student in the entire school the experience "was quite stressful for her".

The socialization process chosen and passed down intergenerationally by the Burdett family in combination with Mrs. Wilson's personal life experiences, including the very distinct childhood experiences of growing up in such a resource abundant family, are discernible in the messages about race, family, and cultural heritage Mrs. Wilson constructed and transmitted to her daughters. For example, she spoke with energy and animation as she talked about her family's intelligence, specialized skills, community contributions, and professional status. The pride in family and family history that filled this tiny soft-spoken woman was almost palpable as she presented the following three descriptive narratives.

I Was a Smart Child, Came from Smart People, Raised Smart Children

I Was a Smart Child

> Now I often think of the motto of the United Negro College Fund, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste", and I do know that in my family I was supposed to have been a very smart child, and my brothers, you know. My mother was a teacher and I just dearly loved school. I got good grades. [O]ur saving grace in a sense was our elementary school teacher who was my daddy's cousin's wife. She grew up and was educated in Cincinnati, Ohio and she was very smart and she could teach. She was a good musician too, so we had a pretty basic elementary school training because of her. The young people branched out from there and have done well,

most of 'em. When I went to New York I went to business school up there for a while. I used to do a lot of adult education classes. Now had Parkland College come here earlier I'm sure I would have gone. I did! I have taken several courses there.

Came from Smart People

I was the first child born in the house [in Sevierville, Tennessee]. [Daddy] built it because he was a brick mason.... Now, [my Daddy] was a brilliant person. He was one of those whose mind was wasted. He used to make, he made a violin that took first prize at the county fair. He used to weave; make baskets and bottoms of chairs....He did all of that with no training; just picked it up and made yard furniture. Oh, he was brilliant....And then I had a brother who settled in California, a brick mason. At one time he had his own construction business, and he's said to have done work for [former President Richard] Nixon and his family. He built a barbecue pit or something, and he took great pride in that....But he was the brilliant one who could just do anything...the artistic one. And my baby brother...when he got old enough he went into the Air Force and later transferred to the Army, but he made a career out of the military. So the baby brother who made the military a career....After he came out of the War he opened his own garage in California. He used to teach in Saudi, Arabia back then...auto mechanics I think it was. They said he was a great mechanic....My cousin, Martha, she was college educated. She grew up where we did and she was a nurse and all that. She went to medical

school....Now the oldest part of Sevierville was built by Blacks; the buildings and all. My daddy and his uncles and brothers...had their own construction companies...and they built all of the older parts of the town. [The Smoky Mountain Historical Society has] given the black folks credit in their books and things....And I just think it's wonderful that the town printed all this about the black people. They didn't ignore the contributions that the black folks made, and I just thought that was great.

Raised Smart Children

But when it came time for [Carrie — Mrs. Wilson's youngest daughter] to go to high school, Uni High just begged and begged Carrie. They wanted her to come. And they called me on the telephone about it and wanted her records sent to them. And I said, "Well she's not coming over there"....she wanted no part of Uni High. So she went on through school and she was active, involved in a lot of activities, and a stand-out student and she got many honors from this, that and the other when she was a student....Carrie being the student she was she had several universities wanting her to come. 'Cause I know the University of Michigan had a meeting in town inviting prospective students. Carrie was one of them. And after the meeting was over, [students] were allowed to ask questions and her daddy asked her to ask a question...the man said, "Wait just a minute". He waited till he'd answered everybody else and then said he really wanted [Carrie] to come 'cause they felt that she could do something for them as well as them doing for her because she was this

> brilliant, outstanding student. But when all was said and done she wanted to go to Purdue so we took her to Purdue....they called her one of their Most Distinguished Students....She was Phi Beta Kappa and went on to the University of Chicago Law School after Purdue. Jamie finished and after she graduated from high school went to Southern Illinois University for a couple of years....came home and went to U of I here....She [then] went to University of Illinois, Chicago, and that's the one thing that I am so thankful for that she did go on and finish her education and that sort of thing....I look back on it and think that our family has not done too badly.

Messages that emphasized education, achievement, and the value of hard work, were evident in both the Burdett family legacy as well as Mrs. Wilson's individual set of socialization messages that she communicated to her children. These final excerpts attest to the types of messages Mrs. Wilson imparted to her daughters as they pertained to both individual achievements as well as those realized by the collective black community.

Their Individual Achievements

> I lived my life through the children and it was important to me that they be educated and I guess one of my reasons for educating them was I didn't want them to be dependent on any man. If things didn't go well, they could take care of themselves. But it was important to me to see that they were educated....[Jamie and Carrie] both took French in school and they were in France a couple of years ago and I was just so proud. That's why I went to work; to help them through school....I couldn't go so I guess I went through them.

Blacks Have Come a Long Way

> Now I would say that the Blacks have come a long way. I mean things have opened up. Maybe they're not as great as it should be, but I think so far as enjoying what's available, black people are doin' pretty good.

The circumstances of Lydia Burdett Wilson's unique childhood experiences contributed to her individual response to racism and racial identity development. The family's wealth, social status, and position within their community seems to have shielded her from becoming the target of oppressive acts based in racism as long as she remained within the protective safety of the Sevierville, Tennessee enclave that was her birthplace. Once outside that community, the realities of personally experienced racism came into view in a more pronounced manner. Nonetheless, Mrs. Wilson's interpretation of events that appear steeped in prejudice and bigotry were understood through the lenses created by her individual set of circumstances. Therefore, the Burdett family legacy continued to serve as unmitigated proof for her and subsequent generations that achievement and success are not only possible but probable despite institutional racism and discrimination, as long as one maintains a strong sense of self-efficacy, is willing to work hard, and remains committed to one's personal goals.

Mrs. Burdett Wilson's story stands as the background against which I constructed a comparative case analysis. In doing so, I was struck by the dramatic contrast between the experiences of Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson from childhood through young adulthood. The overarching premise is this — the remarkable variations (parents' marital status, social class, social environment, neighborhood/community contexts, personal experiences) in contrast to the similarities (political environment, geography,

gender, and age) in the life histories of these two female elders both living through and surviving the Jim Crow era in the south, account at least in part, to the variations in their responses to racial identity development and socialization processes and child-rearing practices respectively chosen by the women, as well as the temper of the racial messages they transmitted to their children.

In stark contrast to Mrs. Wilson's rather unusual experience, Mrs. Anderson was confronted with acts of racism very early in life. In fact, the differences between these two women started at the headwaters of life — the circumstances of birth.

Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson

Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson was born to a share cropping family on the Mississippi Delta in the early 1900s. The 90-year-old Mrs. Anderson was the first child born into the Brooks family, and therefore, dubbed "Sistuh" marking the special position she held in her family system. Frequently the oldest child, whether male or female, was expected to assist the parents and other adult family members in their daily activities and responsibilities. As defined by Jarrett (1995) adult-sponsored development strategies involve the acquisition of skills and competencies like child-rearing responsibilities or actual income earning labor for the family. It was this birth order position that informed Mrs. Anderson of the role she was to play within her immediate family.

In contrast to Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Anderson was born to a very young unwed mother and father (Lena Johnson and Louis Brooks), neither of them quite yet 17 years of age when they became the parents of this baby girl. The young couple didn't marry until Lena became pregnant with their second child. As a youth without a *"homeplace"* traveling the back roads of Crenshaw, Mississippi, Mrs. Anderson's father Louis

exchanged his physical labor for food and shelter. As head of the household, Mary Anderson's widowed grandmother needed the extra hands to help her and her own children work their farm. As tenant farmers, an abundant harvest might lessen the degree of want experienced by families who had no choice but to make due with the meager subsistent living they were able to eke out as sharecroppers.

By far the racial attitude of the farm manager/owner, typically a white male, determined his behavior toward the families who worked his fields, which ultimately predicted the accuracy, fairness, and equity of his accounting skills at harvest time. An avid storyteller, Mrs. Anderson narrates numerous stories of living as a black child in Mississippi from the turn of the century on. These descriptive stories of the realities of racism and racist practices in the south during that historical time period re-present the rare and uniquely special brand of American racism as we have come to know it. In this vein, Mrs. Anderson shared the following story that offers a glimpse into the kaleidoscope of childhood experiences that configured the world in which she lived and summarizes the race relation dynamics between a white farm manager and a black Delta share cropper. Upon a little closer inspection another facet becomes visible. It is one of Mrs. Anderson's early childhood experiences with defiance as a response to racism.

We Never Did Get Our Forty-Acres and a Mule

> Every season we'd have to get through pickin' all the cotton so Daddy could haul it to the [cotton] gin. That's when he'd have to meet Mr. Dudlow to settle the account. Well see Daddy was always smart, from a child on up, so he could figure out just what we was owed in his head. But that didn't mean nothin' really, 'cause in those days you got what the boss

man said you got. He'd just lie and beat you out your fair share. That way you always owed him. I remember Daddy tellin' me "Now this what Mr. Dudlow supposed to give me. You watch and see what I git". Sure enough, when Mr. Dudlow finished tallyin' up the figures, the amount Daddy knew we was due and what we got was different...and always in Mr. Dudlow's favor of course. He'd say "Well Louis you didn't quite break even this year, maybe next year". Next year never did come. So when I hear the people talkin' about paying the families of slaves like all my grandparents, I think to myself, we never did get our forty acres and a mule.

Mrs. Anderson's narratives include stories of pain experienced by her family and indeed her entire black community. One such story involves the brutal beating death of a young female cousin.

That's the Way it was Back Then

My cousin was about 15 years old....One day a white man caught her out in the fields by herself....[H]e decided he was gonna rape her....[but] my cousin fought him....She tried to fight him off but she was just a child....What could she do?...That man beat that girl to death and left her body layin' in the fields....The people knew what happened. Knew who the man was that killed her but the little town sheriff didn't do nothin' about it....[H]e wasn't gonna make his life a livin' hell by arrestin' a white man for killin' a black girl 'cause she tried to stop him from havin' his way with her....See I remember things like that. I saw things like that for

myself....It was terrifying....I was scared all the time...'cause you knew things like that could happen to anybody includin' you!...Things like that happened but....who was you gon' tell?...we had no legal protection whatsoever....Now that's just the way it was back then.

Mrs. Anderson recounted numerous examples of racism 'at its best'. By the 1940s she had moved to Chicago along with the millions of other African Americans during the Great Migration. She told the following story about traveling through the south with her husband. As we see at the end of the encounter, Mrs. Anderson and her husband employ yet another act of defiance to confront and counter the structure and impact of Jim Crow. (This story is re-presented in the author's voice)

Mr. Anderson was on leave after returning to the states from his tour of duty in the Philippine Islands having just served overseas in the Army during World War II. The young couple was going home to visit family and friends when they decided to stop for food at a road side café. Having grown up dealing with segregated public places their entire lives, they automatically planned on making their purchase and driving on, eating their sandwiches in the car.

Before Mr. Anderson could place their order to go, the man behind the counter announced in a loud, aggressive voice, "You can git somethin' to eat but ya'll cain't eat it here". The couple never expected nor had they planned on actually going into the establishment. However, at that moment the irony of the situation just struck Mr. Anderson squarely in the face. He turned on his heels and left without buying anything. Once in the car, he related the event to his wife stating, "There I was standin' in my uniform. I done served my country in the

Philippines and still I cain't sit down in a greasy spoon and eat a sandwich that I done paid for. They can all go straight to hell. We'll just wait 'til we git home to eat". With that, the couple continued on their way, stomachs growling for the hundreds of miles between themselves and the relative safety of home. It seems even black men in military uniform were an affront to some southern whites.

Unlike Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson, the family Mrs. Anderson grew up in had no such social position to offer any form of protection. They came into contact with white southerners on an almost daily basis and they were exposed to the realities of racism even as very young children. Consequently, Lena and Louis' children had to develop strategies to manage race-related stress even before they were old enough to actually understand the basis for the discrepancies that marked the lives of the black versus the white people who constituted the social communities in which they lived.

Mrs. Anderson's family of origin (the Brooks family) as well as her family of procreation (the Andersons) adopted socialization processes best described as acts of defiance. For example, Mrs. Anderson shared stories about going to the fields as young as age nine, working alongside adult men and women and how she could pick cotton as fast as any male child her same age (often doing so in friendly competitions), or how her aged grandmother would pick cotton while seated in a chair carried out to the fields by one of the grandchildren so she could do her part to contribute to the family's earnings. These accounts clearly express the family's belief that hard work was not only a valued attribute, but that taking pride in one's work whatever the task was important enough to warrant being

instilled in Lena and Louis Brooks' children early on in life. These same seemingly subtle practices constituted acts of defiance in that they countered the negative stereotypes of African Americans as lazy, unmotivated, shiftless, and unwilling to work, so prevalent in that place at that time.

The idea of personal freedom as one's birth right was a bedrock belief for these families despite their understanding that an undeniable incongruence existed between what was supposed to be and what was. As people of African descent, the Brooks were all too familiar with what it meant to be black in America during that historical time period. They also believed that one of the foundational strengths of black people lay in their belief in an all powerful God, one who would certainly exercise His own 'system of accounting' on judgment day. According to Mrs. Anderson, then justice would surely be doled out to those who "caused the suffering of the innocent among even the least of His people". The images that are created as Mrs. Anderson weaves stories about the rituals and sacraments practiced at McNeal Missionary Baptist Church (a small one room wooden structure) certainly portray a people who embraced open expression of heartfelt and spirit-filled emotions. The songs of praise in their church were accompanied by the kind of shouting, piano playing, foot stomping, and hand clapping that reached a higher "level of spiritual intensity" (Kochman, 1981, p. 18).

The Brooks and Andersons believed one had an obligation to one's community and indeed to people in general, including a responsibility to offer aid in times of dire need. A true testimony to this value can be found in another of Mrs. Anderson's stories.

Mama Breastfed a White Baby

> [T]his lady across the road from where my mother lived — didn't have no food and lost weight. She was nursing her baby, tryin' to nurse her baby and she didn't have no milk....from her breast. My mother had a baby and she had been breastfeeding....And that girl came over there and asked my mother would she nurse that baby, her baby. And mama took the baby and nursed it. I was telling somebody else that. They said, "I wouldn't! Your mother nursed that baby! Not me! I wouldn't!"...But mama didn't say nothin' about it. So different things like that happen and kids pay attention to it.

The contribution to one's community also extended to the manner in which members carried themselves. Anyone — man, woman, or child, old or young, whose achievements or even their simple day-to-day demeanor contradicted the negative stereotypical images and perceptions of black people was seen as contributing to *racial uplift* (hooks, 2003), making celebrities and public figures such as Lena Horne, Joe Louis, Ethel Waters, and General Benjamin O. Davis revered icons within the African American community.

Lastly, as has been made quite clear from the inclusion of just a small sampling of the many stories Mrs. Anderson shared during her interview, the oral traditions so characteristic of West Africa and African Americans was a highly regarded and utilized art form among her family and most of the families in her rural farm community.

Comparing the Burdett Wilson families against the Brooks Anderson clans one readily notices definite experiential differences in the midst of commonly shared realities or intra-group similarities. These are two families who embrace their identity as African Americans, perceive racism as a socially constructed barrier to be confronted, defied, and defeated, and value and take pride in their race community. In the following discussion taken from her transcriptions, Mrs. Anderson describes how she self identifies as a woman of African ancestry.

"We had to be Some Pretty Strong People"

> The kids today, they don't remember what we had to go through. We had to work in them cotton fields from just after day break 'til way over in the evenin'. Now that was some hard work....I used to listen to all them stories Grandmama told us about how it was when she was growin' up as a little slave girl.... I'd get so angry sometimes I didn't know what to do....I'd get angry when I would hear those stories. I can do it now....but I have to watch myself that I don't do it. I try not to do it 'cause it's wrong....But you know, I realized as a young child that all those things that happened before my time and all while I was growin' up in the south, we always stayed close to God....we knew how to take care of one another. We didn't wait for the government to help us out else we'd been waitin' a long time...! And I knew we had to be some pretty strong people to come through everything we had to and still we made it....Here I am 90 years old. I have seen so much in my life.... But no matter what they [white people] did to those ole souls, we still made it.

In the African American cultural tradition Mrs. Anderson offered numerous stories, several of which are presented here to illuminate the Brooks and Anderson families' perception and understanding of racism as socially constructed — not an innate naturally occurring event, and how one must approach a phenomenon that so intrusively dominated their lives with defiance.

It's the Parents...Kids Don't be Paying No Attention

> When I got old enough to see how these things happen and why they happen. Like I'd ask, "Why can't I call this little girl's parents Mr. and Mrs. Harmon?" The little girl's name was Eula. She played with us from the early mornin' 'til evenin'....she would eat and play with us all day. And we were kids and we were playin' beautiful together. No problem. If we had a fight it made no difference. It was ok. Mama didn't pay it no attention. [S]he would always refer to my dad and my mother by their first name and say "yes" and "no" to them. I was about five years old I guess. And I said "Why she call you all Lena and Louis and then say yes and no to you all...and when her daddy and mother would come up we had to say "Mr." and "Mrs." and "Yes ma'am" and "no ma'am." I wanted to know why and I was quite young....We played all day and kids don't pay no attention. It's the parents that teaches that [differential treatment according to race] to the kids. The kids don't be payin' no attention.

In the next two excerpts, Mrs. Anderson describes the psychological and emotional impact just hearing stories about her beloved Grandmother's experiences as a

young child ensnared by the institution of slavery and the violent acts that so often accompanied this dehumanizing tragedy had on her own young mind and spirit.

Colonel Ferdinand Potts

> [My Grandmother] was twelve years old or so...and this man, this Colonel Ferdinand Potts....down in Mississippi somewhere. [S]he was tellin' the story about the Yankees or somebody came and was takin' this man away...and then took his property and his food out of his barn and threw it all in the lake and rivers and things like that. [The children] was runnin' and chasin' behind [the soldiers]....She and the other little kids with her were all cryin' sayin', "Why y'all takin' Massa Ferdinand." They were children and just didn't understand.

I Couldn't Stand Those Bib Overalls

> Grandmama told us things that happened like when they tarred and burned [black men]. I didn't see that but she told about it and that's why I couldn't stand those bib overalls. She told us about how they'd tie the bottoms of the pant legs and pour that burnin' hot tar down into those overalls. They'd have them tied up against a post and set that tar on fire inside those overalls. And [white men] stand there and watch a man burn and crush to the ground. And I'm listenin' to that and those kinds of things. That's why I say a lot of times they be talkin' about people in other countries and how they misuse the people, like Sadaam Hussein. [Terrorists] were wrong in what they did but all you have to do is look back and think. The same thing happened here....[M]y

> grandmother...would tell us the stories....I don't think she knew it was affectin' us like that because we didn't see these things but they did.

Upon occasion Mrs. Anderson was witness to events in which family members "protract[ed] the interaction with verbal confrontation....calling whites on the carpet for discrimination" (Feagin & Sikes, 1999, p. 412). Confrontational responses to racism may be more common in today's contemporary context of "political correctness". However, such blatant acts of defiance during the 1930s on the Mississippi Delta could easily result in castigations of the most serious kind.

In the following excerpt, Mrs. Anderson's maternal Grandmother was the protagonist in one such high risk defiant confrontation during a face-to-face interaction with a young white man. Constituting a breach of one of the most adamantly reinforced prescriptions for black and white relationships and communication, the re-telling of this event serves a two-fold purpose. First, it represents an exemplary act of individual resistance to racism. Second, it elucidates the impetus for the content and process of racial socialization messages Mrs. Anderson chose to facilitate the racial identity development and socialization processes in her own children.

You Took My Mule, My Wagons, and You Took My Land

> [One day] a man come by the house. He said "Hi Happy, how you feeling?" They all called my Grandmother Happy. She said "Oh shut up. You don't do nothin' but tell me lies. You told me a lie." He started laughin' and said she didn't have good sense. But he knew better than that. She got through preachin' him out. She said "You know you took my mule, my wagons, and you took my land. You promised to pay me back."

> See her husband had died and this man took all her little property....He came to her house and she called him a lie. White folks killed black folks for a whole lot less than that. But she said, "Never mind, that's all right. One of these days you'll pay for that." That's what she told him. He did too! His child died and his wife did too. They were a young couple. I guess that's why he didn't say nothin' ugly to her, because she was old....He just kind of laughed and said "You always fussin'." Turned around and walked on down the road.

The numerous excerpts and stories taken from Mrs. Anderson's transcriptions provide clear and unambiguous evidence that she chose to communicate messages that stressed pride in one's African American heritage, culture, and history to her children. She also imparted messages emphasizing the absolute importance of education, personal effort, achievement, and the value of hard work as well as taking pride in one's work.

> I never allowed my kids to go to all black schools 'cause the quality of their education would have suffered. The white schools always had better teachers and equipment — even the buildings were newer and better. So we moved to the suburbs in 1961 so the kids could go to integrated schools....We knew without a good education [our daughter] might end up scrubbin' white folks' floors and the boys might have to work as janitors cleanin' up somebody's building somewhere....Ain't nothing wrong with that kinda' work....we always told our kids if you a janitor be the best janitor you know how to be. That's your job. Do it right....[but] you cain't

feed a family on those wages. We wanted better than that for our kids. So, they had to get the best education we could get for 'em.

One final story is offered as substantiation of the premise that the lived experiences of Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson and Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson provided the fundamental factors that influenced their responses to racism and the racial identity development and socialization processes and associated racial messages they subsequently adopted.

Tell Him to go to Hell!

> See, I was 26-years-old when I left the south and I was around them [white people]....I walked in a store one day....This man's daughter was there and had her little baby...up in her arms and this old [black] man came in. I was in the store at the same time but I was a kid and this girl, she spoke to him like she was supposed to 'cause she knew him, this girl did. This old man said, "Hi there," or somethin' like that to the baby. She said, "Tell him to go to hell" to the baby and laughed like it was funny. That's what she told her baby to tell that old man....The baby couldn't even talk I don't think....But I was standin' there, and that hit me. I was little but those kinds of things hit me. I was big enough to be standin' in that store and I heard this and it just got me. Those kinds of things just hurt me. As long as you didn't come into contact with it [racist comments] you'd be all right but we were in the south.

Summary and Discussion

Two different women both born around the same time in our nation's history, both living in the apartheid rural south as African American female children, both with uniquely different experiences. When a substantive comparison is made between the experiences of these two women of the same age cohort, the variability in their emotional and psychological responses to racial matters is apparent, as was so clearly illuminated in their excerpts and narratives. Mrs. Wilson experienced a form of protection from the consequential manifestation of racism. Her life story speaks of a level of personal safety and protection afforded by her family's material resources and subsequent social clout. On the other end of the spectrum, Mrs. Anderson's exposure to racism in all its forms began early in life, leaving her susceptible to the deleterious effects of such long-term exposure (Utsey & Payne, 2000; Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). However, observing her parents', community's, and especially her grandmother's strategies for confronting racism, her primary response strategy seemed to take the form of defiance.

The Burdett family's resources created a softer landing for their children. Conversely, Mrs. Anderson was exposed to racism from her earliest memories on. Both born and raised in the south in the first half of the 1900's, it seems the racial identity, racial attitude, behaviors, and the socialization practices adopted by Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Anderson to augment their own child-rearing strategies were affected significantly more by their own individual life experiences from childhood on as opposed to the historical or geographical contexts commonly shared by both women, despite the harshness so prevalent in the Jim Crow south of the early to mid 1900s.

This comparative case analysis based on the lived experiences of Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson and Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson goes a long way in the investigation of *why* certain racial socialization domains are chosen over others in their efforts to prepare their children to recognize and confront racism and effectively manage race-related stress. However, as suggested by Thornton et al., (1990), a more rigorous investigation requires giving consideration to additional socio-demographic and environmental factors.

The following chapter serves to illuminate and clarify the concept of personal experience within a different time context — the premise being despite significant shifts and changes in external social, economic, political, and cultural structures that comprise the environmental context, personal experience remains a consistent and powerful force on the preferred racial identity development and socialization practices of African American parents. In the following chapter we will hear from a subsequent generation through the narrative voices of Jeanine and David Blair.

CHAPTER SIX

Racial Identity Development and Socialization: The Parent Generation Speaks

Sociopolitical and cultural climates change over time. As the landscape of environmental contexts change, the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral norms of a given social group must also change. The impact of these variations in our larger social world is experienced on every level including the micro family systems and individual levels. It is with this perspective in mind that we consider the process of racial identity development and socialization across generations.

The previous chapter explored the question of racial identity development and socialization among African American elder women. Therefore, this chapter will explore the same dimension of parenting within a later generation. Like the elder women — age cohorts with very different childhood experiences, a married couple from among the younger generation of parent informants were chosen for comparative purposes. I specifically chose Jeanine and David Blair because of certain distinct differences in their formative years and developmental pathways. Additionally, the selection of a couple allows us to explore whether or not and in what ways gender potentially functions as an influencing demographic factor in the racial identity development and socialization processes preferred by African American parents.

Jeanine Blair is the young woman from the southern part of the United States who transplanted to the Champaign-Urbana community during the 1980s. From early childhood Jeanine experienced a high degree of interaction with the dominant racial group through sites of daily routine such as the workplace, school, and even some social venues. However, the first time her husband David ever saw a white person in the flesh

he was "nine or ten years old". Oddly enough, David was born in Chicago, Illinois. Of course it is important to note that although Chicago is a large metropolitan Midwestern city, it remains one of the most racially segregated cities in the United States.

The couple has in common the fact that they were both born in the early 1960s to working class poor black families. Their differences begin with where they were born and the regions of the country in which they were raised. Of course they grew up in separate households, among their own family of origin, as a little girl and little boy. Finally we can't negate the obvious presence of their individual personalities. However, their differences do not end here. David and Jeanine each had markedly varied experiences concerning the racial diversity of their neighborhood communities. The similarities as well as the differences in this couple's lives have contributed to each of them developing their own unique and sometimes different responses to racism and strategies for mitigating against the deleterious impact of race-related stress and the internalization of racist oppression, first for themselves and then for their two children, Jackie and Ev Blair.

One detail of Jeanine Blair's life is that she grew up in the south like Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Anderson. However, Jeanine was born during the early 1960s when the civil rights movement was experiencing some of its most notable strides. Consequently, Jeanine attended integrated public schools during her childhood and adolescent years. As an adolescent, she worked part time right next to white youth. Occasionally, Jeanine even attended racially mixed recreational and social events, usually those sponsored by the public schools.

Despite the degree to which public settings in the south were becoming racially integrated, Jeanine reports "I'm from the South...middle Louisiana...one side of the

street all white...the other side all black. That's how we were raised....We never had black and white." Jeanine's early childhood and adolescent experiences in many ways continued the "separate but equal" dimensions of the Jim Crow era, albeit a separation that was maintained by group tendencies to self-segregate as opposed to separations upheld through legal sanctions.

Growing up in extreme poverty, Jeanine was keenly aware of the disparity in socio-economic status across segments of white and black families. Her accounts of life in middle Louisiana, where most of the acceptance and support available to her came from the black community, also suggest she experienced a degree of race-related stress and tension as a child and youth. Jeanine's experiences with racism and prejudice continued when she became a graduate student at the University of Chicago. Always on guard for racially derogatory comments, discriminatory treatment, and the more subtle forms of prejudiced thinking and belief, which were often times presented by otherwise well intentioned whites (hooks, 2003), she is always ready to assertively and, like Mrs. Anderson, defiantly confront racism, prejudice, and discrimination.

> [W]hen [my children] meet people who do not treat them right, they don't think of that as because these people are racist...they just think of these people as rude, negative people....[Jackie is] gonna pray for them....Whereas people like me —'Oh no, you've got another motive behind that'.... No, No! [Jackie can] pray. I'm gonna handle this situation.

Jeanine Blair has been extremely deliberate in choosing the particular practices she feels are most viable as she endeavors to aid her children in their racial identity development and socialization. Her strategies are heavily influenced by the Afrocentric

worldview, values, and belief system. Furthermore, this young mother makes no apologies for employing socialization processes whereby, racial out-groups — in this case, white people are perceived as untrustworthy and to be wary of at all times, despite the inclusion of certain Eurocentric behaviors. Jeanine's racial identity development and socialization processes, practices, and messages can be detected in the following collection of quotes.

You've Got to be Ready to Deal with It

> I oftentimes have to ask myself "Okay, Jeanine, is this an extreme message that you're giving [Jackie and Ev]? Do you have to go that far?"....I talk about it quite often....you might hear people talk about "well we endured 400 years of slavery." Well I was never a slave....But you know what...[s]ome of that mentality has been passed down....from generation to generation..., [and] there are some things that were passed down, in white generations and it exists today,...[s]o we have to be aware of that....because that's reality. So I just think that. Because I keep it to the forefront,....I keep it alive and well in my house. And I have to ask myself sometimes, "Are you goin' overboard with this?" But I think there's a need, because my children literally think....and I'm thankful that I have children who tend to think...God created all of us, and nobody's better than the other. And that's good that they think that way, but I know better. "So I just want you to be prepared." And I do keep it at the forefront in my house....[J]okingly Jackie came home one day and she was saying that one of the kids at school [asked her]..."Are you mixed? Is

> your mom white?"....She looked at the kid and said, "My mama? She's so far from bein' white that they got a black Jesus on the wall....You got the wrong person if you think my mama is white." So they know. When I started out by saying I struggle with it...I want to make sure that I'm not overboard with it, but I also want to make sure that I'm setting reality there and that I'm not teaching my children you're better than anybody. I'm not treating my children to mess with anybody, but be prepared. Because you have people out there who will bring that right in your face. And you've got to be ready to deal with it.

The content of the racial messages Jeanine most often transmits to her children are messages that encourage strong connections with their African American racial heritage. This is a young mother who takes her responsibility to instill a sense of pride in the heritage, race, culture, and history of her African ancestors and African American people into her children as well as others, very seriously.

"The History of Our People"

> Well, I definitely think that just having the cultural and historical exposure...to our history as a people is important. And I know that history is taught in the school but my biggest concern was the history of our people. I don't think it is taught.... to the point where it can bring some appreciation to our children for where they are now or should I say 'from whence we come'. And that's why it's important for me to place my children and others, 'cause I can bring them along, in situations where they can; not just read about it, where they can see some reflections of it,

so they can be told by others who've been involved in some movement. That's why we go to the Civil Rights museum in Memphis. They hear about Martin Luther King, but one of the greatest feelings was when we took the group of kids to the Civil Rights Museum. And then when Dr. King's holiday came around they were just telling me "Mrs. Blair, Mrs. Blair, we told 'em we were there, we were right there by the wreath. We took our pictures so they could see we were there".

Her drive to ensure Jackie and Ev have every opportunity to self-actualize and achieve their highest potential is unrelenting.

"You Just Need to Run a Little Bit Harder"

I never ever implied that they [Jackie and Ev] are better than anyone. I've never implied that people are better than them. But I have to let them know that "some people have had more opportunities, so that just means you just need to run a little bit harder to keep up with them. 'Cause you're not behind them, but you work a little bit harder to keep yourself pushing" ....I tell 'em "You know you're doin' this on the backs of some other people before you"....I'm a social worker and I'm pleased with that. But I tell my children "No, no, no! If you want to go anyplace working with people, become a psychiatrist, a psychologist, be a doctor. Don't stop at the social work level....You could still be respected. You can help people in a lot of different ways and keep movin'. I don't want you to stop there. Social work for me was good. That's what I wanted to do. But you...look for the next step up".

Finally, this mother of two is determined her children will never be blindsided by the realities of racism as she understands and has experienced it.

"They'll Know How to Handle It"

> [W]hen my children are older....[t]hey're gonna understand...'cause whether it's now or not they're gonna encounter a situation...that will make them see, "Ah, this is what Mom was talkin' about." And it will be for no other reason than because of the color of their skin or because of how this other person thinks about this....I had someone ask me did anything ever happen to me with white folks? "Did white people ever do you that way 'cause you are serious....you always you just call things just like you see it..." And I said, "Then that should tell you something. I'm not making anything up if I call it like I see it....So I have to let my kids be prepared for that so they'll know how to handle it.

Jeanine Blair wholeheartedly believes it is her duty to make sure her children are prepared to face life in this society as a successful young black woman and man. While her unique and personal life experiences influenced her racial identity, attitude toward race, behaviors, choice of development enhancing processes, and racial messages for Jackie and Ev, her husband is equally involved in the socialization and development of their children. David's own lived experiences have certainly influenced his socialization preferences and associated messages.

As stated above, David Blair was born in Chicago, Illinois. His early childhood years were spent in a neighborhood identified by the United States Census Bureau as a ghetto census tract. As a result of the very rigidly imposed and maintained social distance

between racially and ethnically segregated neighborhoods and communities, David reported he never really saw a white person face-to-face until he went to school. The kindergarten teacher during that first year in public school was a white woman. The encounter was so brief and occurred at such an early age, that he nearly forgot about it altogether. "I did have a Miss Lake. She was a kindergarten teacher. I forgot about her."

David goes on to vividly describe his first contact with white peers, an experience that occurred only after his family relocated to the Champaign-Urbana community when he was fourteen years old. Prior to his family's move to East Central Illinois, David's primary exposure to white people was through the images projected on a television screen. "I can't remember seeing a white person physically until I'd say probably nine or ten — only on television....we lived in the slums; nothing but blacks, and we were poor so I wasn't...I didn't get out much."

David Blair's family lived in one of Chicago's many impoverished neighborhoods and the only faces he saw each day were those of racial ethnic minorities, primarily African American faces. His perception of white people remained neutral rather than slanted in either direction as a result of any actual experience interacting with Euro-Americans. While he admits these initial interactions as a young teen were memorable (he remembers them in detail), he attributes his resultant attitude about the dominant race to the messages communicated to him by his mother.

Culture Shock

> Oh yes, it was definitely a culture shock you know. It was an experience. But you know the thing that I had coming up was good, sound child rearing. My mom had taught me to view people as people you know. And

so in that respect when I came down here, to mingle and socialize with people of another race was no problem at all you know, because I never really viewed them in opposition.

Although David had virtually no contact or interaction with white people until he was an adolescent, his mother instilled certain messages about people in general, which he applied to his newly acquired white peer group. These messages about race matters that he received from his mother imprinted this young boy from the Chicago slums "to mingle and socialize with people of another race [with] no problem at all".

There is another very interesting facet of David Blair's childhood experiences that may have influenced his response to race and racism. David reports his family lived in a racially segregated community and an impoverished ghetto neighborhood. His mother taught him to "view people as people" and he says "we lived in the slums....I didn't get out much". Since the neighborhood in which David spent his formative years was impoverished with "nothing but Blacks", as he learned to assess people, it was on the basis of something other than race because all the faces were black. Race was not a distinguishing factor. David's mother prepared her son to judge people by criteria other than skin color.

David further explained his first exposure to what he identifies as racism didn't occur until he was approximately fourteen years old.

I didn't experience racism you know coming up until I moved down here....I was about 14.... But then, once I started experiencing people disliking me for my color, that's when I started experiencing the

racism....in school and in the community and what have you. And so that was a bitter pill to swallow.

David's discussion around his own personal experiences with racism and the subsequent strategies he chose to employ in an effort to deal with it as a youth reflect his willingness to confront the offending party, an effective use of self and his own agency, as well as an ability to deflect racially derogatory comments and racist behavior through his own good nature and sense of humor. These strategies seem to resemble Mrs. Anderson's defiance strategy — his willingness to confront the aggressor, as well as Mrs. Wilson's use of resources — in David's case, interpersonal social skills and humor.

I Wasn't Good at Holding My Tongue

> I wasn't good at holding my tongue. You know and I think that that was the tool that helped me to address racism, because I wasn't afraid to sit up and challenge a white person...on the comments that they would make or the innuendos or what have you. Because I never really had anybody stand up to me and call me the "n" word you know face-to-face. I never had an experience like that. But I was a joker. You know a practical joke all the time and always you know, saying something if not to make them laugh, to make my own self laugh you know. And...people in the school knew that. I was a very colorful person, a people person.

David Blair's socialization style includes the perception of racism as another of the many obstacles presented to us in life that must be confronted and overcome. He also exudes a strong sense of racial pride. His choices of racial identity development and socialization practices are two-fold. First, David respects and appreciates Afrocentric

world views, values, and beliefs, most clearly conveyed in the emphasis he places on spirituality, his commitment to his Christian faith and his religious community, expressed pride in his African and African American lineage and culture, the importance of immediate and extended kin, as well as respect, devotion and a sense of responsibility to "look in on the elders from time to time". Further, David embraces the African and African American storytelling traditions and lastly we see how he encourages his children to feel comfortable expressing the entire range of their emotions.

When asked to identify three things he was most proud of having accomplished as a parent, David replied "One is having [Jackie and Ev] grounded and rooted in church.... we are very active in my church". On another occasion I asked David to think about his children as young adults who had achieved a certain level of success. I asked the questions "What would that be? What would that look like?" To these questions he responded "Being able to — and I can't say this enough, to be a productive citizen in the world, first being a Christian....you need to be a prayer warrior. You need to believe in prayer and [Jackie's]....a prayer warrior."

Like Jeanine Blair, David strives to ensure his children are exposed to activities, events, and elements that reflect their African and African American ancestry and cultural heritage. Therefore, these parents actively pursue venues of activities "Like cultural museums. We try to push learning about their heritage and their culture".

The significance of family in the Blair family system is captured in David's words. I think it's very important...another vital part of our...children's growth is to be connected with the family whether it's immediate family or extended". In fact, one of the parenting tasks David embraces even more than his wife is visiting friends and

family. "I've always been...a strong advocate of visiting people....so a lot of times I'll take my kids and then we'll go by people's houses that's not even family."

Among the many times David gathers up his children to "go by people's houses" for a visit, the trio makes their way to the home of an elder. He views this social event as both an opportunity to visit family, friends, and neighbors, but also an excellent opportunity to impart what he considers a valued attribute to his children — to always be available to extend caring to those who may otherwise become neglected. On this latter issue David's intent to teach his children the value of caring for others is clear.

"You Never Know Who's Lonely"

> [T]hey're mainly older people and I go by and check on them and see if there's anything that we can do for them and I make sure that I have both of my kids with me.... I'll always tell them this is the reason...I take you to people's houses...You never know who's lonely. You never know who you can help and so it's always good to go and visit people. And so yes, we do that quite often.

Whether at home in their own community or visiting relatives in Louisiana, David makes certain he inculcates his children with a sense that visiting the elders is a form of caring for very often some of the most vulnerable people in society. In David's case, it seems these occasions are teeming with reciprocity.

"Older People...That's My First Love"

> [P]eople down South are so much different than people up North, so outgoing....they'd be sitting out on the porch and I come out and sit on the porch. They'll accept you into their home like they've known you for

years...and I feed off of that. Especially when they're older people you know because you know that's my first love.

There is yet another aspect of the black cultural typology reflected in David Blair's socialization process. It is one he gets to revel in on his numerous visits to the porches of the elders. David expresses tremendous appreciation for oral storytelling so characteristic of African and African American cultural traditions. "I love to be around older people...because of the storytelling. Now my uncles and my aunts...had all these stories they would sit around and just share amongst each other and...[the] little kids just sitting down, just taking all this in."

Finally, of equal importance to David is the ability to function as that trusted, safe, and unconditionally accepting parent who encourages his children to openly express their full range of emotions. Conveyed in this father's genuine sentiment, David describes how difficult it can be when attempting to be that responsive parent who is willing and ready to listen when his teenage daughter is painfully struggling to establish and maintain her own personal integrity despite peer rejection. "You know...it's hard when it's your own child....and you can't believe this is happening....[Jackie] a lot of times feels more comfortable coming to me so we have a lot of talks. During the interview I learned these talks often occur at the Urbana Free Library, another location David frequents, where he also has a tendency to "make sure that I have both of my kids with me".

David is not in the least bit hesitant expressing those aspects of Eurocentric values and beliefs that he finds not only viable but preferable to alternative options. For example, he considers it absolutely imperative that his children learn how to take care of and support themselves through responsible behavior and honest hard work. It is in his

discussions around issues such as the importance of working to support one's self and family — indicative of independence and good citizenry, and his own habit established during his adolescence, of working hard in order to both overcome shortcomings and achieve one's fullest potential, that we see David's chosen socialization process.

When David was asked to identify the characteristics he desired most for his children, he replied in order for them to be productive citizens in the world, they had to first be a Christian. The second trait he identified was "being able to support yourself as far as in the work force". The meaning underlying David's preference that his children remain good Christians then join the American "work force" suggests his belief that one has first a duty to God followed by an obligation to provide for self and one's family. The implication is David has accepted and espouses the prevailing Western societal values of independence along with the Protestant work ethic.

Another example of the value of hard work as illustrated in David's transcripts refers to the challenge he faced when his family moved to the Champaign-Urbana community. The product of an inadequate, substandard Chicago public school system, the disparity between David's academic performance and those of his fellow classmates became painfully obvious as he entered the Champaign-Urbana schools. He chose to confront the challenge with hard work and diligence. "Now I was so far behind I had to work my tail off to get to the, you know to an acceptable level."

Like Jeanine, the messages David communicates to his children about race suggest his belief that helping his children develop a healthy racial identity is critically important. However, their different lived experiences seem to have contributed to a divergent message for the couple. Jeanine presents and communicates a general mistrust

of white people. David had a different impression of race and transracial relational experiences from early childhood to adolescence. "I didn't have anything like that [racism] to groom me....I didn't experience racism you know coming up until I moved down here." In the final analysis, David perceives people as people. His judgments about individuals tend to be based on their humanity and character as opposed to the particular racial group to which they belong.

"I'm Judging Him on His Own Character"

> So basically that's how I dealt with racism, by addressing it head on to that person...some people can become bitter when they have experiences of people calling them names...I never did that. I just looked at that individual [as having] the problem, and in this person over here, I'm judging him on his own character....and that's what I instill in my kids too. You know, you're going to have black people that are racists. You're going to have white people that are racists...just deal with each individual person on their own merit....[D]on't be ignorant to the fact that people...in power can hurt you if you come into this situation blindly. So in other words watch as well as pray.

Like Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Anderson, David and Jeanine Blair have certain characteristics in common including those that contribute to intra-cultural similarities. However, they also had very different experiences throughout their lives as young children and adolescents. Some of these differences contributed to their different responses to race and racism. The unique confluence of these individual experiences and events also influenced the racial identity, attitudes and behaviors of each person, and the

particular racial identity development and socialization processes, as well as the messages about race they employed as part of their parenting responsibilities.

Summary and Discussion

Despite the variations in personal and lived experiences of the informants in this study, each set of parents and each of the elders considered it of paramount importance that their children 1) acquire knowledge and awareness of the historical experiences of African Americans, including the innumerable achievements and contributions made by their people and the oftentimes remarkable strategies devised and employed that ensured both their physical and emotional survival, 2) understand that racism, prejudice, bigotry, and oppressive behaviors are individual acts and should not automatically be ascribed to all members of a given racial/ethnic group, therefore it is imperative that they be able to separate individual attributes/flaws from culturally prescribed characteristics, 3) view racism as a challenge to be confronted and be prepared to address racism in all its many forms using thoughtfully planned, deliberately constructed, and courageously implemented strategies that both maximize their survival and overall well-being as well as facilitate their achievement, 4) develop a strong sense of self as a competent, capable person with unlimited capacities who is willing to exert the required degree of diligent focused hard work, determination, and stamina, and 5) be cognizant of and take pride in one's own race, family, cultural heritage, and history without becoming an "oppressor".

While the issue of racial identity development and socialization has now been addressed over two generations (the Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights Movement), there is yet another sociopolitical cultural context that requires attention. The current

generation of young African American children and youth is growing up under a very different set of circumstances than many of their parents and most of their grandparents.

The age of computer technology is but one external force that has dramatically altered the social environment in which this age cohort moves. Along with the threat of weapons of mass destruction, global warming, Hubble space crafts, and the concept of a global community, matters of race in this country have taken on a different spin. In the next chapter, we will explore the emergence of an unexpected theme that permeates the racial identity development and socialization process for our children, youth, and parents in very different ways.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Contested Racial Authenticity

The sum total of the parental goals for their children's racial identity development and socialization reflects Sanders' (1997) positive racial socialization model in which a child learns to embrace their own racial group, develop a healthy racial identity as well as an awareness and effective response to racism while having a healthy respect for and acceptance of other racial groups. I do not intend to minimize or disregard the difficulty of encouraging positive racial socialization in children thereby enabling the development of a healthy racial identity while at the same time learning to address the realities of life as a racial/ethnic minority living in America. However, while conducting the interviews with the parents, children, youth, and young adults who participated in this study, a very unexpected yet powerful phenomenon emerged with enough consistency to constitute a significant theme.

Identified by a majority of the informant families, this theme appears to tower heads above the issue of growing up black in America for these young people, particularly in the way that it is affecting the racial identity development and socialization processes employed by these families. In nearly every instance this experience was reported by both the youth and their parents as considerably more ominous and difficult to manage than either racism or race-related stress. This next section is devoted to a discussion of this phenomenon.

Conceptualized as *challenges to racial authenticity*, this theme was first mentioned during an informal conversation with Linda Huxtable following my initial meeting with the family. The following discussion of the challenges to racial authenticity

theme includes a brief summary of the context in which the topic first appeared, followed by the formulation of an actual question incorporated into the existing interview protocol, which I hoped would generate the kind of information that would allow me to understand the prevalence, severity, and meaning this phenomenon might have in the lives of these children and their parents. Excerpts and narratives derived from both the young people struggling to confront this phenomenon in a constructive and productive manner, as well as from those whose responses to the experience established two negative case examples were selected for inclusion in this thesis. I have also re-presented some of the strategies several parents have used to help their children combat the detrimental affects of having one's racial authenticity contested, along with some parenting techniques for addressing this issue as suggested by community-based private social work practitioners who provide therapy and counseling to children and families such as these.

I arrived at the Huxtable home for a meeting with the entire family in order to explain my research project and officially request the family's participation. An initial meeting was conducted in the homes of all of the participant families as part of the methodology utilized to gain access to the families and begin building a rapport with any family member to whom I was a virtual stranger — most typically the children. All four Huxtable family members were present for the meeting including Mark and Linda Huxtable and their two children Rachel and T.J.

On this clear and sunny fall afternoon I walked through the Huxtable's home from the living room straight into the kitchen. The family meeting progressed smoothly in the atmosphere that was warm, congenial, and very encouraging as the Huxtables made it clear they were pleased and happy to be able to support me in this endeavor.

The formal meeting concluded, I sat at the kitchen table talking to Linda about other matters such as her new position in a local social service agency, her mother's health — I knew Linda's mother had been quite ill recently, and I complimented Linda on their beautiful and comfortable home. Eventually, the topic of conversation turned to the children and their academic performance. Mark and Linda had just attended the parent/teacher conferences for Rachel and T.J. the night before and the family was still in a kind of celebratory state. T.J., who has some severe learning disabilities, received a very positive evaluation from his teachers for his hard work and valiant effort to be his best. Rachel's teachers commented on her academic success in the many AP courses in which she was registered. Rachel's academic performance is consistently rated among the highest in her high school grade level. In celebration of the Huxtable kids' successful evaluations, the family had all gone out to dinner to celebrate their achievements. It was this conversation that lead Linda into a disclosure about some of the difficulty Rachel experienced in school.

As Linda reported Rachel's excellent achievements, she stated these successes were attained despite the problems her daughter periodically encounters with other African American peers. "They tease her all the time — call her names". To this, Rachel added "They call me white girl because of the way I talk". What Rachel was referring to was the fact that she speaks standardized English as opposed to the dialect typically identified as *Ebonics* or *black English*. The mother and daughter related several other problems Rachel had encountered, some of which were prompted by the fact that Rachel presents as a middle-class African American adolescent, whose parents are both professional people and own a home in an upper middle-class neighborhood. While I

noted the conversations I had with Rachel and Linda Huxtable in my fieldnotes, it was a full week later when I conducted my interview with Jackie Blair, the daughter of David and Jeanine Blair, that I actively solicited information around this issue by posing an impromptu question.

Jackie and I had been talking for over an hour when I asked her the following:

> [S]ometimes people who work with young folks like you....say things like 'something has happened and young black high school students male and female tend to feel like if you're really bright and if you're really accomplished in school, that somehow that's...not cool, that's just not the way to be, that its not fashionable. And that it somehow marks you as being less hip I guess. So have you found, have you had any of those experiences since you've been in high school where you've felt like there were peers who were critical because you are such a smart student? Since you're such an accomplished student? Have you had to deal with any of that?

To this rather disjointed and unrefined question, Jackie responded nonverbally before she uttered a word. As I finished formulating my questions, this young girl was shaking her head in the affirmative, and verbally reiterated her ready response as noted in the following excerpt.

> I've definitely had to deal with that. That has been like the story of my life since I entered high school, since I entered middle school. It's just been — and the pressure keeps building; where a lot of kids who are in that one crowd...a lot of African Americans...they stick together and they tend to

be friends and you know one student will encourage another student to come over and bother me or to you know, say bad things to me. Just because of who I am and how I, you know how I act. And you know how I tend to be an individual. I'm different from a lot of kids. I don't just hang with the in-crowd. I do what...to do.... I do what I want to do you know as far as you know focusing in on school. I do what I want to do as far as choosing my own friends, positive people to surround me. So a lot of kids...they don't appreciate that and they don't understand because you know that's not their story....And a lot of kids do bother me with that. A lot of kids come up to me and they say rude things about me. They think that I'm a snitch or you know a tattle teller...because if they do something to me, I am going to tell and they don't expect you know for kids at this age to do that, because they figure you know, oh just be quiet, you know everybody else is quiet about it. And that's not how I am because I figure you know I try to be respectful to everybody around me. I try to be nice to people and I find that the more I try to be nice a lot of kids who are going in a different direction, they try to be mean and they try to pull me down with them. And that happens a lot.

As I listened to Jackie describe these ongoing experiences of teasing, rejection, and harassment, I wondered just how she managed to stay the course and resist conceding to "the pressure [that] keeps building". I asked her to explain just how she defended against these assaults and resisted compromising herself in order to be accepted "in that one crowd", to which she replied in this way.

[O]ne thing is my religious belief. I pray a lot of the times. I pray to God and I ask for strength to just get through the day a lot times. If I'm having a bad day because of something somebody said or did. And I just ask God to just help me...and not to take it out on anybody else.....I try to hide it....[b]ut after a while, it gets very frustrating to just keep hiding it day after day. So a lot of times I have to tell someone or I let it out through poetry because I love writing poetry. So sometimes I write about what happened to me and it's you know just my private poems....a lot of people wouldn't handle it that way. A lot of people take a violent route or they do something else. But that's not what I do. I just, I mean I peacefully take care of things. And I try my best to just leave other people alone, even when they bother me to the extent that I'm very, very frustrated....there are Deans and there are counselors. So I try to talk to them sometimes. And you know sometimes if they're not in, then you know I can definitely talk to my friends about things because they're very open minded and you know, sometimes they just give me encouragement like you know, "it'll be OK" and you know "they're just jealous or they're angry at you because you're doing this or you know you're doing that and it's good and they want to be that way. And they want to do those things but they're not".

Unfortunately, Jackie Blair and Rachel Huxtable were not the only young people who had to experience such peer rejection. Kyle Barnes, the oldest child and only son of Simon and Margot Barnes, is an undergraduate currently enrolled at the University of

Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Born and raised in the Champaign-Urbana community, Kyle attended Centennial High School. Like Rachel Huxtable, Kyle's family has resided in their upper middle-class neighborhood since he was in elementary school. Growing up in a predominately white middle-class neighborhood, Kyle's parents are a dual career professional couple who both earned graduate degrees.

By the time I interviewed Kyle I had refined my question and conceptualized this unanticipated theme as challenges to racial authenticity. When I asked Kyle to speak to any experiences he may have had in school that fit this particular concept, like Rachel and Jackie he had struggled with the very same phenomenon through middle and high school and even into his freshman year in a private Catholic university. The conversation proceeded from this question.

> Let me ask you this question [that] wasn't originally a part of what I thought I was going to be asking families but in the process of talking with the young adults in particular, this issue showed up....[R]ecently there have been those researchers saying something has shifted among the young people so there are situations in which you will have young black men and young black women who are excellent students, who are excelling in school, who are motivated to do really well, they're very goal oriented....[and they] are experiencing a lot of criticism and rejection, not on the basis of race, not on the basis of social class, but on the basis of if you are an articulate, successful student then somehow that is a reflection of your identity as an African-American, [implying you're] not black enough, if you're a good student. Do you know what I'm talking about?

To this pointed albeit rather lengthy question Kyle Barnes launched into a very detailed and clearly genuine diatribe.

> Oh yeah! Oh yeah! I deal with that all the time....I dealt with that all the time in high school and at the beginning of college it was pretty bad also. I mean, that is absolutely true. I think it's absolutely ridiculous if you ask me. There's no reason why if you're not playing basketball, living on the south side of Chicago and talk ghetto, if you will, that you're not black enough. It's ridiculous. In high school....I played football and I played baseball. I was the only black person on the baseball team....But football, like the football guys I was close with. But there were people from the north side of Champaign who just assumed that I live on the south side of Champaign I belong to a country club. I'm articulate. They're like, "He's not black enough or whatever." In high school I was like, "Whatever. Screw those guys." In college I made a conscious effort to, you know, to see that just because I'm not from Chicago and I don't talk ghetto and I don't wear ghetto clothes doesn't mean I'm not cool. So I made a conscious effort to talk to all these people and get to know them. I still have like a number of those guys I still talk to now from Quincy. Those are people who in the beginning wouldn't talk to me. They wouldn't talk to me just because of the way I spoke or the way I dressed. Like, I did kind of find a medium with that. I changed some of the way I dressed a little bit. I dressed a lot preppier, if you will, in high school and I toned it down. I wore the same stuff but I changed the labels, like the brands. So

it's not as outgoing or its not as apparent. So I shifted back a little bit but I wasn't going to change full course just for them. But that did make it easier. A lot of the guys who wouldn't talk to me, like three or four of them now are really good friends of mine. So every time I go back to Quincy I talk to them or call them. So, I mean, I think that's ridiculous and when people get to know me, I'm fine. They have no problem with it.

When I asked Kyle to speculate as to what this shift in segments of African American youth community was all about, his response conveyed his own consternation around what he so pointedly viewed as "ridiculous".

I don't know....they just want to prove they're all ghetto. "I'm from the hood." They want to prove that that's who I am. I feel bad for them because a lot of those guys, some of them athletic and some of them are smart....The smart ones will be written off the moment they get out of high school because one they have braids. You can't go to work — well unless you work at McDonalds. They don't speak correctly. You won't get your foot in the door. So, I mean, when they put emphasis on things like that they're hindering themselves and their opportunities. I'm sure they can succeed if they get the right opportunity but they're not allowing themselves to do that by not speaking correctly or wearing the wrong clothes or having braids. I wanted to see just what I look like with braids but I work at a bank. There's no way I could have that. At some point you just have to grow up. That's a problem. They just don't. I know guys...I'm three years out of high school. They're still doing the same thing. It's not

ironic those guys aren't in college. They're not doing things correctly. It's a direct relationship.

The reports of these three young people speak volumes concerning this emergent theme of rejection by African American peers on the basis of "not being black enough". While each of these informants shared experiences from middle school through freshman year of college, children still in elementary school are feeling the pangs of this kind of peer rejection as expressed by one of the auxiliary informants.

Cheryl Brown, one of the professional practitioners who participated in this study as an auxiliary informant has a son in elementary school whose attention to homework assignments changed dramatically just weeks prior to my interview with her. An exemplary student who typically earns "A" grades in both his assigned work and in many of his semester final grades, this young boy began to discard his completed homework assignments rather than turn them in as expected. Because Cheryl monitors her son's academic endeavors and progress so closely, she knew full well the work had been done, was done correctly, and that her son had the work in his backpack when he left home for school each morning. However, in an informal chat with his teacher after school one afternoon, Cheryl discovered her son had missed several assignments that week. Mom and the teacher decided it was time to investigate this matter and started by looking in the child's desk.

> We go in his desk...and this paper is balled up....He's not turning it in. I said, [son] "Why would you do the work and not turn it in?"....I think part of it is he wanted to fit in with the other kids because the school that he attends predominately is low-income and middle class...middle

> income...because we live in a nice area but there are three low income housing complexes where the rate is based on your income. So a lot of the kids are from poor backgrounds and I think sometimes in order for him to feel like he fits in, he doesn't stand out — like he'll want to wear certain clothing, and I'm like "You can't wear that to school. Those are play clothes."....like one day he came home and said, "All the kids were sayin' they liked my clothes....So they realize that there's something different about him as far as his family.

Each time this theme was discussed by either one of the young people or their parents, there was clear indication that this issue was one that caused distress for both. For example, as Jackie Blair talked about her experiences she emphasized her frustration with the instances in which these peer rejections were articulated such as "a lot of times...they'll make fun of you know my clothes or....I could be doing some work at my desk and they'll you know think that I look funny doing it.... so you know they'll make fun of me".

Cheryl Brown expressed her concern when she told me "that's the big issue....we sat down and talked. And I said, 'You cannot fail because you're afraid you're gonna be different from other people....My expectations are not for you to end up working at McDonald's at age 25'. Now that may happen but it won't be because [he] didn't get what [he] needed now".

Kyle Barnes' exasperation with this matter which he considers "ridiculous" was apparent as shared he his perception of the depth of this occurrence in this manner.

"[T]hey just want to prove they're all ghetto....We're starting to think as people that that's how we are. That shouldn't be how it is. We should be trying to change it".

The concern generated by my inquiry into the degree and nature of ridicule, harassment, and rejection from African American peers around contestations of racial authenticity prompted discussions about causality. I wanted to find out what the participants believed to be factors that contributed to this phenomenon. First, I asked the adolescents and young adult children, as well as their parents to share their perceptions about possible causal factors. I then asked the parents to talk about the various strategies they initiated to help their children manage this confusing and frustrating experience such that the youth would not abandon their efforts toward academic achievement and eventual success outcomes as young adults. The complexity and scope of coping strategies the parents adopted was surprising and enlightening.

The Young People Speak Out

Kyle was most articulate in presenting his thoughts on the possible causal factors contributing to this phenomenon experienced by the majority of the children and young people I interviewed for this research project. From the following excerpt from his transcribed interview, Kyle expressed both his concerns and his thoughts on the impetus of the taunting and rejection he experienced.

> I'd say a lot of it is from pop culture with the rap videos and TV shows. I mean, if you turn on the television...with an African American...nine out of ten times the person will be hard core from the hood or whatever....And even then if its that once its a comical character like the Fresh Prince of BelAire for example. Will Smith was from Philadelphia and Carlton was

from BelAire. [T]oo much emphasis on being a gangster. Not necessarily they're all in a gang....Everyone wants to earn street creds. People want to perceive that they're hard core. You got all the rap videos....You got the guys with chains down to here, cars with spinners. Basically they're from the hood and they still talk like it. So it's just too often that we're portrayed that way....[and] we accept it. That's the problem.

Jackie Blair was another young person who had very definite opinions about what may have prompted her African American peer group to respond so negatively toward her as a high academic achiever and young high school student who made more mainstream choices about her academic career and future life direction. Jackie appears to believe peer pressure and problems occurring within the home environment may explain why some of her peers and even former friends exhibit such hostile behaviors toward her. She cites what she considers inappropriate and disrespectful parent/child communication patterns, an absence of parental discipline, and conflicts within the family system as indicators of problems within the home environment. When asked to share her thoughts on what may be contributing to these negative reactions from peers Jackie replied in this manner.

Well I think a lot of it has to do with peer pressure...I've had some friends of mine you know, people that I thought were friends...as we got older and they started going a different way and started hanging out with a different crowd...and you know the negative people that you hang out with, a lot of people don't believe it, but they can influence you very heavily to the point where you know, they're almost controlling your

every move....And then I think a lot of it has to deal with home....I've visited some of my friends' home and I was surprised at you know, the way that they talk to their parents and the way that their parents let them you know talk to them....sometimes [I] wonder you know why do they talk to their parents that way? Why do their parents let them talk to them that way, you know without any disciplinary action being taken?...it's very, you know disheartening....Like I have a friend...something that's going on in her home....[and] because of how things have changed over the years, she's not the same you know, quiet, sweet, you know always wanted to talk to me and hang with me. She's not that type of person anymore. Now she's...very loud....In class she doesn't focus well. She doesn't pay attention...I feel she's you know upset and she's thinking about what's going on at home. You know and it's hard to leave what happens outside of class you know where it belongs. You take it a lot of times into school and you take it out on the wrong person....[T]ruthfully you....take it out on the people who are trying to be a positive influence you know and just take it out on them because of what you're feeling inside a lot of times.

Another young adult informant was able to share her experiences with ostracization by African American peers during her middle school and high school years. While Dana Rogers is now a graduate student enjoying life on a diverse university campus, she attributes her ability to effectively confront African American classmates

who questioned her racial authenticity to several skill sets including her outspoken personality, personal style, and the supportive relationship she has with her family.

I Just Wanted to Get Through Middle-School

> [In] middle school...it was like this bunch of girls...we were talking about like different kinds of foods that we liked..."I like sweet potatoes" and "I like black-eyed peas"....so we're talkin' like that and the girl who is black and Jewish...she decided, "You're not really black 'cause you don't eat those kind of foods." And I'm kinda like; it really took me back and I was like "First of all, both my parents are black, so that'll make me blacker than you 'cause you're only half black." And just like, "You can't say that I'm not black just 'cause I don't like certain foods"....But I think in certain ways that was her way of kind of compensating because people were telling her that whenever; it's kinda' like...we have this saying that black people will accept anybody into our community. They become part of the black community but soon as you do something you're gonna' be reminded that you're not black. And so I kinda' feel like it was her way of overcompensating.

Dana compared her experiences and that of her friend and peer — a young black male who was also a high academic achiever. Although they were attending the same high school and enrolled in many of the same AP courses, her friend found acceptance from their African American peer group when she was only met with renewed challenges and continued rejection.

High School: A "Totally Different Experience"

> But like my friend he lived in the same neighborhood with everybody else so it didn't matter that he was smarter because he was just like one of them. Which with me was like, "Oh you come from this other school...you [live] in this other neighborhood"...Totally different experience. Because...they knew him....they'd grown with him his whole life....[If I had] put more effort into it...then I probably, I could have gained a little more acceptance but it was more like, "Oh you went to this school", "You talk like a white girl and live in this neighborhood"....even when I went to high school in 9th grade I was in geometry and...I was the only black person in my geometry class....It was funny because in high school we called ourselves "the AP clique" 'cause we had like AP classes and we like supported each other...and then...the UC clique and....we supported each other through that....so there was only the two of us.

Dana offered these final thoughts on the issue of contested racial authenticity. Based on her personal experience as a middle school and high school student, she now looks back and finds it interesting that *blackness* is defined in such a delimiting way by the African American community. She also says the whole experience has motivated her to change these narrowly prescribed and frequently negative or stereotypical images of what it means to be black in contemporary America.

It Motivated Me to Change People's Perception

> It was just interesting to see like their perception of what it was to be black...."Why are you talkin' like that? You're talkin' like a white girl" or

like you need to talk a certain way, or you need to act a certain way, or you need to smoke weed, or do something like that. It was kinda like this whole perception of what blackness was....But instead of lettin' it get me down, it motivated me....I need to change people's perception of what it is or what education is because if one more person tells me I talk like a white girl because I can speak proper English it's gonna' be all over.

The harassment and rejection each of the young participants experienced based on their peers' perceptions that they simply were not "black enough" challenged them to develop strategies that would enable them to withstand the internalization of these experiences. Of the sixteen children, youth, and young adults who participated in this project, only two denied ever being confronted with this predicament. Like Kyle, Jackie, and Dana, the remaining fourteen participants found their own strategies for deflecting the potentially harmful effect of such egregious contestations. At this point, the discussion will focus on child-rearing practices adopted by two of the parent couples who struggled to provide a home environment that would nurture and armor their children as they confronted these challenges to their racial identity.

Patricia and Ahmad Akbar are the African American Muslim couple who have successfully raised their six sons and daughters and are actively involved in and highly respected by the Champaign-Urbana black community. As stated before, it was an absolute honor and privilege to be welcomed into the home of such a unique and esteemed family.

When I asked the Akbars to comment on how they addressed the issue of contested racial authenticity that might have negatively impacted their children during

their formative years, Ahmad was the first to offer what I found to be an elaborate, critically devised plan that required an significant expenditure of family resources on behalf of their children's development and eventual futures.

We Chose to Live in this Neighborhood

> [T]rying to help [our sons and daughters] develop so that they can get the most out of their upbringing as well as their education. But being African American males and growing up and sort of realizing in my own life the things that sidetracked me and the kinds of things that can interfere with your own efforts to be successful I think I was pretty much focused on helping them understand some of those dynamics that they would run into....[W]e chose to live in this neighborhood. It was sort of a choice. Because having friends from different areas and different backgrounds and like that, you realize that some families, their children...like in high school...they encounter certain kinds of individuals from African American neighborhoods who they haven't encountered before and...it's really an adjustment problem for them. Especially when you're talking about children who are normally successful, who seem to be doing very well, especially academically say in grade school...then they get to high school, and then all of a sudden they encounter a crowd that's a different kind of crowd who has an impact on your life and then starts to try to influence you to go in a different direction although you have the potential to be successful. I think you have all the abilities to be successful, so I thought, if they're gonna have to encounter certain individuals, how they

should encounter them? From day one understanding... it's possible for you to be a leader and still maintain your relationship with individuals who may not be doin' so well in school and individuals who are doing very well in school. It's impossible for you to be a leader and sayin' "Okay, I'm coming from the same neighborhood you come from. It's not like you know we come from different neighborhoods, so I may be, I'm doing well in this school, but it's not like we came from different neighborhoods"....I realize in my own upbringing that I was totally separated from the crowd that I ran into in my teenage years and when I did run into that crowd in my teenage years in high school, it took me in a direction that was not good for me....I realize that as an African American male [especially] you have to wrest with those kind of things — individuals who don't value education as maybe your parents taught you to value education....[S]o then they give out this air of it's not important. "I have to be here and I'm a tough guy". And at that particular age, say the high school years, you don't realize it but this air they're giving off, that's really because they probably have some self confidence issues...and they're playing it off as "I don't need this" or "This is not important" but they're having difficulties....They're putting on a face of being a tough guy. And then youths probably say, "Well I don't want to look like I'm not part of this group, because this group seems to be the group that's black and they're the cool guys". So you want to be with the "cool" guys. But the cool guys are never the guys that are doin' good academically.

Most of them are the guys who are not goin' to class. So I knew that it was goin' to be the demands on my sons.

The Akbar family made the conscious and deliberate decision to move into what was then a newly constructed housing subdivision on Urbana's North End; traditionally a black neighborhood. Because this move would situate the Akbar family in the black neighborhood, their children would grow up with the same African American children who would one day be among their high school peer group. Despite the fact that the Akbar children often took advanced math and science classes in which they were the only black students in the entire classroom, they were nonetheless kids from the neighborhood and therefore *insiders*.

The Akbar family took a proactive approach that enabled their children to have exposure to their black peers in the neighborhood context and therefore they were not "sidetracked" or enamored by young black males in particular who were putting on "tough guy" facades. Nor did the Akbar children experience the kind of peer rejection most of the other children, youth, and young adult informants suffered because as so succinctly stated by Dana Rogers, they "lived in the same neighborhood with everybody else so it didn't matter that he was smarter because he was just like one of them....they knew him....they'd grown up with him his whole life. With me...[t]otally different experience." In fact, Nassar Akbar, Patricia and Ahmad's oldest son discussed his experiences in high school with both African American students who also lived on the North End and white middle and upper-middle class students this way.

"I'm Really Proud of You"

> I [was] taking these college courses....But at the same time, I wasn't really ostracized....And so the African American peer group....I mean we sat at the lunch table together....I wasn't seen as like, "oh you're trying to be better than us". But at the same time on the other side....I may be the only African American in the class you know. And you know we didn't really you know, chitchat. You know because in Centennial, there's like there's a lot more upper class students....[and] people in the advanced courses you know, it was like they would have their parties and what not...but we didn't really talk you know. So the group I related to was the African Americans, which was fine with me actually. I don't know why. I still can't figure it out to this day. You know, but it kind of, like on graduation day...I met a guy; he grew up on the North End too. And you know, he was the kind of guy who liked to hang out and stuff like this, but what he said to me, it's like you know "I'm really proud of you"....I knew him you know, maybe we sat at the lunch table together you know. But I never expected him to...I never knew that people were actually looking you know at I guess my performance or whatever you know as far as the African American peer group you know. But what I found after I graduated...I would be in the neighborhood and people would actually have a certain respect.

Another strategy that the Akbars used to instill the importance of choosing and maintaining an achievement trajectory as a means to encourage their children's future

success despite influential negative pop culture images or potential challenges or pressures from their peers to abandon their success oriented course is reflected in this additional excerpt from Ahmad and Patricia's joint interview. This is the manner in which the Akbars used historical contexts and African American iconic figures to encourage their children to consciously select the kind of citizen of the black community they might want to become as well as encourage them to consider making a contribution to the community through *racial uplift* (hooks, 2003) in the process.

Which Identity Do You Want to Accept for Yourself?

> [T]here is this dual black identity....Frederick Douglass, DuBois, and Booker T. Washington....Blacks as achievers, as leaders, as heroes...you can take that road. Or you can take the attitude that being black...means I've got to be cool....Okay, which identity do you want to accept for yourself?...One identity which means these are black people, these are black achievers, and these are black men who have made tremendous contributions. So your Blackness don't have to be this standard...set by the pop culture....It could be this standard here which is the standard that has the greatest impact and the best influence for us as a race trying to achieve.

For Ahmad, his initial attraction to the Islamic religion was its emphasis on positive racial identity among people of African ancestry. He explained the teachings of Islam clarified certain confusing issues for him and allowed him to gain a point of view that he found empowering. For example Ahmad explained how he learned there are two forms of blackness or what he refers to as the "dual black identity" as described in the

above excerpt. It was this perspective that Ahmad along with Patricia transmitted to their children during their all important racial identity development and socialization process. Additionally, like the Burdett family the Akbars possessed a family legacy that provided a foundation from which their six children could achieve and succeed despite exposure to racism and the accompanying stressors that can be so harmful to African American children were it not for the crucial protective mechanisms that prevent the internalization of racist thought, prejudice, and bigotry.

The final example of parenting strategies aimed at mitigating against the potentially deleterious impact of challenges to racial authenticity was taken from the interview with David Blair. As stated earlier Jeanine Blair has a tendency to become quite action oriented in the presence of a threat to her children's well being — in this case harassment and hostility in the school setting generated by their African American peers. On the other hand, David Blair takes on a very different role. David is the parent who spends time talking his children through these difficult situations while Jackie frequently takes on the role of the parent who takes decided action steps. In order to explore this matter of aiding the children as they struggled to stay the course despite the negative reaction and rejection of their peers I posed the following question to David Blair:

> How do you help Jackie deal with some of the pressures that she feels because she is that really successful student? When she comes home upset because of things that kids may have said to her, what do you say to her that helps her keep going?

David's response was two-fold. First, David and his daughter find the time to sit down and as thoroughly as possible go over the events that have overwhelmed her. He

begins by acting as a sounding board for his daughter when she becomes overwhelmed by these stressful interactions with peers. Once she has externalized her hurt and frustration and he thinks she is ready, the father and daughter dyad begin to develop a plan of action that Jackie can deploy when these kinds of situations arise in the future. The thrust of these planned strategies is using both his own experiences from youth as well as the family's ingrained Christian principles and faith to help Jackie remain focused on her goals, compassion, and human agency, as opposed to exacting some form of negative consequence or retaliation against her aggressor.

Use This as a Means of Maturing

> The day-to-day struggles of just trying to survive on the streets with the gang activity...the bullies and all that, which can strip you a lot of your self-esteem also, you know, you have to deal with that also. I am the one who talks more about the down to let's say nitty-gritty problems that Jackie faces. Now Jeanine will address it but a lot of times, you know she'll get upset. You know... it's hard when it's your own child. So... a lot of times [Jackie] feels more comfortable coming to me so we have a lot of talks. But the first thing that I try to do with her is to share experiences that I had when I was coming up in school....She is an emotional type person...because she feels like because she can be so nice to people...then [contrary to what she's being told and what she believes]...these people are all you know, mean and nasty so "why is it like that"?...And so, and then I share with her....some of the wrongs that people did to me and how I handled that. And I'll give her some tools to use....just try to use this as a

means of maturing because then when you get through this stage there's going to be another obstacle that you have to climb. And then it's just a part of life. When you become an adult, there're still obstacles, but they're different...and if you know if you can surpass these, then when you meet the next level....I told her, you mature by how you can deal with this and then move on....[Y]ou can stay stagnate and continue to sit there and worry about it. And the problem, nine times out of ten, isn't going to go away, but if you continue....then the Bible says that; and it sounds weird but just rejoice when you're going through those tribulations....so when you're going through some of those things, when people are coming at you....when people are saying nasty things or they're being mean to you, you know just shake your head and smile. And then I said, and sometimes you know they might look at you and you know think you're weird but eventually when you continue to condition them, they can't do nothing but turn around and respect you....And I told her I said, and that zeal is important....And another thing I always tell her I say, you never know what these people that are being mean to you, what they go through at home. A lot of times it can be that they're acting out because they want attention. A lot of times they're acting out because they're angry because they know when they get home, they've got to be confined to acting a certain way or being you know, yelled at or talked about a certain way....I told her the other strange thing you know that you might find strange is that you have to pray for that person. Maybe because they have a problem

you know and you sometimes you don't know what the problem is, but pray for them anyway. You know and then that'll strengthen you sometimes....[S]he still goes through you know the rollercoaster you know the ups and downs. But I see growth in her from where she used to be.

As a parent who is comfortable in the role of listener while his children freely express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, David is able to function in an advisory role with his teenage daughter. This advisory role requires an intact solidly sacrosanct relationship between parent and child in order for the kind of dynamic exchange called for in this style of parental role-taking with an adolescent child. Further, it appears David Blair frequently utilizes multi-tasking while carrying out his parenting responsibilities. Like making certain he takes his children to visit the elders in their neighborhood so they can develop a respect, compassion, sense of caring, and giving to members of one's community, he structures many of his talks with his children to accomplish a dual task.

Often times these father/daughter talks occur at one of the favorite locations for David, Jackie, and Ev — the Urbana Free Library. Jackie showed me the exact location where her Dad sits as often as possible to read and study, while she and Ev do homework or select materials for leisure entertainment. In fact, the very day I interviewed Jackie, we found David in his favorite spot on the second floor by the south facing window. On another occasion during an informal visit with the Blair family in their home David told me he often takes his children to the library as a way to 1) ensure their exposure to books and materials available to them through their own community library system, and 2) he also uses the library as a place to have important conversations with Jackie in particular

because of its quiet calm atmosphere. Even when the discussion focuses on problems Jackie may be experiencing, David will bring his son along. In this way Ev is also able to observe the Blair family process of the children talking through important issues with their father.

Summary and Discussion

The issue of confronting challenges to racial authenticity by African American peers seemed to create much more intense race-related stress for the children, youth, and young adults who participated in this research project than conventional forms of racism and discrimination. These young people seem to have successfully learned that racism in America is to be expected. They also seem to have acquired effective strategies for combating the potential negative effect of racism and discrimination without internalizing race-related stress. However, the contestations of racial authenticity from their own racial intra-group members has left them feeling frustrated, disappointed, confused, and in some cases rather angry.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The relationship between black and white Americans seems to reflect a classic love/hate relationship. Cornell West used the concept of the *blues note* in jazz music to represent this symbiotic relationship. Evolving out of an unparalleled form of slavery the contentious race relations between black and white America has been played out in various arenas including the social science community.

Peters (1997) delineated a chronology of systematic research on African American families which began with a descriptive framework. Based on this approach the harsh and repressive social environment enveloping black families was the focus of sociological studies by researchers like W. E. B. Du Bois, followed by Charles S. Johnson's work depicting black family life in the South during Jim Crow.

The next significant framework for the study of black families was what Peters (1997) called the comparative deficit approach. Raising to prominence as a result of the research efforts of Robert Park and Gunnar Myrdal, assimilation was assumed to be the pinnacle of achievement for African Americans. When assimilation did not manifest as predicted, researchers began to question why. Labels such as *culturally deprived* were applied to any characteristics that diverged from those that characterized middle-class Euro-Americans. E. Franklin Frazier proposed the family disorganization concept in which perceived family dysfunction was attributed to deficiencies, and from this work Daniel Patrick Moynihan's study emerged during the 1960s.

By the 1980s an ecological approach to the study of black families proposed investigations of families should be considered from a culture-specific perspective. From

this framework, researchers such as Billingsley (1968), Hill (1972), and Stack (1974) emerged (Peters, 1997).

Certainly we have seen the interpretation of African American family life from a biological deficit model to socioeconomic deprivation accounting for the disorganization of the black family to a sociocultural determinism perspective which suggested patterns of instability in black families were due to chronic racial oppression exacerbated by ingrained destructive patterns of family interaction (Allen, 1995). However, regardless of the particular angle from which African American families have been studied, a comparative approach has formed the basis for much of the early research efforts. Each time elements associated with black family life such as structure, form, function, relationship dynamics, and interpersonal communication patterns are compared to that of middle-class white America, the former consistently falls short of the normative standard of measure, constituting a seemingly innate deficiency.

The deficit model for studying African Americans prevailed with almost no challenge from the 1940s, going unheeded until the 1970s when researchers began to contest the appropriateness of a deficit model when investigating diverse cultural groups (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Glanville, 2002; Ogbu, 1981). By the 1990s a noticeable increase in study of African American family life within a sociocultural context was reflected in the research literature. While this shift in the research community is welcomed as long overdue, there is much to be attended to, if we are to rectify the erroneous conclusions that emerged out of the past.

It was the aim of this study to contribute to the new era of African American family research. More specifically, this research project explored the child-rearing

strategies and parenting practices employed by middle-class African American families that promote achievement and foster success outcomes in their children with a particular emphasis on racial identity development and socialization. By investigating the parenting practices that facilitate the healthy development and socialization of children, we can begin to better understand how these families encourage their young people to become achievement oriented and help guide them onto pathways that lead toward success in adulthood (Brown 2003; Thornton, et al., 1990).

There is an underlying assumption upon which the following discussion is predicated. It is assumed that among the societies spanning every dimension of time and space, there are certain universal aspects of parenting (Harkins & Ray, 2004; Lamborn & Felbab, 2003). Without exception social groups attend to the development and socialization of its newest members into the larger community (Spera, 2005). Prior to the birth of a child the prevailing values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral norms of a given society envelop the expectant family (Rigoberta Menchú as cited in Sattler, Kramer, Shabatay, & Bernstein, Eds., 2000). Following the birth, even the most rudimentary skills such as language and motor skills are mutually taught by the appointed individual(s) and acquired by the child. These are among the basic universal aspects of child-rearing that are shared by all societies.

The complexity and frequently dissonance laden elements of child development and socialization are introduced not in the *what*, but rather in the diverse range of the *why, how*, and *when* dimensions of child-rearing strategies. The space within these diverse strategies is where culture exists and cultural norms around child-rearing are situated (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Harrison, et al., 1990; Ogbu, 1981). This research

illuminated a particular space, the sociocultural context, and aspects of the environmental setting of six middle-class African American families including members of their extended kinship systems. Further, the contribution of several individuals who functioned as auxiliary informants was solicited. These informants provided an expanded perspective from which to view the parenting practices of African American families, clarified, and verified several themes that emerged from the data gleaned by observing and interviewing the participant families, and assisted in the conceptualization of the emergent themes pertaining to parenting practices. Finally, a small group of elders provided a perspective of parenting in black families from an intergenerational point of view as well as a description of the Champaign-Urbana black community — including historic details pertaining to the evolution of the African American middle-class. Gaining a better understanding of the community environment in which these families are embedded contributed to understanding the families' overall experiences.

The focus of this chapter is to integrate the results of an intra-group comparative case analysis in order to highlight the in-group similarities and differences among the individuals and families who so generously gave of their time and energy to advance the study of African American children and families from the perspective of the black community itself.

As stated earlier, the underlying assumption of this research is the premise that a set of universal aspects of child development and socialization exists (Mandara & Murray, 2002). Across the multitude of sociocultural contexts, the processes by which these universal dimensions are carried out are informed by the collective shared characteristics and experiences of a given society simultaneously (Mandara & Murray,

2002). This is what accounts for inter-cultural variation (across groups) as well as intra-cultural (within group) similarities. However, of critical importance is the understanding that despite the commonalities of a cultural group, there is a plethora of unique experiences and personal characteristics (age, gender, neighborhood composition, marital status) that contribute to intra-cultural (within group) differences as well (Thornton, et al., 1990).

This study identified parenting practices employed by African American parents that suggest the commonalities across six middle-class families all living in the same midsized East Central Illinois community. However, it also considered the impact changes in the sociopolitical and cultural contexts over time along with a variety of other idiosyncratic features, experiences, and characteristics had on individual parenting practices. The next section of this chapter summarizes the parenting practices that emerged as themes in this project.

Strategies that Foster Achievement and Success

Interviews with six families resulted in a comprehensive set of qualitative data pertaining to the practices the informants employ that promote achievement and encourage success outcomes for their sons and daughters. Ten parenting themes emerged out of the data analysis process including 1) defining and achieving success, 2) the role of education, 3) the contribution of selective exposure, 4) the importance of family and family activities, 5) responsibility and respect for self and others, 6) religion and spirituality, 7) the protection of children, 8) child discipline, 9) racial socialization, and 10) contested racial authenticity. The first eight themes listed above are indicative of universal parenting practices, beginning with the way in which the families determined

achievement and defined success. Because of extenuating discourses and the unique dimensions inherent in the final two themes, they are addressed in separate sections from the more universal parenting practices that foster success outcomes.

Achievement and Success

Ogbu (1981) suggested each society develops a unique set of culturally informed instrumental competencies, and there is a causal relationship between these competencies and child-rearing strategies. Instrumental competencies most often associated with populations in the United States include 1) type of employment most significantly symbolizes one's social standing, and 2) economic status is largely determined by instrumental competencies acquired during childhood (or are inherited genetically). However, among the families in this study ninety percent of the informants did not define success as the acquisition of material wealth, status, or the surplus accumulation of property or other tangible items typically associated with *having arrived.*

For these informants, achievement was predicated on the level of effort exerted to attain personal goals. The idea of striving to be the best as determined by one's own standards as opposed to looking always and only to external entities for acknowledgment was identified as an important attribute of a high achiever. At the same time, it was considered appropriate and beneficial to utilize standards for success and achievement established by those within one's system of respected significant others as a guidepost for referencing and assessing progress. The overwhelming majority of participant families defined success as attainment of individual goals, the acquisition of a new set of skills, and successful completion of assigned tasks. While among the wider society how one defines achievement and success may be highly variable, among these six families the

common thread of internally generated standards for achievement and success rule the day.

Education

Education was one of the many opportunities denied people of African descent during the era of institutionalized slavery in this country. However, the implementation of laws to enforce that denial simply served to illuminate the power and value of this forbidden commodity. Despite laws to the contrary, Wilberforce University, the first black university in the United States, was established in 1856 (www.wilberforce.edu). By 1867, a number of black colleges and universities educating freed black persons had been started including Fisk University, Atlanta University, St. Augustine's College and the John C. Smith College (Franklin & Moss, 2000). More than 200,000 black children were being educated by more than 9,000 teachers by 1870 (Irons, 2002). By 1880 that number had more than tripled reaching over 714,000 students (Franklin & Moss, 2000). As the details convey, education is a traditional mainstay in the African American community.

Over thirty years ago Hill (1972) suggested five attributes necessary for an African American family to survive as a stable and well developed family system. Being in possession of a strong achievement orientation was one of those attributes. Low income black families living in impoverished neighborhoods emphasize education as one of the primary strategies necessary to mitigate against the risks associated with poverty and promote upward social mobility in their children (Jarrett, 1997). For these families, their children's education was viewed as an essential and fundamental building block for achievement and success. Traditionally, considered a vital resource by the black

community (Smetana, Metzger, Campione-Barr, 2004), among the families I worked with the importance of education holds as true today as it ever did.

Without exception the parents and young people who informed this research identified education as a crucial feature in the healthy development and socialization process if achievement and future success are the goals. Parents were determined to provide their children with the best possible educational opportunities they could manage. Opportunities ranged from private tutors to close parental monitoring of children's homework assignments. Summer school was a common event for many of the youth. For others the summer break did not mean they could forget all they'd learned over the academic year, so study sessions occurred at home in the den or garage. Family resources were expended in support of children's educational pursuits including out-of-state trips initiated, coordinated, partially sponsored, and chaperoned by the parents themselves. In the words of one parent, education was the process by which her children would have "a voice in life and a choice in life".

Selective Exposure

Another strategy that enhanced children's education was one that literally expanded their knowledge and understanding of available opportunities — selective exposure (Bell, et al., 1998). The participating families structured special, often unique learning experiences for their children. Often times the focus of such events was to promote awareness and knowledge of the contribution African Americans have made to this country. Other activities were selected because of the way in which they bolstered the children's sense of pride in their racial group, culture and heritage. Still others were chosen for the powerful way the messages communicated through the activity supported

the family's value and belief systems or systems of morality. Yet others were geared toward introducing the youth to all their social environment has to offer — for example options for institutions of higher education, lifestyles, and career options. One family was able to secure a brief internship for their son while he was yet in high school. The internship experience with a local banking establishment allowed him to observe and participate in an actual business loan approval process — a unique experience indeed.

The impetus for investing the family's resources into these additional activities and events was clearly stated by the parent who said "We've taken advantage of being able to connect our kids with people and/or activities that really broaden that scope [of available options]".

Family and Family Activities

Another of the attributes required for the stability and positive development of a functional black family was strong kinship bonds (Hill, 1972). The importance of family and family activities appeared in every one of the informant families with a resounding force. The relational connection between *family* extended far beyond the immediate family sharing a common household. It incorporated family members who lived in another town or state — the ones you see once a year at the family reunion. Family included those related by blood as well as those related by function and relationship sans any blood affiliation. One father's statement about the importance of family sums up the meaning family had for all the informants. "You're connected and not out here in this world by yourself. Wherever these kids go, whatever they do, will affect the whole because they're attached. And that attachment is forever....No matter what I do, I can always go home."

Related to the importance of family is the issue of family activities. Mandara and Murray's (2002) African American family functioning typology included the following three designations: 1) cohesive-authoritative, 2) conflictive-authoritarian, and 3) defensive-neglectful. Family activity levels were highly competitive yet disorganized in the conflictive-authoritarian category and extremely low in the defensive-neglectful designation. However, they were a high priority among the cohesive-authoritative families and were organized in a supportive, personal growth inducing manner.

The connection to family is enhanced and strengthened by the consistent and ongoing engagement of activities that involve the family as a whole (Carter-Black, 2001). Of course as children get older they begin to seek social events with their peers, however, even among the older young people who informed this research the maintenance of regular contact with family around activities was an important feature. One informant recounted the meaning these activities held for him as a child and now as an adult. "We would go out on a picnic....other people thought we were weird actually. But we thought it was normal....I think it made us more of a family. I mean, it all goes back to the whole family gathering."

Responsibility and Respect

Responsibility is rooted in the Afrocentric worldview. The sense of responsibility can be seen in activities that range from communal child-rearing (Carter-Black, 2001; Forehand & Kotchick, 1996; Thomas, 2000) to family values of collectivity and interdependence (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996; Thomas, 2000). Respect for self and others is surpassed only by the requirement to be respectful of the community elders (Carter-Black, 2001; Thomas, 2000).

The families in this study consistently stressed the importance of teaching their children to accept responsibility for their actions. This was a matter of more than just acknowledging the fact that we alone are ultimately responsible for our own actions. These parents were intent on making certain their children understood the importance of deciding for oneself, thereby reducing the potential impact of negative peer pressure. One mother said her standard line to her children is "You can't let them [peers] have that much control over you because then they have control over two lives; theirs and yours. And that's too many."

The manner in which the families discussed responsibility and respect for self and others suggested the inter-related nature of these topics. Being responsible and accepting responsibility seemed to function as a precursor to being respectful. One has a responsibility to respect oneself. One is expected to show respect to others. It is required of responsible people. When one accepts and meets the responsibilities that contribute to the functioning of the family, they are also conveying respect for their family members. One young man connected being responsible and respectful to his faith. "Being a good Christian includes respecting others, respecting myself, and being responsible...doing what I'm supposed to do when I'm supposed to do it."

Religion and Spirituality

The place of religion and spirituality has been an essential element in the experiences of African Americans throughout our history in this country, originating in the long-ago past before the tragedy of the African diaspora (Billingsley, 1992; Hale-Benson, 1982; Thomas, 2000). Although oftentimes forbidden to openly practice the religions of our African ancestors or the Christian faith of the new world, our ancestors

nonetheless remained spiritual people. It seems the oppressive existence inherent in a system of enslavement, which was the same system that prompted the very denial of religious practice, fueled the ancestors to hold on to faith, spirituality, and some form of religious practice and ritual just that much tighter.

One of the elders tells the story of her grandmother who was born into slavery. She recounts how the people would sneak off to deep wooded areas late at night for a prayer meeting. They carried pots and bowls to cover their heads so they could secure their safety while singing and praying.

That strength of conviction and connection to their faith and religious community was transmitted intergenerationally to these families. One parent expressed the family's religious and spiritual orientation and the parental obligation to carry on the tradition this way. "Our kids hear people say 'Oh here comes the God squad'....Our job is to prepare our kids to face those out in the larger world who challenge their faith....to be able to stand on their faith."

Protection of Children

The protection of children was a theme that elicited considerable discussion especially from the parents. These families' socioeconomic status (SES) places all of them squarely in the American middle-class. Commensurate with their middle-class SES, they have access to resources typically unavailable to families living in poverty. Their neighborhoods are safer. There even tends to be a slight increase in the likelihood that law enforcement agents may extend at least a modicum of protection (viewing the families as more mainstream because of their address). The school systems are better staffed, better equipped, and boast a higher academic ranking. The parents' financial

circumstances afford them easier access to opportunities for themselves and their children.

However, these are parents raising black children. Their middle-class SES does not protect them from acts of personal or institutional racism. They are raising daughters. Their SES does not ensure their daughters will be safe from the affects of sexism or the threats of harm more commonly experienced by females in our society. Finally, they live in America. Despite the fact that this country remains the most powerful nation in the world, consuming 25% of the planet's resources, it is also a country with enormously high rates of violent crime. Therefore protection of children from these larger social forces was of paramount importance to these families.

Also of significance is the fact that the theme of protection was the only area where socialization differed between sons and daughters. This single distinction appeared in a previous study by Carter-Black (2001). Similar to the findings reported in Hill's study (2002), the parents in this study had the same basic expectations for both their sons and daughters. However, there was an expectation that the sons in two of the families would take on the role of protecting their female siblings regardless of other distinguishing characteristics such as birth order (older female sibling) or parents' perception of the children's maturation (female child considered more mature than her brother). One father explained it this way. "Its hard out here...People are capable of anything...I told Josh 'Look, when you're out with your mother and your sisters, walk with them. Stay close to them. Keep your eyes moving."

Child Discipline

Discipline is another universal parenting theme. However, the history of assessment and evaluation of child discipline within the African American family system has created ongoing fervor in the social science research and practice communities. If there is one parenting task that is laden with cultural prescriptions and sanctions, it is child discipline.

The process of teaching a child the necessary societal norms and behavioral expectations of the social group is crucial to the child's acceptance into their larger community (Spera, 2005). Therefore, the importance attached to the task of discipline marks it as a pinnacle parenting obligation and duty. Similarly, this is a task that if approached improperly or administered inappropriately can have dire consequences. Associated with unhealthy externalizing and internalizing behaviors such as poor self-concept, low self-esteem, aggression, delinquent behaviors, and even criminal acts, violence, and suicide in adults (Flynn, 1994; Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Straus, 1991) there is tremendous pressure on families to *get it right.*

Researchers have typically labeled child discipline practices commonly associated with black families as harsh and punitive (Deater-Deckard, et al., 1996; Whaley, 2000). They have assessed the parents administering the discipline as reactive, acting out of frustration and/or with an ultimate goal of getting blind obedience from their children. The families who participated in this study did anything but act out of reactive frustration. The concept of blind obedience was nowhere near the radar screen as they considered, designed, discussed, and deliberated over how to develop a viable and effective plan of discipline for their children. As suggested by the data, the focus of the

informant parents' discipline strategy was multidimensional, thoughtful, and child-oriented.

First, these parents were intent on teaching their children what they would need to know in order to survive as African American men and women in the United States. This entails an understanding that even innocent actions can be misperceived as threatening when performed by a black male in particular as one young man explained. "People may perceive me as a threat....Even if I'm just like joking around with my friends and someone sees it, they could take it the wrong way. I have to watch myself...not put myself in a bad situation."

Second, they want their children to clearly understand that there are consequences for every action and sometimes those consequences can change the course of one's life forever. The incidence of incarceration of young black males is not lost on these families.

Third, the families were intent on providing instruction to their children. The goal was not to obtain absolute obedience. It was to impart lessons that would be generalizable to a variety of situations their children would face throughout life as one mother explained. "Discipline is very important to us....[when] there's an opportunity to teach...a learning opportunity....giving them information that they will be able to use and build upon in making their own decisions."

Fourth, these parents worked hard to ensure they presented a consistent set of expectations, rules, and consequences for infractions to their children. It was important that their children clearly understood the seriousness of specific actions. This was accomplished by talking with their young people as opposed to the stereotype of whippin' or using spankings as the preferred or indeed the only method of discipline. "If

its' serious....my husband and I talk and decide how we're going to approach it so we're on the same page....We're clear about what we want. We're clear about the behavior we're concerned about so the child doesn't have questions."

The final point to be reiterated here is the response of the children in these families. There was a high degree of similarity in their responses. There were parents who included spanking in their discipline strategy when their children were young. The children from these families frequently stated they would seek alternative ways to discipline their own children. They also reported their belief that at times and under certain circumstances (a child willfully disobeys or the infraction places someone in harm's way), a spanking may be in order. Last, the young people acknowledged that child discipline is crucial to the healthy development and socialization of children.

As each of the above parenting practices is considered, one will notice the commonality of such parenting strategies across multiple socioeconomic and/or racial/ethnic cultural groups. These strategies can be observed in many family groups committed to raising their children to be healthy, functional, achievement oriented and successful adults. It is here that the universal domains of parenting are most obvious. Nonetheless, we cannot forget about those inter-cultural group distinctions that exist. Those unique culturally prescribed parenting practices must be attended to at this point.

Racial Identity Development and Socialization

The importance of racial identity development and socialization for minority families cannot be overstated. It reserves a place of premier importance in the range of development and socialization processes to be addressed by African American families (Peters, 1997; Thornton, et al., 1990).

Like discipline, if fumbled the consequences for the children can prove quite painful. The tendency to question one's self-efficacy as a person of color has been well documented (Feagin & Sikes, 1999; Hale-Benson 1982; Miller, 1999).The risk of internalizing negative images and stereotypes of African Americans, or the adoption of victimization language to the point a child becomes immobilized are all very real possibilities. Certainly research suggests there is a range of mental health issues associated with chronic race-related stress including anxiety and depression (Broman; 1997; Harrell, 2000; Utsey, 1997; Utsey, Payne, Jackson, & Jones, 2002).

Conversely, when done with skill and accuracy black children are able to recognize the existence of racism. They tend to perceive it as a barrier to achieving one's personal goals that must be overcome. It becomes an obstacle that exists external to the person and therefore something that can be addressed (Sanders, 1997). They can be taught a set of viable strategies for confronting prejudice, bigotry, racism, and discrimination.

There are techniques for instilling racial pride, inculcating children with an appreciation of their cultural heritage, making them aware of and knowledgeable about the history of Africa and African Americans (Bell, et al.,1998). This is what the parents who participated in this project knew. These were the lessons they taught their children.

However, we cannot truly discuss racial identity development and socialization processes as an intra-cultural constant. It is a set of practices including messages that get communicated to children intergenerationally. It is also a process that is informed by highly variant and individualized characteristics (age, gender, neighborhood and

community, personality, social class, education) and experiences — not the least of which includes the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts that change over time.

The inclusion of several elders in this project afforded the opportunity to explore the issue of racial identity development and socialization from the experiences of women who all began life during the historical Jim Crow era of American history. However, the intra-group differences between these women (social class in particular) were sufficient to impact both their responses to race and racism and the manner in which they socialized their children to understand race.

Mrs. Lydia Burdett Wilson's family had substantial financial resources and social position. As a result even in their community located in the mountains of Tennessee they enjoyed a degree of protection from personal racism rarely afforded most African American's during that time period. Mrs. Wilson's family legacy promoted converting one's internal resources into achievements and successes in the external world. Mrs. Mary Brooks Anderson was born to poor Mississippi Delta sharecroppers. She learned early in life that even hard work and honesty did not guarantee a place of safety from personal and institutional racism. Mrs. Anderson learned one must confront racism by defying it.

Two women, both daughters of the American apartheid Jim Crow south, both denied the fulfillment of their aspirations to become well educated professional women for very different reasons. They diverged on the issue of racial identity development and socialization processes and racial messages they brought to their individual parenting strategies.

Two generations later dramatic changes were occurring in the sociopolitical environment and African American cultural contexts. Jim Crow was dismantled by the Civil Rights Act of 1965. The south was experiencing a metamorphosis; the final outcome of which was yet to be determined. The number of black families now living in northern urban cities was at an all time high due to the Great Migration North and World War II. Even the beauty of the ethnic neighborhoods like Chicago's 1930s and 1940s Bronzeville, had given way to high-rise project living creating vertical ghetto communities. Jeanine and David Blair were both born into this cauldron of social, political, economic, and cultural change.

David Blair lived in what he called the "slums". He rarely saw any other than African American faces until his family relocated to Champaign-Urbana. There was no material wealth or privileged social status. Nonetheless, David was infused with resources. There was David's mother who he says taught him to "view people as people." The internalization of this message facilitated his transition to East Central Illinois, despite finding himself surrounded by predominately white farm communities. David was able to apply the lessons he learned in the somewhat socially restricted life he knew in Chicago.

However, Jeanine had a different experience. Growing up in Louisiana she had seen white people and had become quite mistrustful. Her nurture and sustenance was provided by the black community who recognized the strength and intelligence so apparent in this child. Jeanine also learned to confront racism with defiance, which one hears clearly when she states "I keep it [race matters] to the forefront, far more than my husband does."

In the case of David and Jeanine Blair, both were born during the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and the Black Power Movement. Both were born into poor families. Both were able to acquire college educations because of the influence of social and educational programs created during the era of the Great Society. Nonetheless, *their* understanding of race and individual responses to racism diverged. The subsequent racial identity development and socialization practices and racial messages they each employ in their parenting repertoire varied as well.

The common thread that weaves itself through these four people is the necessity to understand and make sense of race and respond to racism. How this occurs and what it eventually looks like was predicated on their unique experiences and circumstances. As we contrast these four people, there seems to be two different techniques in operation — 1) utilizing available resources or, 2) defiance.

Mrs. Wilson and David Blair had resources (internal or otherwise) that afforded them a way to address race and racism. Mrs. Wilson "had proven myself and most everybody liked me" on the job while David "was a very colorful person. A people person....I dealt with racism by addressing it head on.... I just looked at that individual to have the problem.... And this person I'm judging on his own character."

On the other hand, Mrs. Anderson and Jeanine Blair seemed to rely on defiance as their response mechanism to race and racism. Mrs. Anderson learned to be defiant through her anger. "They had places where sharecroppers lived....They worked the land....[the white landowner] supposed to give them half of what they make on the land. Then as I grew older my mind was just going back. It made me pretty angry." Jeanine Blair's defiance was expressed through her gift of articulation as she described this

incident that occurred in graduate school as she confronted another student. "I remember going off in class on her. 'Who do you think you are? How can you just say that?' My Professor said '[Jeanine] you cannot get that angry. You can't let it get to you like that'."

There is yet one more dimension around racial identity development and socialization that must be discussed. We must fast forward to the current generation of young gifted and black youth. As I asked about race and racism I found these young men and women to have developed a functional response to racism including recognition that racism is real, yet can be defeated through one's own set of skills and personal agency. These youth talked easily about being prepared for the inevitable confrontation up to and including the legal recourse available to them. I realized generations of successful struggle have reduced the strategies down to manageable, teachable lessons, albeit varied. But my exuberance was short lived as I recalled one of Clarence Page's editorials in the Chicago Tribune about John Ogbu's Shaker Heights study (2003). I posed the question about this phenomenon to these competent high achievers. The flood gates opened and out poured contested racial authenticity.

Contested Racial Authenticity

The generation of young people who participated in this study are the children of college educated, professional, community and civic duty minded, politically active, predominately church-going parents. That means the children have had access to many more opportunities than their parents. The threat of personal racism is much less given their residential neighborhoods and racially mixed schools. They are escorted to the many school, church, and community sponsored activities and events in which they freely and easily participate by responsible and watchful adults. Consequently, their personal safety

is more secure than that which David Blair experienced in the Chicago of his early childhood. These are the academic achievers in their elementary, middle, and high school settings. Several students are now in college. However, they remain members of a racial/ethnic minority. Nothing in our society seems to allow one to transcend race. But the catch for this generation lies in the *who* and the *where* these racial tension are situated.

The young people in this study have been struggling against the challenges to their racial authenticity by other young black men and women. In fact this contention is showing up as early as elementary school. High academic achievers, youth who have aspirations to move up the social mobility ladder, those interested in community sponsored events and programs that expand opportunities, and young people who profess a strong religious belief are targeted by their young African American peers who claim these characteristics, attributes, values, and beliefs suggest they "ain't black enough".

The parents of these young people are working diligently with the community, the schools, and their churches to begin to address this problem. It unfortunately goes beyond teasing or even harassment. In some instances it has erupted into physical violence. The affect on those being victimized is quite visible. Some are angered by the accusation. Others try to understand what may be the cause of such a split. Neither the young people nor their parents have found adequate answers to this problem at this point. However, they have mobilized themselves and their resources to do just that. This they see as an old problem coming at them from a new angle.

Implications for Social Work Research

This study has several implications for research in the area of African American parenting practices. First, the ethnographic research design permitted exploration into the parenting strategies employed by black families relative to themselves as opposed to the archaic comparative analysis in which the stability, health, appropriateness, effectiveness, and functionality of black families is positively correlated to practices associated with middle-class white families. Second, the tradition within the research community has been not only the investigation of low-income black families living in impoverished neighborhoods, but from a pathological perspective. By disregarding the strengths of these families poverty is equated with pathology. I elected to study middle-class African American families who are raising their children to be high achievers striving toward success outcomes as defined by the children and their families. Further, while addressing intra-cultural similarities, this research also highlights the within cultural group distinctions. The subsequent contribution is in the dismantling of the concept of a monolithic black family model.

African Americans have traditionally been marginalized to the edges of American society. The bias of social science researchers all too often stems from a comparison of cultural practices that effectively satisfy the needs, experiences, and preferences of one racial/ethnic minority group against those of the dominant group. The results of these comparisons frequently led researchers to conclude that the minority racial/ethnic group's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior are at best deviant, oftentimes "pathological."

This study contributes to research by providing additional evidence in support of a multifaceted theoretical approach to the study of social phenomenon including an

endorsement of Afrocentric theory and feminist theory as viable approaches to knowledge building. These theories offer a valuable basis for investigating the strengths of family systems that vary from the dominant culture in form and function. They provide a perspective for viewing and understanding the innovate strategizing employed by families as they create elaborate structures and mechanisms that not only ensures survival in what is frequently a *hostile environment*, but makes it possible for children and families to thrive and achieve success. Additionally, Afrocentric and feminist theory structures a theoretical framework for the conceptualization of family patterns of child-rearing practices utilized by African American families.

Afrocentric theory supports the use of multiple and varied theoretical and paradigmatic approaches to explain social phenomena. It is based on the assumption that individuals must be viewed within the context of their primary social group, and the *affective* is an epistemologically sound approach to the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, cultural variance should be investigated from the perspective of a "cultural and ethnic group's ethos" (Schiele, 1996, p. 285).

Additionally, this study provides collateral endorsement of feminist theory in the approach to building knowledge of our social world. Based on the assumption that the actual lived experiences of those whose voices were previously excluded from social science investigation is crucial to understanding social phenomena, it provides a valid standpoint from which to research African American families.

Implications for Social Work Practice

This study contributes to family social work practice in several ways. First, race remains a crucial issue in social work practice for several reasons, including the dramatic

demographic shifts occurring in America (Proctor & Davis, 1994). With the increased numbers of people of color, the ability to recognize and accurately interpret the differences and similarities among racial, ethnic, and cultural groups is an undeniable imperative.

Second, every social worker involved in providing services to children and their families must be knowledgeable and possess an adequate and sometimes specialized set of skills. Ethnic and racial cultural themes and orientations permeate the family system and are incorporated into family life in ways that forge critical patterns of interaction and functioning (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1999), influencing parenting and shaping the beliefs, values, attitudes, and goals they carry into their parent-child relationships (Harkness & Super, 1995). The definition and roles of family members in a child's life, parental beliefs about the child's socialization and developmental outcomes, including discernment of normative and potentially harmful elements, and definitions of competence in each area may be defined by and reflect certain culture-specific differences (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1999).

Practitioners responsible for providing services to children of color and their families must also be culturally aware and sensitive to the unique aspects of parenting minority children in America. It is crucial for practitioners to be aware of and recognize diverse cultural prescriptions for child-rearing and parenting practices and to develop the necessary skills to accurately interpret inter-group and intra-group differences and similarities. When child-rearing practices endorsed by African American families are perceived as prescriptions intended to advance their "children's competencies and

socially adaptive behaviors within a given societal context" (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1999, p. 221) the strengths and resilience of African American families becomes more apparent.

Third, social work practitioners are required to intervene on behalf of children and their families across a wide array of service areas. They are frequently responsible for conducting risk assessments, submitting progress reports, and making recommendations to juvenile and family court systems. Increased knowledge pertaining to the parenting strengths of the black family and the community as a whole will help workers recognize and identify these strengths despite their variations across cultural groups. This is a particularly relevant competency given the weight workers' risk assessments and/or recommendations may have on out-of-home placements, reunification, and termination of parental rights.

Social workers facilitate foster home placements and adoption services for African American children who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system (Carter-Black, 2002; Kopels, Carter-Black, & Poertner, 2002). The more knowledgeable they are concerning racial identity development and socialization practices, the better they will be able to prepare white families for becoming multiracial families in transracial adoption and foster care placement cases.

Social work practitioners provide services to unwed teenage mothers and are often called upon to develop curriculum and teach effective parenting skills to targeted client groups found lacking such skills. When practitioners are in possession of diverse parenting strategies and child-rearing practices as dictated by primary sociocultural contexts, the parenting training curriculums can be tailored to the particular targeted client group more effectively and efficiently.

Social workers can also be found implementing a plethora of youth oriented, community-based programs. The incorporation of strategies that resonate with black clients may enhance client satisfaction, outcomes, increase trust of helping professionals, and may even reduce premature attrition rates. Ultimately, this particular contribution will help reduce the perception that child and family service organizations, such as the public child welfare system, is simply unresponsive to the needs of people of color.

Finally, deficiencies in worker knowledge and skill development continue to negatively affect social services in general and perhaps child welfare and family social work in particular. Studies that attempt to expose and illuminate errors in the interpretation of cultural processes will further contribute to "best practices" in social work. Heightened awareness of the effects of racial and ethnic culture on groups and individuals will only enhance the development of strategies for more meaningful and productive dialogue between workers, workers and their clients, and in social work practice in general.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Strengths of the Research Findings

This study was designed to explore the parenting practices that facilitate the development and socialization of children in middle-class African American families that promote achievement and success, with a primary focus on positive racial identity development and socialization. The influence of social class and child's gender on parenting practices were also considered by this study, but only with a secondary emphasis.

One of the strengths of this study is its design. Qualitative approaches were employed in the research design — ethnography and a comparative case study based on oral histories. The ethnographic design allowed me to interview African American families in their home environments. The location of these interviews facilitated a more intimate discussion of parenting, both because of the physical comfort of the families' homes, but also because of the opportunity to observe family interactions. The result was the opportunity to "capture the day-to-day interactions of members of middle-class African-American families, and to finally redress a long-standing gap in our knowledge of children's social development" (Trosper, 2002 p. 54).

The comparative case study approach permitted a comprehensive exploration of racial identity development and socialization processes both within and across multiple generations of African Americans. The compilation of oral histories amassed through interviews and observations provided a rich and varied collection of data. By comparing the lived experiences of informants of the same age cohort, I was able to determine the manner in which their unique and personal circumstance helped shape and influence their understanding of race and responses to racism within similar sociopolitical and cultural contexts. In this manner, within group similarities and differences became discernible. By comparing personal experiences across generational cohorts, the manner in which external sociopolitical forces and cultural contexts contribute to the racial identity development, attitudes, behaviors, and responses to racism was illuminated.

A second strength of this project was the parenting strategies consistently reported as important by the six families who participated in this qualitative ethnographic research project that emerged as ten themes. Eight of the ten themes echo universal parenting

practices (child-rearing practices common to families across varied inter-cultural contexts).

The most significant strength of this study is the attention devoted to the process of racial identity development and socialization. A crucial parenting task unique to racial/ethnic minority families, it was comprehensively addressed as such by this research. As another strength, the current study not only reinforced the idea of intra-group differences in how individuals come to understand race and their responses to racism, it highlighted the manner in which individual differences influence the racial identity development and socialization practices they utilize as part of their parenting strategies, and the racial messages they communicate to their children.

Finally, this study illuminated the presence of contested racial authenticity as a critical dilemma that seems to reproduce the highest degree of race-related stress for the current generation of high achieving African American youth who informed this study. This last phenomenon requires much greater attention from the social science and practice communities. Further, since this matter has the potential to create a destructive divide within the black community, it is imperative that African American families and traditional support communities (the church and schools) also begin to investigate this issue in earnest.

Strengths of the Research Design

Ethnography, defined as "descriptions of people who were ethnoi or 'other' [combines] long-term participant-observation with in-depth interviewing, the two hallmarks of modern ethnography" (Miller, Hengst, & Wang, 2003). Several key epistemological advantages are frequently considered available to ethnographers. The

first advantage concerns the inclusion of the "actor's point of view", which enhances the credibility of the particular research project. This advantage is recognized despite the potential for those under study to attribute unstable, inconsistent meanings to the phenomenon of interest. The second advantage accessible to ethnographers pertains to the *quotidian* — the everyday world, the every day life, the taken-for-granted understandings and meanings — that contribute to the shared culturally based actions of people. Finally, ethnographers perceive their qualitative methods of research to be more conducive to developing what Geertz referred to as *thick descriptions*, "...reproducing the 'lived experience' of others" (Becker, 1996, p. 63).

Stake (2000) suggests in case study work, the researcher must provide enough narrative description to enable the reader to "vicariously experience" what is happening in the case (p. 439). Such description must include the unique and complex historical, physical, social, cultural, and political contexts in which each case is embedded. The qualitative case study approach allows the researcher to explore both those aspects of the case that resemble other such cases, as well as illuminate variations between cases. It is through the exposure of these likenesses and distinctions that we are able to expand our knowledge. "We come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience....and, in their experiential and contextual accounts, case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge" (Stake, 2000, p. 442).

In the 1980s Lincoln and Guba proposed a naturalistic form of scientific inquiry whereby the quality of the research is determined by adherence to criterion used to establish both trustworthiness and credibility. According to their methodological philosophy, truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality all contribute to

establishing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry. Credibility of findings and interpretations is enhanced through multiple categories of activities such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. Additionally, credibility is further established when external checks on the investigative process are facilitated through peer debriefing. The ultimate test of both the researcher's findings and interpretations is made possible through the process of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301).

Perhaps one of the most strident proponents of qualitative research methodologies is Norman Denzin (1997, 2000). He not only encourages ethnographic research, but proposes significant revisions in our conceptualization of ethnography both as a form of scientific inquiry and in the way we write descriptive accounts of people.

The strengths of this research include its' adherence to the criterion for establishing trustworthiness and credibility as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). It also follows a descriptive account of the lived experiences of the families and members of the African American community as proposed by Denzin (1997, 2000).

Prolonged engagement permitted the necessary time to establish trust between myself and the informants and address my research query. As an insider and already accepted member of the group under study, I was able to easily gain access to informants. I was also able to avoid the "stranger in a strange land" affect an outsider status researcher can have on the group under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1990, p. 302).

This research is based on ethnographic interview and participant observation and qualitative case study. Triangulation was achieved by interviewing and observing multiple informants from six family systems. Members of the families' extended kinship systems, experts from the social work practice community, as well as elders from the

African American community were included among the informant groups, lending a varied perspective and multidimensional point of view. Further, multiple theories were employed as the theoretical framework in this research project.

Peer debriefing was made possible by extensive reliance on the input and feedback provided by a colleague from the human service profession. The process afforded the opportunity to check my interpretations, conceptualizations, and conclusions against those of an objective reviewer.

The process of member checking allowed the author to present the categories that emerged from the data to a representative group of the informants. Another facet somewhat related to the benefits provided by member checking was my insider status. As an African American, my long-term residence in the Champaign-Urbana community, and number of years as a professional in the social work practice community (including credibility as a competent and skilled professional) I brought a particular perspective to the research. I was also able to apply my practice skills (observational and interviews skills) to further the data gathering process. Finally, my professional expertise facilitated the work of establishing rapport and trust among informants.

Finally, an audit trail has been created through detailed fieldnotes, verbatim transcriptions of audiotaped interviews, and the maintenance of researcher's journal. All the strategies identified enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility as well as the confirmability of the research.

Limitations of the Research

The limitation of this research pertained to the field relations. As an insider and one who has known the majority of the informants for a number of years, the dynamics of

the relations between the researcher and the informants was affected. While the relationships facilitated access to informant parents and their children in their home environments, the potential for the families to strive to put their best foot forward cannot be ignored. Efforts were made to reduce the influence of such affects (use of effective interview skills; avoid judgments or criticisms; remain vigilantly aware of attending behaviors, body language, and cadence; maintain a conversational tone; and rely on the pre-planned interview protocol). Nonetheless, the privilege afforded by insider status also creates a set of complications that must be acknowledged.

Despite this limitation, this study contributes to the knowledge and understanding of parenting practices that facilitate the healthy development and socialization of children in middle-class African American families. It further illuminates the ways in which the families' child-rearing strategies encourage achievement and foster success outcome in children despite the social barriers posed by racism.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations proposed for future research. The first is the further explorations of intra-group differences by studying parenting practices among working class African American families, thereby illuminated the similarities and differences across social class. Second, further investigations are necessary concerning high achieving youth who find themselves criticized as "not black enough". The aim would be to discover aspects of individual and family agency employed by these youth and their family systems to deflect the potential negative impact of such challenges. Third, additional research is needed that seeks to understand the origins and/or impetus

for the phenomenon of contested racial authenticity among African American youth. The question that needs to be asked is "what constitutes being black enough"?

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APPENDIX A

Proposed Research Statement

I am a University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign School of Social Work doctoral candidate currently conducting research for my dissertation thesis. My research is being supervised by Dr. Wendy L. Haight, Director of the Doctoral Program and Responsible Project Investigator (RPI).

The purpose of this research project is to identify parenting practices used by middle-class African American families and their communities that foster achievement and success in their sons and daughters despite the realities of racism, sexism and issues of class present in American society by conversing with parents, children, and significant others (extended kin, family friends, church members, neighbors) identified as important by the families participating in the project. This research includes the historical development of the Black middle-class in the Champaign-Urbana community. Therefore, I will also talk with informal community historians in Champaign-Urbana.

The key questions for this research project are as follows:

1. How do middle-class African American parents teach their children lessons that strengthen the family as a whole?
2. How do middle-class African American families help their children understand race and ethnicity, create in children a positive self-image and racial identity, and develop the skill to successfully maneuver within the larger society, yet maintain their own cultural identity?
3. Which parenting strategies encourage achievement and promote successful outcomes?
4. How do middle-class African American families view the issue of social class as it relates to the achievement of boys and girls?

I will visit with project participants approximately three (3) hours over a four (4) month period of time starting September, 2004 and ending December, 2004.

It is important to note that the confidentiality of any families and/or individuals willing to voluntarily participate in this project will be strictly maintained.

Please direct any questions, concerns or comments to:

Jan Carter-Black, MSW, Doctoral Candidate
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work
1207 West Oregon Street, Room 101
Urbana, Illinois 61801
phone: (217) 333-2887 or (217) 359-7701
email: carterbl@uiuc.edu

APPENDIX B

Parent Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

TITLE OF PROJECT — Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization

I understand that the purpose of this research project is to identify parenting practices and child-rearing strategies used by middle-class African American families that foster achievement and success in their children, and to determine whether these strategies differ for sons and daughters. I understand that Jan Carter-Black will be conducting the project and can be reached at (217) 333-2887 or (217) 359-7701, or at carterbl@uiuc.edu should I have any questions or concerns.

I understand the researcher will conduct audio taped interviews which will take approximately 2-3 hours total and will be spread out over several visits, typically to our home, with each visit lasting approximately 1-1 ½ hours. I also understand that on occasion and as I determine acceptable, the researcher will be spending time with our family both in our home and at events and activities we may attend outside our home. I understand the interviews and visits will occur over the course of four months beginning September 2004 and concluding December, 2004.

I understand that any information gained from the conversations or discussions I may have with the researcher will remain permanently confidential with regard to my identity. I also understand that in her professional capacity as a practicing social worker employed at Black & Black Associates, and as a mandated reported, Jan Carter-Black is obligated by law to report to the Department of Children & Family Services any act that

could be determined as child maltreatment; specifically incidents in which a child is at serious risk of danger. Further, her professional obligation includes reporting to the appropriate authorities incidents that pose serious endangerment to me or others.

I also understand that Jan Carter-Black will be asking me to refer other individuals and/or families who may be willing to participate in this study, and that by doing so, I will be relinquishing some of my confidentiality since those individuals may realize that I am a participant in this project. I am also aware that I am under no obligation to make any such referrals.

I understand any identifying information such as my actual name coded with an assigned pseudonym, will be kept in a locked file accessible only to the researcher, Jan Carter-Black. I further understand that all audio taped interviews will be destroyed at the completion of this project, and the expected completion date for the project is March, 2005. Further, I understand that any other identifying information will be destroyed by December, 2005.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I am under no obligation to continue my participation. I understand that I am free to terminate my participation in this study at any time without penalty. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions at any time.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I may have had and all of those questions have been answered in a satisfactory manner.

If you wish to speak to someone about your participation in this project, you may contact Dr. Wendy L. Haight, Director of the Doctoral Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work, and Responsible Project

Investigator (RPI) at (217) 244-5212 or wlhaight@uiuc.edu . You may also contact the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board Office collect (identify yourself/your child as project participants) at (217) 333-2670 or via email at irb@uiuc.edu for information about your rights in UIUC-approved research projects.

This is to certify that I,_____

hereby agree to participate in the study as authorized and approved as part of the education program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign under the supervision of Dr. Wendy L. Haight, Director of the Doctoral Program and Responsible Project Investigator.

My signature here, _____ further certifies that Jan Carter-Black has my permission to use my name in the process of seeking and/or inviting others to participate in this research project.

I further understand that I will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

Date signed_____

APPENDIX C

Auxiliary Informant Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

TITLE OF PROJECT — Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization

I understand that the purpose of this research project is to identify parenting practices and child-rearing strategies used by middle-class African American families that foster achievement and success in their children, and to determine whether these strategies differ for sons and daughters. I also understand that the project will include the historical development of the Black middle-class in the Champaign-Urbana and surrounding communities. I understand that Jan Carter-Black will be conducting the project and can be reached at (217) 333-2887 or (217) 359-7701, or at carterbl@uiuc.edu should I have any questions or concerns.

I understand the researcher will conduct audio taped interviews which will take approximately 2-3 hours total and will be spread out over several visits, each visit lasting approximately 1-1 ½ hours. I understand the exact location of these interviews will be decided by the researcher conducting this project and myself. I understand the interviews will occur over the course of four months beginning September 2004 and concluding December, 2004.

I understand that any information gained from the conversations or discussions I may have with the researcher will remain permanently confidential with regard to my identity and any identifying information such as my actual name coded with an assigned

pseudonym, will be kept in a locked file accessible only to Jan Carter-Black. I also understand I may choose to have my identity revealed by giving both oral and written consent.

I understand that in her professional capacity as a practicing social worker employed at Black & Black Associates, and as a mandated reported, Jan Carter-Black is obligated by law to report to the Department of Children & Family Services any act that could be determined as child maltreatment; specifically incidents in which a child is at serious risk of danger. Further, her professional obligation includes reporting to the appropriate authorities incidents that pose serious endangerment to me or others.

I also understand that Jan Carter-Black will be asking me to refer other individuals and/or families who may be willing to participate in this study, and that by doing so, I will be relinquishing some of my confidentiality since those individuals may realize that I am a participant in this project. I am also aware that I am under no obligation to make any such referrals.

I understand that all audio taped interviews will be destroyed at the completion of this project. I further understand that any materials I consent to have the researcher duplicate will either be destroyed and/or returned to me as deemed appropriate by myself (excluding information and/or materials which reveal my identity that I have given consent for use in this project). I am aware that the expected completion date for the project is March, 2005. Further, I understand that any other identifying information will be destroyed by December, 2005.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I am under no obligation to continue my participation. I understand that I am free to terminate my

participation in this study at any time without penalty. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions at any time. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I may have had and all of those questions have been answered in a satisfactory manner.

If you wish to speak to someone about your participation in this project, you may contact Dr. Wendy L. Haight, Director of the Doctoral Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work, and Responsible Project Investigator (RPI) at (217) 244-5212 or wlhaight@uiuc.edu . You may also contact the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board Office collect (identify yourself as a project participant) at (217) 333-2670 or via email at irb@uiuc.edu for information about your rights in UIUC-approved research projects.

This is to certify that I,_____

hereby agree to participate in the study as authorized and approved as part of the education program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign under the supervision of Dr. Wendy L. Haight, Director of the Doctoral Program and Responsible Project Investigator.

My signature here, _____ further certifies that Jan Carter-Black has my permission to use my name in the process of seeking and/or inviting others to participate in this research project.

I further understand that I will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

Date signed_____

APPENDIX D

Parental Permission Form

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

TITLE OF PROJECT — Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization

The purpose of this research project is to identify child-rearing strategies and parenting practices used by middle-class African American families that foster achievement and success in their children. It also seeks to determine whether these parenting practices differ for sons and daughters. In order to fulfill this purpose, I would like to interview your child.

With your permission, I will interview your child for a total of 2-3 hours over the course of several visits. Each visit would last approximately 1-1½ hours depending on your child's comfort level. These audio taped interview sessions would be arranged at the convenience of both you and your child, typically occurring in your home.

In addition to your permission, I will also ask your child to consent to participate in the study. Of course as with all strictly voluntary research, your decision not to allow your child's participation or to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at anytime for any reason will certainly be honored without any consequences to you, your child, or your family. I will make certain your child knows they don't have to answer any question(s) they don't wish to answer. Your child's conversations with me as well as their identity will be kept completely confidential. Any identifying information, such as your child's actual name coded with their assigned pseudonym, will be maintained in a

locked cabinet accessible only by Jan Carter-Black, the investigator conducting this research project.

In my professional capacity as a practicing social worker employed at Black & Black Associates, and as a mandated reported, I am obligated by law to report to the Department of Children & Family Services any act that could be determined as child maltreatment; specifically incidents in which a child is at serious risk of danger. Further, my professional obligation includes reporting to the appropriate authorities incidents that pose serious endangerment to you or others.

I will be asking you to refer other individuals and/or families who may be willing to participate in this study. By doing so, you will be relinquishing some of your child's confidentiality since those individuals may realize that you are participants in this project. All identifying information will be kept in strict confidence until the conclusion of the project, at which time the information will be destroyed. The expected project completion date is March, 2005.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Jan Carter-Black, the researcher conducting this project, at the following telephone numbers: (217) 333-2887 or (217) 359-7701, email address carterbl@uiuc.edu, or Dr. Wendy L. Haight, Director of the Doctoral Program and Responsible Project Investigator (RPI) at (217) 244-5212. You may also contact the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board Office collect (identify your self/child as project participants) at (217) 333-2670 or via email at irb@uiuc.edu for information about your rights in UIUC-approved research projects.

I have read and understand the above information, and I voluntarily give permission for my child_____ to participate in this study. I understand that I may keep a copy of this signed permission form.

_____

Parent's Signature Date

My signature here, _____ further certifies that Jan Carter-Black has my permission to use my name in the process of seeking and/or inviting others to participate in this research project.

APPENDIX E

Minor Assent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

TITLE OF PROJECT — Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization

The purpose of this research project is to identify the ways middle-class African American parents help their children become successful. It also considers whether parents raise their sons and daughters differently.

To help me identify and understand the way they parent you and your siblings, I would like to meet with you at your convenience to talk about these matters. I would be coming to your home several times spending about 1-1½ hours with you each time for a total of 2-3 hours. I would also be using a tape recorder during our discussions. I would ask you a series of questions, some of them personal. You never have to answer any question that you don't want to. If you agree to participate in this project, you can change your mind at any time without any consequences for you or your family.

Anything you share with me, including your real identity, will be kept completely confidential. However, as a professional social worker at Black & Black Associates, I am a mandated reported, which means I am required by law to report to the Department of Children & Family Services anything that you might tell me or I may see that suggest you or another child or youth is a victim of abuse or neglect. I am also required to report to the appropriate authorities any incident that puts adults in serious danger of being hurt.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jan Carter-Black, the researcher conducting this project, at (217) 359-7701, or carterbl@uiuc.edu, or contact

Dr. Wendy L. Haight, the Responsible Project Investigator, at (217) 244-5212, email address wlhaight@uiuc.edu.

I have read and understand the above information, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this project. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this signed assent form.

Youth's Signature Date

APPENDIX F

Demographic Questionnaire

The following information will be used in the study, *Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization*. It is important to make sure the families who participate in this project share certain common characteristics. By doing so, it will be possible to identify the range of parenting practices used by similarly situated families. Primarily, this information will be used for the purposes of establishing the participating families' socio-economic status (SES) as middle-class African American families, who are raising both sons and daughters. The various characteristics vital to the project and required for inclusion as a participating family are indicated by asterisks (*).

Please take a few minutes to complete this basic demographic questionnaire. While we acknowledge this is highly personal information, please be assured that once this information has been reviewed solely by Jan Carter-Black, this questionnaire will be destroyed. Furthermore, in order to ensure confidentiality, your actual family name has been replaced by an assigned pseudonym.

1. Family's Pseudonym Name:_____
2. Date: _____
3. Mother's Age:_____
4. Father's Age:_____
5. Number of Years Married to Current Spouse:_____
6. Highest education level achieved by Mother (*)

   _____ High School Graduate

   _____ Undergraduate Degree

   _____ Graduate Degree

7. Highest education level achieved for Father (*)

   _____ High School Graduate

   _____ Undergraduate Degree

   _____ Graduate Degree

8. How many sons are there in your family? (*) _____

9. How many daughters are there in your family? (*) _____

10. Which schools do/did your children attend? (*)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. What is/was your current/previous career or occupation?

_____

12. What is/was your spouse's current/previous career or occupation?

_____

13. Do your combined incomes exceed $60,000 annually (circle one response)? (*)
YES NO

14. Does/Is your family own/buying your current home (circle one response)? (*)
YES NO

15. Please provide a general description of your family's residential neighborhood:

_____
_____
_____
_____

16. Please provide a brief description of the kinds of volunteer, civic, sports, church, community, and political groups and/or activities in which you and other family members are actively involved: (*)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank You!

APPENDIX G

Child/Youth/Young Adult Environmental Factors Questionnaire

The following information will be used in the study, *Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization*. It is important to show that those participating in this project are successful families and young people. This brief questionnaire will help establish the successes you have already achieved in your life. The most important required characteristics of successes among young African American children, youth and young adults for the purposes of this project, are indicated by the asterisks (*). Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Younger children may want to ask one of their parents to assist them in completing this questionnaire.

While this is personal information, please be aware that once your achievements have been noted, this questionnaire will be destroyed. Furthermore, in order to ensure confidentiality, your actual name has been replaced by an assigned pseudonym.

---

1. Your pseudonym name: _____
2. Date: _____
3. What schools do you currently/did you most recently attend? (*)
   _____
4. What is the highest grade level you have completed at this time?
   _____
5. What is/was your current/most recent GPA? (*)
   _____
6. What extra-curricular activities are/have you been involved in through your school(s)? (*)
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
7. What kinds of organized activities (sports, the arts, music, church sponsored, community youth groups) are/were you involved in outside of school? (*)
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

8. Have you been able to travel with your family or organized groups, and if so how often does that opportunity occur and where have you traveled?

_____
_____
_____

9. What kinds of cultural events or activities do you enjoy?

_____
_____
_____
_____

10. What kind of summer activities have you been able to participate in over the past 5 years?

_____
_____
_____
_____

11. What are/were your education goals? (*)

_____
_____
_____

12. What are your future career goals?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank You!

APPENDIX H

Parent/Child/Auxiliary Informants Interview Guide

Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families:
A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization

Topical Outline:

1. Describe the family's routines, social support network, extended kinship support.
2. What are the family's strengths?
3. What are the individual and family achievement goals?
4. What are the parental expectations for children?
5. What constitutes success?
6. Does education contribute to the quality of life and if so, how?
7. Does one's occupation contribute to the quality of life and if so, how?
8. What kinds of lessons are taught to children by their family that encourage and/or motivate them to strive for success?
9. Which stories get told and re-told by this family and why?
10. What are the parenting beliefs and specific child-rearing practices?
11. Do any of these lessons differ according to gender?
12. How do racism, sexism and/or social class impact people in their daily lives?
13. Which strategies employed by the family combat the negative effects of racism, bigotry, and discrimination?
14. What are the preferred forms of discipline used by the parents?

APPENDIX I

Parent/Child Interview Questions:

(Transition Statement) I'd like to start by getting to know a little bit about life in the _____family home.

1. Describe a typical day in the life of (informant) for me.

2. Some families have certain routines that they do every day or every week like eating dinner together every evening. What are some typical _____family routines?

3. Describe some of the activities that the immediate family does together?

4. How often does your family engage in activities or events that involve the relatives; aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, close family friends? Describe some of those activities.

5. How important are these gatherings to you as a person and your family as a whole?

6. What are the strengths of the _____family?

7. What are some of the _____family goals?

(Transition Statement) I'd like to switch gears now and talk about achievement and success.

1. In your opinion what does it mean to be a success in contemporary America?

2. How does education affect one's quality of life and success in life?

3. How does one's career affect one's quality and then success in life?

4. What kinds of lessons have you taught your kids/your parents tried to teach you that might encourage and motivate them/you to strive to be successful?

5. How do racism, sexism and/or social class impact on the lives of Black people or women?

(Transition Statement) I'd like to hear your opinion about parenting.

Question for Children Only:

Tell me something about your responsibilities around the house that contribute to the family as a whole

1. In your opinion what do you/your parents consider some of the more important issues involved in raising kids?

2. If you had to identify the three most important lessons your children/ your parents believe their children need to learn, what would they be?

3. Should the lessons parents teach their kids be different for their sons as opposed to their daughters, and if so **are** any of the lessons for your son/brother/you as opposed to your daughters/you and your sister(s)/sisters different **because** he's/you're a boy and they're/you're girls?

4. Who does the disciplining in your family?

5. What are the preferred forms of discipline?

6. Which forms of discipline actually get used the most?

7. Do/will you discipline the way you were/are disciplined? Why or why not?

8. Do you think physical discipline is discussed in the Christian bible, and if so, what is your interpretation of the biblical philosophy surrounding the physical discipline of kids?

9. Are there a lot of storytellers in your family, and if so who are they and what is the nature of stories they tell?

10. What kinds of stories get passed around in your immediate and extended family and which ones tend to be re-told across generations?

11. Are stories used for different purposes, and if so how are they used?

12. Is it important for Black parents to prepare their kids to deal with racism, sexism and/or social class issues, and if so, how have you/your parents tried to prepare your kids/you?

(Transition Statement) This is my last question.

If you had to identify 3 things about yourself as a parent/a young Black person that you are most proud of what would you identify?

APPENDIX J

Auxiliary Informant Interview Questions:

(Transition Statement) I'd like to start by getting to know a little bit about how you might describe a healthy, well functioning family. This is strictly your personal perception, beliefs, and opinion of what constitutes a strong, functional family.

1. How would you describe a typical day in the life of a well functioning Black family in contemporary America, particularly in the Champaign-Urbana community?

2. Some families have certain routines that they do every day or every week like eating dinner together every evening. Do you believe these routines are important and if so, what would you consider to be some important family routines?

3. Describe some of the activities that your immediate family does together?

4. How often does your family engage in activities or events that involve the relatives; aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, close family friends? Describe some of those activities.

5. How important are these gatherings to you as a person and your family as a whole? How important are they to the functioning of a healthy family?

6. What do you consider the strengths of a well functioning family?

7. What types of family goals do you think are important for an African American family to have in today's society?

(Transition Statement) I'd like to switch gears now and talk about achievement and success.

1. In your opinion what does it mean to be a success in contemporary America?

2. How does education affect one's quality of life and success in life?

3. How does one's career affect one's quality and then success in life?

4. What kinds of lessons should parents teach their children that might encourage and motivate them to strive to be successful?

5. How do racism, sexism and/or social class impact on the lives of Black people or women?

(Transition Statement) Now I'd like to hear your opinion about parenting.

1. In your personal opinion, what are some of the more important issues involved in raising kids in contemporary America?

2. If you had to identify the three most important lessons children need to learn, what would they be?

3. Should the lessons parents teach their children be different for their sons as opposed to their daughters, and if so which one's should differ and why?

4. Who should do the majority of the disciplining in a well structured family?

5. What do you consider more appropriate and acceptable forms of discipline for children?

6. Which forms of discipline do you believe actually get used the most in contemporary middle-class African American families?

7. Do you personally discipline your children the way you were disciplined? Why or why not?

8. Do you think physical discipline is discussed in the Christian bible, and if so, what is your interpretation of the biblical philosophy surrounding the physical discipline of kids?

9. Are there a lot of storytellers in your family, and if so who are they and what is the nature of stories they tell?

10. What kinds of stories get passed around in your immediate and extended family and which ones tend to be re-told across generations?

11. Are stories used for different purposes, and if so how are they used?

12. How should middle-class Black parents prepare their kids to deal with racism, sexism and/or social class issues?

(Transition Statement) This is my last question.

If you had to identify 3 things about yourself as a parent that you are most proud of, what would you identify?

APPENDIX K

Informal Community Historian Interview Question:

(Transition Statement) As a critical aspect of this research project, I would like to include an account of the historical evolution of the African American middle-class in the Champaign-Urbana community. With that in mind, I'd like to chat with about that evolution from your perspective, experience, and your own personal witness.

1. Would you describe the Black community in Champaign-Urbana when you were a young child growing up?

2. How would you describe the middle-class African American community during those same childhood years?

3. When did the Black middle-class begin to show definite signs of growth, and what were some of those signs?

4. How has the employment status, educational opportunities, access to resources and housing options for the Black community in Champaign-Urbana changed over the past 50 years? I'm using Brown v. Board of Education as the benchmark year.

5. What were some major events that took place on the national, state and local levels that, in your opinion, have significantly impacted the Black middle-class community in Champaign-Urbana?

6. What would you say has shown real progress, been extremely positive for African Americans in our community over the past 50 years?

7. Which events, occurrences and/or experiences do you believe have been detrimental to our community?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Janet D. Carter-Black

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Champaign, Illinois 61820
(217) 359-1138

Office: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work
1207 West Oregon
Urbana, Illinois 61801
(217) 333-2887 or (217) 333-2261
Fax (217) 244-5220 E-mail carterbl@uiuc.edu

EDUCATION

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois

Ph.D. in Social Work, graduation date: December 2005
Dissertation Title: "Success Oriented Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families: A Focus on Positive Racial Identity Development and Socialization"
Dissertation Adviser: Associate Professor Wendy L. Haight

M.S.W. in Social Work, 1995

B.A. in Liberal Arts and Sciences, 1977

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work, Urbana, Illinois

Lecturer, M.S.W. graduate program 2005 - present

Project Coordinator,
(Department of Children & Family Services Urbana Field Office
Child Welfare Laboratory), 1998-2002

Adjunct Instructor, M.S.W. graduate program 1998-2004

Parkland Community College, Instructor, 1997-1999

Black & Black Associates, Partner
44 East Main Street, Suite 209
Champaign, Illinois 61820 1996-present

Provide training, staff development and consultation to social service agencies, schools, and organizations.

Cunningham Children's Home
1301 North Cunningham Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61802 1976-1997

Director of Human Resource Development Responsible for the development of an agency human resource department capable of effectively and efficiently facilitating the achievement of program goals and objectives.

Associate Director of Residential Services Administrator for the agency's long-term residential child welfare program for children and adolescents, including management and supervision of several individually licensed main campus and community-based group homes.

Assistant Director Aided the executive director in ensuring the program mission and purpose was being met in all aspects of agency operations.

Program Coordinator Responsible for the management and supervision of clinical caseworkers, child care workers and support staff for residential, community-based and independent living program services.

Child Care Worker Supervisor Served as supervisor for the child care worker staff providing services to BD, LD and SED adolescent clients in a licensed residential group home setting.

PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

Carter-Black, J. (in press). Teaching Cultural Competence: An Innovative Strategy Grounded in the Universality of Storytelling as Depicted in African and African American Storytelling Traditions. Journal of Social Work Education.

Carter-Black, J. (2002). Transracial adoption foster care placement: Worker perception and attitude. Child Welfare, LXXXI (2), 337-370.

Carter-Black, J. (2001). The myth of "the tangle of pathology": Resilience strategies employed by middle-class African-American families. Journal of Family Social Work, 6 (4), 75-100.

Haight, W. L. & Carter-Black, J. (2004). His eye is on the sparrow: Teaching and learning in an African-American church. In E. Gregory, S. Long, & D. Volk (Eds.), Many pathways to literacy. London: Routledge/Falmer of the Taylor & Francis Group.

Kopels, S., Carter-Black, J., & Poertner, J. (2002). Reducing conflict between child welfare communities: A child welfare laboratory experiment. Journal of Health and Social Policy, 15 (3/4), 117-129.

Kopels, S., Carter-Black, J., & Poertner, J. (2002). Reducing conflict between child welfare communities: A child welfare laboratory experiment. In K. Briar-Lawson & J. Levy Zlotnik (Eds.), Evaluation research in child welfare: Improving outcomes through university-public agency partnerships (pp. 117-129). New York, NY: Haworth Press, Inc.

COURSES TAUGHT

Parkland Community College
- Introduction to Sociology
- Sociology of Marriage and the Family

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work
- Human Behavior and the Social Environment
- Methods of Social Work Intervention, I
- Supervision/Consultation/Staff Development
- Social Planning

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Service to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work

Student Grievance Committee, Member	2005-present
Cultural Diversity Committee, Member	2005-present
Child Welfare Committee, Member	2005-present
Doctoral Committee, Member	2002-2004
Cultural Diversity Committee, Member	2002-2003
Child Welfare Specialization Advisory Committee Member	2001-2002
School of Social Work Dean Search Committee (Student Representative)	2002
Social Justice Alliance, Advisor	1999-2000
Child Welfare Practice Advisory Committee Member	1995-1996

Service to the Urbana-Champaign Practice Community

Champaign County Forum on Character & Values	1996
Champaign County CHARACTER COUNTS! Initiative-Leadership Council Member	1997-1999
Prairie School Annual African-American History Program	1998-2001
From the Schoolhouse to the Jailhouse: What's Happening in Between (Program Moderator)	2005

Professional Presentations

Accepted Presenter at Council on Social Work Education 2006 Annual Program Meeting
- Teaching Cultural Competence: An Innovative Strategy Grounded in the Universality of Storytelling

Presenter at 2004 Society for Social Work and Research Annual Conference
- The Myth of "The Tangle of Pathology": Resilience Strategies Employed by Middle-Class African American Families

Service Provider's Seminar in Kitwe, Zambia 2003

- Basics of Child Development and Care of Special Needs Street Children

UMA Child, Youth, and Family Administrator's Conference
Illinois Council on Training
Carrie-Busey Elementary School
Jefferson Middle School
Larkin Center
Onarga Academy
Center for Children's Services
Glenkirk Vocational Services
Florida United Methodist Children's Home
United Methodist Church Training of Trainers
Webster-Cantrell Hall
The Children's Foundation
Urbana High School Special Education
Department of Children & Family Services
Central Baptist Children's Home
W. A. Howe Developmental Center
Centerpoint Mental Health Center
Parkland College
Child Care Resource Service
Youth Campus
Lakeside Center
Pavilion Foundation School
United Methodist Children's Home
Indian Oaks Academy
Centennial High School
Eastern Illinois University
Children's Home & Aid Society
Edison Middle School
Covenant Children's Home
Rotary Club of Champaign
Kemmerer Village

Memberships/Affiliations

- Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, University of Illinois, Chapter 046
- Council on Social Work Education
- National Association of Social Workers
- Society for Social Work Research
- Alpha Delta Mu National Social Work Honor Society
- Illinois Council on Training

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

- Council on Social Work Education-MFP Underrepresented Minority Research Fellowship Program Award (funded by NIMH and DHHS)
- Incomplete List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students (Spring 1999; Spring 2003; Fall 2003; Spring 2004)
- University of Illinois School of Social Work Loyalty Award 2000
- 1997 Athena Outstanding Business or Professional Woman in Champaign County Award Nominee
- Illinois Council on Training Excellence in Training Award
- Experiment in International Living Program Scholarship
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Award