A Megaphone for Black Mothers: Exploring the Content and Culture of Black Parenting

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By Aliesha Y. Clark, LSW

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Dedication

This dissertation is a dedication to my dearest son, Nehemias Amore Clark. You have been in every doctoral class with me since my journey first began. This is Mama's way of showing you that even though the odds are stacked against you, with your brown skin, you can still shatter glass ceilings. Thank you for effortlessly showing me what patience, joy, forgiving quickly, and unconditional love look like each day.

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To my parents and siblings, thank you for pushing me and giving me a reason to keep going; a special shout out to my dad, Aaron Robinson, for telling me that "Doctor would sound good on your name" and my mom , Tynisha Robinson, for showing my strong motherhood. We all come from the same place; this research is a beacon to show you that there are no limits.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This study explores Black mothers' perceptions of their parenting practices and, more particularly, the culture and contributing factors influencing parenting methods. Black mothers are excluded from research and "talked about" rather than consulted or "talked with." To better understand parenting strategies and their purposes, African American mothers who have been mothering for at least a year have been interviewed. The primary purpose of this study is to obtain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of parenting among Black mothers who are given opportunities to describe how they parent in their own words. This purpose is constructed with the hope that nuance, authenticity, and qualitative data captured by the methodology and questions allow Black mothers to tell their own stories. Data collected more carefully offers context and authenticity that negates, corrects, and/or balances assumptions.

Keywords: motherhood, parenting, racism, Black or African American, culture

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

African American parents [1] have long been scrutinized and criticized for their parenting practices (e.g., Manning, 2021; Cantey et al., 2022; Dismantling Racism, 2021). Some studies indict African American parents for the use of corporal punishment (Cantey et al., 2022). Corporal punishment is used to teach Black children that harsh consequences can result from their actions. Parental belief may suggest that the future success and survival of African American children will be dependent upon the child's ability to selectively assert themselves or to acquiesce to authority (Allen, 1981). Other studies suggest that the overall authoritarian style of parenting utilized by many African American parents is problematic (Silveira, Shafer, Dufur, & Roberson, 2021) and leads to poor home, health, and behavioral adjustment, as well as school difficulties. The distinction between authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles is significant. Authoritarian parenting often resorts to demeaning or harsh punishment. Parents exert more control over their children but are inconsistent with follow-through and meaningful consequences. Authoritative parenting (generally viewed more positively in related research) (Silveira, Shafer, Dufur, & Roberson, 2021) involves holistic consequences, such as computer restrictions or limited activity, and does not involve demeaning language (Holden, Grogan-Kaylor, Durrant & Gershoff, 2017).

Outcomes associated with the use of corporal punishment and authoritarian parenting have been well documented (LeCuyer & Swanson, 2017). For decades, researchers have connected corporal punishment to worrisome outcomes, including negative behavioral adjustment in childhood and adolescence (Kerr, Lopez, Olson, & Sameroff, 2004), negative emotional consequences, disciplinary issues in school (Snyder, Cramer, Afrank, & Patterson,

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[1] Later in this chapter, I discuss terminology, including "African American," "Black," and "White."

2005); developmental delays (Bender et al., 2007), and physical and mental health issues (Silveira, Shafer, Dufur, & Roberson, 2021). Contemporary research more carefully interrogates causal and associational links, pointing out that the effects of corporal punishment depend upon a constellation of parenting behaviors as well as upon the type of outcome being considered (Simons, Simons, & Su, 2012). Of great concern is the contested boundary between what constitutes child discipline versus what should be viewed as abuse (Berlin et al., 2009; Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton, Davis-Kean, & Sameroff, 2012; Regalado, Sareen, Inkelas, Wissow, & Halfon, 2004). The connection between authoritarian parenting and increased risk for child maltreatment has been well-established (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016).

More contemporary research has interrogated the variables associated with the use of more severe parenting techniques (Silveira, Shafer, Dufur, & Roberson, 2021), identifying characteristics correlated with the use of corporal punishment and other parenting styles (Dietz, 2000). As noted above, studies from the 1980s and forward studies tend to oversimplify the complex dynamics that occur between parenting and society and culture. Further, they adopt a pejorative perspective, typically noting that African American parents use more physical, punitive, and assertive power discipline than White parents. Early research emphasized deleterious, long-term outcomes and often conflated "corporal punishment," "abuse," and the more general phrase, "family violence. Finally, older studies fail to distinguish between race, ethnicity, and other confounding variables. There are, of course, exceptions. Garcia Coll and colleagues noted in the late 1990s that minority parents have the unique challenge of raising their children successfully and preparing them for life as a minority, consisting of racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination (García Coll et al., 1996).

Beginning around the year 2000, a consensus in the literature emerged, suggesting that race/ethnicity may be a significant co-variant (Cantey, et al., 2022). Simultaneously, empirical evidence grew to support more complex models of violence and, relatedly, problematic parenting. One of the more prominent contextual models found in the literature (mentioned above) was developed by Gelles and colleagues (1985). Gelles and Cornell's social situational model (1985) posited that violence is unevenly distributed within society and that it is related to differential occurrences of stress and to differences in socialization. From this model, it is assumed that familial violence is a result of cultural norms and structural frustration and stress experienced from socioeconomic standing. Though this model thus utilizes contextual variables to consider family violence (including parental abuse of children), it does not isolate race or racism as distinct variables. Further, its focus on injury/abuse limits its relevance to other elements of parenting and parenting style.

A notable dearth in the literature is the careful, nuanced exploration of how race and/or racism shapes parenting style, including but not limited to the use of corporal punishment (both abusive and non-abusive corporal responses). As noted below, racism remains a powerful societal force, and racism is a contested experience and topic. Certainly, the experience of racism and parenting may be connected. Parents who experience racial discrimination may want to protect their children from the negative consequences by preparing them for its occurrence. It is essential to understand the circumstances under which parents transmit racial socialization messages and which types of messages they use (Smith, Reynolds, Fincham, Beach, & McNeil Smith, 2016). The relationship between African American parents' experiences of racial discrimination and their parenting practices seems plausible; however, only a few studies have empirically examined this relationship, and the results appear to be mixed.

Racism

Racism is one of the most dominant cultural frames in the United States. Racial biases in the United States have been amply documented, ranging from general prejudice against African Americans held by Whites (e.g., Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Stewart, Weeks, & Lupfer, 2003) to African Americans being less likely than Whites to receive help in emergencies and more likely than Whites to receive substantial penalties in court cases (Gaertner, Dovidio, & Johnson, 1982; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001).

A cursory review suggests that systemic indicators seem to confirm the "problem of parenting" experienced by African Americans. That is, African American parents more often "need" the "intervention" of child welfare systems to disrupt child maltreatment. Rates of foster care placement, when analyzed by ethnic and/or racial group, reveal the disproportionate representation of Black children (Cantey, et al., 2022; Puzzanchera and Taylor, 2020). But social indicators are shaped by social context, and it is contemporarily taken as fact that racism shapes, defines, and structures human interactions and the systems that respond to them. An extension of this logic would suggest that social relationships of all kinds, as well as the systems that regulate them, are shaped by racism.

Racism in the United States takes many forms, including the experience of frequent microaggressions, verbal abuse, racial maltreatment, and racial discrimination. An existing body of research exhibits the perpetual battle Black people face due to the systemic racism American institutions uphold. The overrepresentation of Black children in public child welfare systems may have much more to do with racism than with parenting, per se (Cantey, et al., 2022). Parents must prepare their children to thrive in a society where they will face challenges solely because they are people of color (Keyes, Smyke, Middleton, & Black, 2015). In line with the paradigm

shift noted above (i.e., research including variables that included race and racism), Bradley (1998) asserts that attitudes toward corporal punishment and favoring spanking highlight the need to teach children the importance of respecting elders and authority figures in the African American community and may also be associated with the preparation of African American youth to overcome societal barriers imposed by Racism in America. These themes, the first that acknowledges cultural influences and the second, noting the preparation for the experience of racism, have remained underdeveloped in the existent literature and inspired the questions that will be explored in the present study.

Effects of Racism on Parenting & Families

The effects of racism on African Americans have been well substantiated and range from psychological distress to higher incarceration rates. As noted in Chapter 2, myriad studies document systemic biases in police and judicial systems, as well as deleterious outcomes for both physical and mental health.

The Criminal Justice system has also been identified as an instrument of institutional racism (Williams, 2018). The criminal justice system is adversely affected by overt and intentional racist behavior (Parker, DeWees, & Radelet, 2001). In addition to the fact that racism permeates the criminal justice system, it should be noted that this institutional racism focuses on placing Black people in prison instead of assisting them in receiving the necessary care.

Despite substantial growth in the research in this area, the specific pathways linking racism to mental health outcomes are still not well understood (Brondolo, Ng, Pierre & Lane, 2016). Research indicates that racism is a negative social determinant of health (Williams et al., 2019), which is associated with the worst outcomes that advance beyond symptomologies, such as cardiovascular disease (Havranek et al., 2015), early mortality (Chae et al., 2015), and mental

health disorders (Pieterse et al., 2012) and impacts all generations and families (Trent, Dooley, & Douge, 2019) with a disproportionately negative effect on minorities such as African American families (Breslau et al., 2005). Racism places a substantial strain on the mental health of targeted individuals (Brondolo et al, 2016).

Williams and colleagues have argued in line with theories of distributive justice and equity that the generic perception of unfair treatment can lead to negative emotional reactions and the induction of psychological distress (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Kirkinis and colleagues (2018) have conducted research that has examined the prevalence of trauma and found higher rates of traumatic stress in response to significant life stressors among African Americans as compared to the general population (Breslau et al. 1998). White (2020) states that the fear of racism is harmful and reduces the presence of strengthening characteristics such as resilience and grit. Racism may also adversely affect mental health status through the subjective experience of discrimination (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Given that health and well-being are intimately tied to parenting, as shown by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, it is likely that racism affects parenting styles, as well.

Problem Statement

Experts are aware of the profound impact of racism on almost every aspect of human life, and yet, very little is known about how racism affects parenting practices among African American families and, more specifically, mothers. In attempts to better understand parenting practices across diverse communities, literature has tended to focus on difference and perhaps shaped by larger racially biased structures, tended to focus on negative traits and patterns associated with racial groups (typically Black as flawed and White as "more appropriate"). A cursory review of relevant studies seems to indicate that Black parenting is problematic.

Studies create artificial or poorly defined subgroups, conflating socioeconomic status and ethnicity or race. Further, when ethnicity or culture is reflected in study variables, it tends to be poorly defined or perhaps attributed solely to survival in a racist community (when some cultural practices may be independent of racist pressures). Less understood is the role of cultural components such as identity and religion.

The absence of a more authentic and careful exploration of Black mothers' parenting has consequences beyond academic ignorance. Negative stigmas associated with Black parenting may create barriers that frustrate open communication across families and with professionals who juggle dual roles (e.g., helper and enforcer) in large, bureaucratic systems shaped by white values.

Finally, many researchers (Schulson, 2020) who engage in research and study racism and privilege, not limited to but including Black families and parenting, are not Black. It has been discussed that researchers often skew away from identifying their race due to this scrutiny. Though this barrier to identifying with one's sample is lauded as objectivity in larger experiments, it is also true that White researchers are unable to empathize with the experience of living in Black skin and raising Black children, thereby presenting limitations on in-depth, qualitative research.

Statement of Purpose

This study aims to explore Black mothers' perceptions of their own parenting practices and, more particularly, the culture and contributing factors that have influenced parenting methods. Black mothers are excluded from research and "talked about" rather than consulted or "talked with." To better understand parenting strategies and their purposes, I will interview African American mothers who have been mothering for at least a year and are part of a church

body. As noted in Chapter 4, utilizing a church community allows me to explore the possible influence of religion and culture on parenting while also bolstering sampling efficiency and convenience. I will explore with them their parenting practices, style, content, and purpose.

The primary purpose of this study, then, is to obtain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of parenting among Black mothers who are given opportunities to describe how they parent in their own words. This purpose is constructed with the hope that nuance, authenticity, and qualitative data, which are captured by the methodology and questions, offer Black mothers the opportunity to tell their own stories. The misunderstandings, conflation, stereotypes, and biased research summarized in Chapter 2 send clear messages: there are deep distinctions between Black and White parenting; White parenting is "better", and Black parenting is "harsh" and/or "abusive;" Black parenting is "mean" and stems from challenges. Data collected more carefully may offer context and authenticity that negates, corrects, and/or balances assumptions. A clearer understanding of context may consider factors that shift paradigms of perception. As noted above, a few researchers have noted the impact of racism and culture on parenting, but much ignorance remains.

This study is timely, building on the energy of other powerful movements that are calling for authenticity and equal access to communication platforms across diverse groups. Perhaps the most visible movement, Black Lives Matter, works to raise awareness of not only oppression and discrimination but the need for representation and leaders who have walked the paths they describe (Black Lives Matter, 2022). In the spirit of such cultural authenticity, the study aims to balance literature and share stories that add fullness and accuracy to the topic of parenting.

Research Questions

Do African American mothers believe there is a Black way of parenting that is distinctive?

Do direct and/or vicarious experiences of racism affect the content of parenting among African American mothers?

Do direct and/or vicarious experiences of racism affect the culture of parenting among African American mothers?

Does racism influence an African American mother's role in her home?

Does Christianity have an influence on the parenting practices of Black mothers?

Rationale and Significance

According to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 's 1967 interview with The National Broadcasting Company, the identity of African Americans has been defined through the lens of White society for centuries (Northcutt, Henderson, & Chicoski, 2020). This same lens, when used to view parenting practices, may have amplified and stigmatized differences that are poorly understood. Black and White families may/do parent differently, it seems. Studies point to these differences but are less able to explain why divergent practices emerge. More specifically, Black mothers have not been invited to participate in substantive parenting discussions with any kind of regularity.

It is imperative that those who are being studied can tell their story, thus negating assumptions and incorrect narratives about a Black mother's truth and what Black mothers believe is appropriate when considering the social welfare of their children. These same communities have suffered unfairly negative representations in virtually every form of media

(Black Lives Matter, 2022). A cursory review of social media reveals stereotypes of "hard parenting" are pervasive and sometimes lean toward what some would characterize as abusive in their characterizations (e.g., TikTok, Instagram). Carol Stack (1974) provides an anthropological analysis of an urban Black community in the Midwest and argues that though systemic oppression, racism, and economic violence permeate these communities, solutions are possible since these disparities exist within systems.

The significance of this research is immeasurable as it is crucial to a better understanding of Black parenting. Currently, the existing literature poorly explores, discusses, and attempts to explain parenting. Much of this research omits the importance of considering culture, religion, and even basic truths about Black parenting methods, while also considering Black families of different socioeconomic statuses.

This research that will be conducted will present an accurate depiction of why Black mothers parent the way that they do and the contributing factors that shape those decisions. This research will diligently tease out bias and the existing discrimination within this body of research by including Black mothers in the study instead of simply observing and coming to assumptive conclusions. Utilizing qualitative research methods, with Black mothers as participants, this research will provide a counternarrative to what inaccurate research currently presents. Such information is indispensable and will inform social work practice and education, allowing social workers and leaders to have access to information with increased accuracy, thus resulting in better service delivery and anti-racist education, decreased stigma, and ultimately a decrease in internalized racism.

According to the CSWE, social work programs must demonstrate competency in the areas of diversity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality. The accreditation of social

workers has been based on this principle since 1952. What is lacking is the strengths-based perspective of Black parenting. No research exists that discusses what Black mothers do especially well and what lessons can be gleaned from Black parenting practices. Instead, this facet of research focuses on whether Black children are safe in their homes if their parents are "too harsh", and what needs to be fixed. When, in full consideration, the parenting differences may be better understood as adaptive, protective, and culturally appropriate rather than a parenting practice that needs to be changed, corrected, or harmful. Stack views the behavior of Black urban communities as highly adaptive and deems it important to continue to research the adaptive strategies of Black communities.

Now more than ever, we need to understand differences and the strength that comes from differences. For Black parents, their children are "at-risk" of being harmed by a racist society (Manning, 2021). Given our awareness that the White lens, the dominant lens, is distorted, an increased understanding of difference is vital and can only be obtained by talking with Black women, Black parents, themselves. The hope is that one day, systemic racism and the prevalence of racist experiences will reduce overall as the cause of making it inherently impossible to parent African American children in a way that ensures their safety in society. Currently, the potential for that seems to be immeasurable.

There should be a discussion of racial experiences with family and friends, a heightened sense of comfortability with one's race, and a sense of oneness with the community to begin to show some improvement (White, Ph.D., 2020). Potential proximal outcomes include reducing functional difficulties related to direct and vicarious racism in the community. A likely secondary effect would be addressing the traumas of experiencing racism would allow African

American families to have a higher sense of self-worth and have a healthier mode of thinking and functioning in everyday life when parenting their children.

Social workers have a duty to engage in social justice (NASW, 2022), and when considering how African American people function within a society saturated in racist supremacy, should engage this perspective when participating in community building. Not only does this align with social justice goals, but community engagement concerning Black parenting gives Black mothers a voice and platform to directly tell their stories.

Definition of Key Terminology

This research will involve various vital terms that are not consistently defined across studies. It is essential to recognize that the terms used in this research are multidimensional constructs that have been operationalized in research in numerous ways to avoid contributing to this confusion.

Racism. The term racism refers to the antagonism directed against a person or people based on their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2022).

Systemic racism. It is a combination of systems, institutions, and factors that advantage white people and cause widespread harm and disadvantages in access and opportunity to people of color (Greenblatt, 2022). For this study, the experiences of systemic racism will be explored to discuss its impact on the content and style of parenting in African American families.

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Theoretical Framework

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The theoretical framework for this study comprises three distinct but related theories: critical race theory, social learning theory, and matricentric feminism. These constructs were

carefully chosen as they address the variables of interest, including African American parenting, the vicarious and direct experiences of racism, and how and what children learn from their parents in their homes. Combined, these theories clarify the influence (if any) of direct and vicarious experiences of racism on the style and content of parenting in African American families, with particular attention to women's parenting styles.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework historically derived from legal studies in which race and racism are examined regarding society distinctly after the Civil Rights Movement (Crenshaw, Gotanda, & Peller, 1996). A comprehensive understanding of systemic racism requires the use of CRT. Critical Race Theory has five main tenets that should be considered: (1) racism is ordinary and exists everywhere; (2) it is difficult to eradicate racism; (3) race is socially constructed; (4) Black people's experiences of racism and knowledge of racism is legitimate and appropriate; (5) the pursuit of social justice is essential (Kelly, Jeremie, Chambers & Smith, 2020). Today, this theory is used across many disciplines to challenge oppression and injustices caused by racism and issues surrounding racial ideologies (Clarke, 2012; Jeffery, 2005). In this research, CRT will be used to ascertain how Black parenting experiences are shaped by the structures within systemic racism. This theoretical framework will be used to contextualize the persistent role that race plays in the lives of African Americans. This lens will be used to explore personal narratives (Harris, 2012; Sonn & Quayle, 2013) and whether racism shapes the content and style of parenting their children.

Furthermore, CRT's tenet of counter-storytelling is a keystone of this research. In this research study, the counter-storytelling technique is used to explore the counter-stories of Black people about parenting their children. Contextually, the counter-stories are legitimate examples

of what Black parents consider effective parenting practices within their families. The experiences of "common" Black families provide an invaluable context for understanding what it means to parent while Black within a racist society.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (SLT) is foundational in social science research and is used to explain the complex dynamics involved in learning and conveying social behaviors. The main components of social learning theory are observation, assessment, imitation, and identification. Social learning is exhibited by observing one's behaviors and the consequences or results of that behavior while learning what is socially acceptable versus what is not (Bandura, 1977). A social learning theory framework provides a detailed analysis of how parents interact with their children at home and what their children learn from that, with particular attention to racial socialization (Grindal & Nieri,2016). SLT is also useful for discussing intergenerational violence/racism and parenting practices that your interviewees observed in their parents.

Parental messages about race, discrimination, and culture are communicated to children through racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). These messages are canalized using modeling behaviors, lexical communication, and exposure to certain environments (Lesane-Brown, 2006). Such communication mechanisms foster an explicit focus on cultivating cultural pride, achievement, and positive associations with mental health (Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2012).

Racial socialization messages prepare children for the racial discrimination they are likely to experience once they venture out into society and concurrently promote cultural empowerment. It is not unusual for parents to talk to their children about their cultural heritage, discuss critical historical figures and events, and expose them to culturally affirming objects such

as books and music (Hughes et al., 2006). The theoretical lens of social learning and racial socialization provides a strong foundation for the conducted research and its exploration of the content and style of parenting practices within Black families. It could be that parenting practices that embody racial socialization, for example, appear "harsh" or "punitive" to non-Black observers.

Matricentric Feminism

Matricentric feminism can be considered in theory, activism, and practice (O'Reilly, 2016). Matricentric Feminism emphasizes the labor of mothering and the social and political motivations or experiences of mothering in the culture of Black Americans. In this perspective, motherhood as a form of social practice includes the responsibility of caring for all the children born to the mother, ensuring their physical survival (O'Reilly, 2016). Additionally, this perspective explains teaching children resistance and the ability to survive in a racist society, thereby providing them with their own racial and cultural history and identity and practicing social activism and communal mothering on behalf of all the children in one's community.

O'Reilly (2006) writes that the premise of maternal thinking is examined as the judgments a mother makes, the attitudes she adopts, and the values she affirms in her children. According to this principle, a mother's first duty is to protect and preserve her children by keeping safe whatever is vulnerable and valuable in her child. A concept accompanying this idea is that mothers naturally cultivate and nurture their children's emotional and intellectual development while also preparing them for social acceptance.

The methodological approach in this research encompasses individual interviewing of African American mothers employing counter-storytelling, which is an aforementioned crucial tenet of critical race theory. Maternal feminism provides a prism through which mothering can

be considered while simultaneously exploring arising themes emerging during the individual interviews. The social learning theoretical framework will serve as a basis to explore the culture and context of parenting in African American homes, assisting with the culmination of questions to be asked during the interviewing process. Considering the theoretical framework, existing bodies of literature will be thoroughly examined.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In conducting the literature review, Ebscohost, Google Scholar, PsychInfo, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect were databases utilized. This search yielded more than 4,000 studies and peer-reviewed journals conducted since 1937. The literature review revealed multiple themes related to racism and its effects on Black families. One central theme was that Black Americans are disproportionately affected by racism. A second predominant theme was that Black Americans experience racism in multiple ways and that racism is directly linked to how Black Americans behave in society, as individuals, and within their homes with their children. Conclusively, the analysis of literary works guides and informs the research methodology about racism's impact on Black parenting.

Racism Against African Americans

A system cannot fail those it was never built to protect -W.E. B. DuBois

The United States has a rich history of events built on white supremacy, which has transpired for hundreds of years. Being Black in the United States means enduring a lifetime of extreme racism. Racism in the United States takes many forms, including the experience of frequent microaggressions, verbal abuse, racial maltreatment, and racial discrimination. An existing body of research exhibits the perpetual battle Black people face due to the systemic racism perpetuated by American institutions. The constant daily battle of racial stress takes a psychological and physical toll on the lives of Black people (Brooms & Perry, 2016). African Americans experience significant deprivations, threats, losses, and frustrations in life that negatively impact their success and life satisfaction (Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005.) This differs

significantly from their White counterparts, who experience privilege in the White Supremacist society. Without facing the additional barriers created by institutional and system Racism, White Americans experience fewer barriers to success and well-being due to race.

Numerous studies have discussed the consequences of children and adolescents exposed to violence in families and communities (e.g., Brown & Gourdine, 1998; Guterman & Cameron, 1997; Jenkins & Bell, 1997; Osofsky, Wewers, & Hamn, 1993). In central cities with high rates of homicide and nonlethal shootings and stabbings, children and adolescents are at risk of exposure to violence despite the efforts of their parents to shield them. Geller et al. (2014) performed a qualitative study of young men to assess how often they were stopped by the police and the content of their encounters with the police. The study found that the young men presented with symptoms of anxiety and PTSD because of the intrusiveness and perception of injustice and disrespect when they had encounters with the police (Geller, Fagan, Tyler, & Link, 2014). The absence of a repertoire of coping or healing strategies increases the likelihood that race-based stress symptoms may progress to racial trauma (Hargons et al., 2022).

Vicarious Experiences of Racism

Those of the Black community also witness frequent media reports of violence directed toward those in their people group, resulting in vicarious experiences coupled with their personal experiences affecting their mental health, all of which are chronic stressors (Williams, 2018). There have been many largely publicized murders from police forces, such as the murders of Freddie Gray, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Tatiana Jefferson, Botham Jean, Stephon Davis, Ahmaud Arbery, Alton Sterling, Emmett Till, Anthony Hill, Walter Scott, Renisha McBride, Tamir Rice, Mike Brown, Jordan Davis, and Stephon Clark.

In 2012, Trayvon Martin was shot and murdered. The story about this presumably racially motivated murder was broadcast nationally, with the perpetrator gaining notoriety for his vigilant actions amongst supporters. Media broadcasts have a latent purpose: to remind African American families of existing risks. In many ways, it can be argued that they serve as a warning to African American parents and children alike. Although this is only one example, the death of Trayvon Martin reinforced the burden Black parents carry regarding how to teach their children to react if they find themselves in a similar situation, how to engage in the processing of this event effectively and safely, and how to protect their Black children in a racist society (Thomas & Blackmon, 2014).

Research completed by the BRFSS has concluded that the media coverage of racial violence negatively impacts African Americans' mental health and employment. In 2019, in a quantitative study about mental health, African American respondents reported missing more workdays and increased mental health symptoms (including depression, stress, and problems with emotions) during periods of publicized racial violence. During this same time, White respondents did not show any statistically significant or clinically significant changes in mental

health (Savat, 2021; American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Historically and today, the direct and indirect experiences associated with Racism that African Americans experience has made it disproportionately difficult for African American parents to teach their children about the reality of the racist society that exists and yet protect them and teach them to thrive in navigating the possibility of racist encounters.

Black Parenting

The parenting challenges faced by African Americans have existed since slavery in the United States, and there is a multigenerational impact on African Americans. Parents must prepare their children to thrive in a society where they will face challenges solely because they are people of color (Keyes, Smyke, Middleton, & Black, 2015).

Social science literature has provided considerable commentary and debate on the discipline practices of African American parents. Thoman & Blackmon (2014) discuss the notion that despite the experiences of racism and discrimination, African American parents are crucial in helping their children develop a positive racial identity despite those experiences. Among the major influences on racial identity are primary socialization experiences, particularly parental messages concerning the meaning of being Black. Demo & Hughes (1990) assert that parents' messages concerning the sense of being Black are particularly influential. Parental racial socialization prepares African American adolescents to deal with race-based stressors (Saleem et al., 2016).

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is commonly used to teach Black children that there are harsh consequences that can result from their actions. Parental belief may suggest that the future success and survival of African American children will be dependent upon the child's ability to assert themselves selectively or to acquiesce to authority (Allen, 1981). This discussion can be attributed to early studies that infer African American parents use more physical, punitive, and assertive power discipline than White parents.

A quantitative study of regional differences in attitudes toward physical punishment found that African Americans are three times more likely than White parents to favor spanking nationally (Bradley, 1998). In this study, the researcher analyzed the questionnaire findings and found that spanking was directly correlated to the contextual situation of parental disrespect or the challenging of their authority. Bradley (1998) asserts that these finding underscores respecting elders and authority figures in the African American community and may also be associated with preparing African American youth to overcome societal barriers imposed by Racism in America.

Religion and Parenting

When considering the contributing factors surrounding parenting practices, it is also important to recognize whether religion has an influence and, if religion does, in what ways. A well-rounded exploration would consider biological factors, psychological factors, social factors, as well as religious when considering how a person thrives and acts within the context of their lives. Neglecting religions' impact on parenting practices does not account for potential contributions to parenting practices overall, especially those of the Black culture (Mahoney, 2010).

Petro, Rich, Erasmus, & Roman (2018) state that religion has a growing influence on parenting and child-rearing practices, emphasizing the need to understand religious values. Throughout history, religion has been shown to be capable of socializing, motivating, constraining, and directing human behavior (Smith, Denton, Faris, & Regnerus, 2002). Howarth and Lees (2010) explored a multitude of papers about religion and parenting and found a common theme of parenting transmitting religious beliefs to their children as well as using these religious beliefs to inform their parenting practices.

Racism and Parenting

Parenting and Discrimination

Minority parents have the unique challenge of raising their children successfully and preparing them for life as a minority, consisting of racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination (García Coll et al., 1996). The study of racism is relatively new to public health (Caughy, O'Campo, & Muntaner, 2004), and previous research into questions about how parental experiences of racism might affect the well-being of African American children is scarce. Racial socialization is characterized by the way in which African Americans teach their children to view themselves as members of society. The extent to which denial of racism relates to a specific perspective of African American identity may lead to differences in racial socialization practices and differences in child mental health outcomes (Caughy, O'Campo, & Muntaner, 2004).

A correlation exists between discrimination and racial socialization because parents who have experienced discrimination are more likely to transmit racial socialization messages to their children (Benner & Kim, 2009; Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2010; White Johnson et al., 2010). The experience of discrimination by African American parents is greater than that of other ethnic and racial groups and is correlated positively with the use of race-based

socialization messages (Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2009; White-Johnson et al., 2010). These findings suggest that African American parents may be reluctant to openly discuss discrimination since they have regularly experienced it.

Parents who experience racial discrimination may want to protect their children from the negative consequences by preparing them for its occurrence. It is essential to understand the circumstances under which parents transmit racial socialization messages and which types of messages they use (Smith, Reynolds, Fincham, Beach, & McNeil Smith, 2016). The relationship between African American parents' experiences of racial discrimination and their parenting practices seems plausible; however, only a few studies have empirically examined this relationship, and the results appear to be mixed. Hughes and Johnson (2001) supported the link between racial discrimination and cultural socialization and preparation for biased messages. Parents of African American children may attempt to teach them to possess a positive sense of identity, prepare them for injustice, and teach them that it is not wise to trust everyone (Hughes et al., 2006). When parents experience racial discrimination, they are likely to simultaneously navigate the process by which they can protect their children from race-based stress and instill the necessary beliefs and values to navigate injustice. Parents of Black children do not exhibit deficit-based logic but rather provide resources to their children and lessen the effects of racism. Racially marginalized families need these racialized parenting practices to survive today, saturated with inequality (Manning, 2021).

Child Welfare Systems

Hill (2004) writes that the child welfare system was not originally created to serve Black families. Around the same time as the settlement house movement, this system was created to help working-class and poor White families who had migrated from Europe. Meanwhile, the Black Church was creating programs to help Black families due to the deficit of assistance. Black families were excluded from participating in assistance programs such as Mother's Aid which was the foundation of which the child welfare system was birthed in the 1930s.

Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Services (CWS) represents a glaring example of disproportionality. Although Black children constitute 13% of the population, they make up 41.6% of children in foster care (Peprah, 2021). In Children of the Storm, Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972) wrote about this over 40 years ago. Hill (2004) writes that the child welfare system is saturated with Black children not only because of their higher risk factors, such as low socioeconomic status but also because the system is infiltrated with institutional racism. This is emulated by the decision-making processes within the child-welfare system. The National Incidence Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS) reports that Black families do not abuse their children more than White families do (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996) and when risk factors are considered, Black families actually have lower rates of neglect and abuse than White families (Sedlak & Schultz, 2004). Though these statistics reflect lower rates of abuse, the number of Black families that are reported for abuse gravely surpasses the founded reports (Hill, 2004).

Mental health institutions, educational institutions, and the juvenile justice system are all catalysts for recruiting Black children into the child welfare system (Hill, 2004). Researchers have discovered that Black patients are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia by mental health professionals, who internalize stereotypes about Black people as violent or

aggressive (Whaley, 2008). Following these diagnoses are the influx of inpatient referrals for institutions, while White children are more likely to be referred to outpatient services. Because of this, Black children end up with more mental health concerns after being institutionalized and entering the Child Welfare System than they do going into the system initially.

Cultural Socialization

The term cultural socialization refers to the process of teaching children about their racial and ethnic heritage**.** These messages promote cultural traditions and the development of cultural, racial, and ethnic pride (Hughes et al., 2006)**.** Examples of cultural socialization include celebrating cultural holidays, exposing children to art, different books, music, and events that celebrate their heritage, educating children about important historical figures, and eating ethnic food (Hughes et al., 2006)**.** Several studies have found that parents are more likely to endorse these messages and convey them more frequently than any racial socialization message (Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006). Thus, cultural socialization is a critical component of racial socialization. African American parents feel it is essential to expose children to their culture and heritage.

Gaps in the Research

Knowledge of cultural practices regarding the discipline of children has become a professional imperative as counselors encounter increasingly diverse client families (Bradley, 1998). The dissemination of such information into literature has been limited. Currently, social policies fail to close the social gap between Black Americans and their counterparts (Lawson-Borders, 2019). Consequently, this will give this marginalized group a voice and allow them to fill in the gaps themselves.

When reviewing the literature on corporal punishment in Black families, the research was conducted from a perspective of determining child welfare and exploring racism, specifically in the child welfare systems. There was very little research on corporal punishment as part of a cultural framework and what Black parents seek to teach their children by employing corporal discipline in their parenting, and in that research, the included parents were those only of low socioeconomic status. There is very little research about the full context and style of parenting; that is, why does the Black culture embody certain practices when disciplining their children, and why does this differ from that of their White counterparts. When looking at Black parenting, one must consider all the factors that influence the parents' perception of making sure their child can thrive optimally in a racist society instead of their White counterparts.

Implications for Social Work and Future Research

One of the most prominent issues when dealing with racism is that it is engrained historically into American systems, including the systems in which social work is built. The mission of social work is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (NASW, 2022). The current narrative implies that institutional racism only exists as police brutality, but it goes far beyond that. Racism has infiltrated and infected many other systems, such as the school-to-prison pipeline, medical racism contributing to modern-day health disparities, the War on Drugs, and mass incarceration, which have excoriated Black families and communities. At the core of other institutions resulting in the school-to-prison pipeline, medical racism contributes to increased deaths of African Americans for preventable causes, the War on Drugs, mass incarceration, inter-generational poverty, and more.

Social Work Practice Considerations

As a result of this research study, there are three practice areas for consideration to address the identified issues within this population.

Learn to be Anti-Racist. The idea of anti-racism goes beyond simply not engaging in racism. Being anti-racist requires one to oppose racism but also engage in racial acceptance. The social work profession mainly comprises White social workers (NASW, 2020). When the helper is White, and the population of need is a population of color, an aperture exists due to the extreme dichotomy of white privilege and seemingly inherent oppression. Social workers must continuously examine themselves and those around them while also engaging in education and professional training that will assist them in becoming increasingly competent in serving Black families and communities'-racism directly coincides with the ethical principle of developing professional expertise. NASW Code of Ethics (2022) states that social workers should continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills to apply them to practice. Social workers can also engage in advocacy to ensure they embrace anti-racist principles.

Assist the Black Community in Understanding Their Worth. Social workers can engage in liberating the Black community. Many activist groups in the local community seek to achieve equity among everyone. One of the core principles of social work is respecting the inherent dignity and worth of the person (NASW, 2022). Actions that can be taken are dismantling the organizations that oppress people of color and their communities. Social workers should also be promoting self-determination while also recognizing their social responsibility to the person, ethical standards, profession, and the broader society.

Advocate for the Black Community. Social workers would be adhering to the ethical principle of challenging social injustices. This principle is focused explicitly on oppressed populations, including the Black community. While advocates, social workers, and the organizations they are a part of should continuously seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity (NASW, 2020). Those with platforms to reach broader spectrums of people should also utilize those platforms to encourage activism and advocacy, raising awareness of the social issue of racism and the damage it has done to American culture. Lastly, social workers must advocate for anti-racist policies encouraging social change and equality.

Future Research

This research study offers a step toward liberating Black families and addressing the social issue of racism and its impact on Black families. Future research would improve the quality of services from within organizations and reduce oppressive social work practices. Continued research will support the divulgence of racist roots within organizations and systems so they can be plucked out and rebuilt to be anti-racist.

Qualitative Studies Exploring Coping Mechanisms for Black Parents. Throughout time, Black adults and parents have experienced direct and indirect racism. It would be beneficial to explore the current coping mechanisms utilized within this population and assist in providing education about healthy coping mechanisms and referring to culturally competent services that would be beneficial in helping Black adults and parents address their trauma.

Qualitative Studies on Mental Health in the Black Community. Qualitative research on addressing the mental health disparities, as related to racism, within the Black community will be imperative to promoting positive social determinants of health.

Research Addressing Current Coping Mechanisms. It would be beneficial to explore the current coping mechanisms utilized by this population. Social workers could then identify culturally competent, strengths-based intervention strategies to increase healthy coping skills by understanding the adaptive and maladaptive skills that are used.

Study of the Social Work Profession. Since the social work profession comprises White social workers, further research would need to be conducted on social workers' perception of the Black population, authentic cultural competence of the social work system, and additional ways social workers can engage in anti-racism.

Cross-Cultural Research on Attitudes Toward Physical Punishment. The existing body of research discussing attitudes toward physical punishment is very dated. It would be beneficial to have up-to-date research exploring physical punishment within the family structure and also explore how that differs cross-culturally.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore Black mothers' perceptions of their own parenting practices and, more particularly, the culture and contributing factors that have influenced parenting methods. This study sought explore the following questions:

1. Do Black/African American mothers believe there is a Black way of parenting that is distinctive?

2. Do direct and/or vicarious experiences of racism affect the content of parenting among African American mothers?

3. Do direct and/or vicarious experiences of racism affect the culture of parenting among African American mothers?

4. Does racism influence an African American mother's role in her home?

5. Does Christianity (or another religion identified by the respondent) have an influence on the parenting practices of Black mothers?

Overview of Research Design

The qualitative method of this research is critical ethnography which is used to gather observational and interview data. The critical ethnographic method examines how people behave in specific social situations, including how their behavior is shaped by, and constrained by, those circumstances, as well as how they interpret their experiences (Wilson & Chaddha, 2009).

This research explores direct and vicarious racism experienced by African Americans. Via the collection of interview data and the extraction of themes, this study explored if and how the racism experienced by African American mothers influences the content and style of their

parenting. Existing research has adopted a deficit-based perspective on Black parenting (García Coll et al., 1996); this research seeks to balance this discourse. The selection of a qualitative research design was the result of a critical review of methodologies. The strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were examined and considered. Qualitative research methodologies are particularly powerful because they allow you to gain insight into the deeper subjective meaning of phenomena (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Qualitative research was chosen over quantitative research because of its capacity to weave data-driven narratives, support the extraction and analysis of major themes, and empower respondents who are sharing their stories. In contrast, quantitative questionnaires may be limiting or restrictive, thereby not allowing respondents to tell their stories and provide context (Lundy, 1996). The chosen qualitative approach allowed for the significance of each of the participants' experiences to be explored, considering the nuances of culture that cannot be captured within the use of the quantitative methodology. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain the defining features of ethnographies including: focusing on developing a complete and thorough description of the culture of a group, the exploration of mental patterns such as beliefs and ideas expressed through language and actions, and the use of theory to focus the attention of the research.

The participants in this study were afforded the opportunity to embrace their stories and share them from their perspectives. Using this approach also allowed the participants to use their natural language and terms that make sense to them when telling their stories. Using any other method other than interviewing would not have allowed for this to happen.

Creswell and Poth (2018) identify several steps integral to a critical ethnographic research study. A priority is a determination of whether an ethnographic approach is the most appropriate for examining the phenomenon being studied. For the research here, critical

ethnography is most appropriate because it allows for the interrogation and investigation of first-person meaning given in response to questions regarding factors that influence Black parenting practices (i.e., racism, religion, culture).

The next step as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) is the identification and location of a group that shares the same culture. In totality, the Black population is a diverse group unified by their marginalization and experiences of racism and would fit this description. Through an understanding of the shared perspectives and experiences of this marginalized group, the realities of Black parenting can be brought to the forefront to counterbalance the predominantly white discourse that misrepresents Black parenting.

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that the next step is the selection of cultural themes or issues associated with the target study population and the determination of the subtype of ethnography that is most appropriate. This research explored how the indirect and direct experiences of racism affect the content and culture of Black parenting, with a specific focus on mothering. Critical ethnography is the best fit for this research as racism is the cause and effect of societal inequalities and findings may suggest ways to re-dress dominant discourse and inform efforts toward social change.

The last steps in an ethnographic approach include gathering and analyzing data as well as presenting the observed patterns. Individual qualitative interviews were utilized in this research study. Specific data collection and analytic strategies are discussed below.

Research Sample

A combination of purposive and snowball methods were utilized in this research. Padgett (2017) discusses the foundational characteristics of purposive sampling. One of the key

characteristics includes identifying study participants who can provide information relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Creswell and Poth (2018) identify criterion sampling as a specific type of purposive sampling in which the participants meet a specific criterion to be included in the sample. Sampling began at a church in southeastern Pennsylvania. After the initial sample, snowballing occurred and mothers outside of the church reached out to participate in the research study. Word of mouth also reached central Pennsylvania. Inclusion criteria for this study included gender (woman), sexuality (heterosexuality), race (Black/African American, age (at least 18 years of age), and parenting status (parenting the referenced child for at least a year).

The sample population in this study were mothers who identify as African American. The second qualifying criterion was "mother." Contextual astuteness (Slife, Wright & Yanchar, 2016) requires that "mother" be operationalized with attention to the contested nature of the term's social construction. Considering the lens of matricentric feminism, mothers can be defined as women who participate in and those who identify as mothers but may or may not biologically be the woman who has given birth to the child.

Though this researcher is familiar with the identified church, having recently joined as a new member, previous nor current relationships with any of the participants existed. This researcher shares common experiences with some sample members, identifying as a heterosexual, African American, Christian woman who has been mothering her child for at least one year. Reflective practices (discussed later in this chapter) increased the ability to bracket research bias during data collection and analysis (Probst, 2015).

Participant Recruitment

Prior to data collection, this researcher recruited participants during a holiday church event . This researcher explained the purpose of the research study, and if the participant was interested, their contact information including their name, email, and phone number was provided to the researcher (Appendix E). Snowball sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was then utilized to attract the remaining participants in the study. The remaining participants were not required to be a part of the women's group at the church, nor were they required to attend church at all. Initial subjects were asked to provide the names and contact information of the mothers to be interviewed. They may also share the explanation of the research. Once additional participants were identified through snowball sampling, they were recruited to participate via email from the researcher. These potential participants were invited to participate in informed consent procedures (Appendix B), which involve the full explanation of the research (Appendix C). Emails were sent to each participant throughout the month of January 2023.

Padgett (2017) suggests that a sample size of 6 to 10 participants is sufficient for a research study, whereas Guest et al. (2006) suggests a sample size of 5 to 12. Boddy (2016) defines saturation as the point in qualitative research where no new themes or codes are discovered or when the information provided becomes repetitious. The sampling plan for this research included identifying up to 15 consenting participants, with a goal of interviewing 6 - 10 participants. This is in accordance with both Padgett's and Guest et al. (2006) recommendations for sample size in consideration of the saturation of information. Fourteen participants were recruited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews, however only six were completed as a result of mothers reporting not having time to complete the interview, forgetting

to respond to this researcher, or the recruited participant responded far beyond the conclusion of data collection.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted and approved (Appendix A) through Millersville University to grant permission to conduct the research as a doctoral student. The researcher has also completed the training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program for research with human subjects and ethics training.

Risks and Benefits to Participants

This research study poses no known risk to subjects that would not occur in daily life. Potential minimal psychological risks are present due to the nature of the interview questions asking the participants to describe any experiences of racism they may have endured. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, audio recorded and saved to an online cloud storage location for later transcription. Zoom provided encryption of data recordings to the cloud as a security feature. Video recording was excluded during the interviews to further protect the identity of the participants. The researcher conducted the interviews in a private space, behind a locked door, with a sound machine running outside the door to ensure the participants' privacy. The researcher is the only individual who retained the names of the participants. Throughout the research process, handwritten notes were transcribed into password-protected files and kept in the researcher's research office file cabinet. Participants were offered resources in their community upon request in the event someone would like to seek assistance with processing possible trauma.

Qualitative Data Collection

The researcher maintained an Excel spreadsheet with the participants' names; contact information (e.g., phone number and email); the age and sex of their child/children; the number

of children they have; and whether they are single, partnered, or married. Participants were given a study ID number for data collection to protect their privacy. This spreadsheet is stored as a password-protected file on the researcher's home computer, which is also password protected. The researcher contacted each participant individually via phone to explain the purpose of the research study, its risks, and the demographic requirements, review the confidentiality agreement, and obtain consent. During each call, the researcher scheduled a day and time that works mutually for the researcher and the participant to engage in an interview via encrypted Zoom. Each participant was provided with the researcher's phone number and email address in the event there are any questions or concerns that may arise after the call has ended. The researcher then provided the participant with the Zoom link via email to be used for the interview at the conclusion of the call.

For each interview, the researcher allowed a one-hour slot, anticipating that the actual interview would take approximately 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for the consent process, buffer room, and questions. Individual qualitative interviews were conducted using semi-structured, open-ended questions (Appendix D). Seidman (2006) suggests two or more interviews per participant however, one interview per participant will be conducted due to the time constraints of the study. As noted above, interviews were conducted via Zoom, audio recorded, and saved to an online cloud storage location for later transcription. After interviews, a thank you email was sent electronically to each participant with the primary investigator's name and contact information, offering that the participant may contact the researcher if she wishes to debrief. Once this dissertation is published electronically, all subjects will be contacted, and the link to the dissertation will be provided. In accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB)

regulations, all transcribed audio recordings, written notes, and interview transcriptions will be destroyed after three years.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted recorded interviews via Zoom without using the video feature of the application. While conducting the Zoom interview, the transcription feature was utilized to capture the complete discussion between the researcher and the participant. After the interviews were conducted, the researcher listened to each recording while reading the transcription simultaneously to scrub for any errors Zoom may have included in the interview transcript. An inductive approach was used to analyze the findings by applying content analysis (Padgett, 2017) in the form of word-for-word coding. For further analysis and coding, transcripts were imported into NVivo. Word-for-word coding was then facilitated by using memo writing to assist in breaking down the content into smaller categories and highlighting repetitive information. This researcher utilized emergent codes and open coding processes.

Transcriptions

Interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed by encrypted Zoom. It was necessary for this researcher to scrub the Zoom software transcriptions for accuracy, clarity, and depersonalization, as the software provided word-for-word transcriptions. During the scrubbing process, this researcher listened to the audio recorded interviews, corrected any errors that Zoom captured, and then removed any disfluent speech that had been captured. Sentence fragments were also combined to created whole statements. Any personally identifiable information was also removed such as names. Using this method, intelligent verbatim transcriptions were generated, which increased readability and clarity (McMullin, 2021).

Following the scrubbing of the data, NVIVO 12 Qualitative Analysis Software was used to analyze the results. As part of the research process, this software was used in order to identify common themes and to create a word cloud that would provide a visual representation of the findings.

Coding

As a result of analyzing the content of the interviews, emergent codes were developed. Once the intelligent verbatim transcriptions were completed, the data were coded multiple times. Once the data were coded and reviewed, this researcher shared the code book along with the data to a colleague who is also a student in the Doctor of Social Work program to establish intercoder agreement and increase the validity of this research. Once intercoder agreement was established, NVIVO 12 Qualitative Analysis Software was used to generate word clouds for each theme.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

The criteria used to determine the trustworthiness and rigor of this qualitative study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985). Peer debriefing and support is one method described by Guba and Lincoln (1985) to define credibility. Credibility in research can be defined as the level of confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Avis, 2006). Utilizing peers not only supports the researcher in processing the information and data that are being explored, but it also gives room for reactions to the data from non-participating researchers. For this study, peer debriefing and support, member checking, and constant reflexivity were utilized to enhance the credibility of the research.

The transferability of results is defined as the extent to which the results can be applied in another context or setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The setting and population for this research

have been defined in detail earlier in the chapter; however, it should be noted that the effects of racism on the parenting of African American people in the current setting may also serve as a tentative explanation for parenting practices of other marginalized groups as well.

Judging the quality of qualitative research has been a debated topic in terms of methodology (Hadi & Closs, 2015) however, there is a collective goal of ensuring trustworthiness in a research study(Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Data conformability refers to the degree of objectivity and consistency regarding the accuracy, relevance, or meaning of the data across two or more individuals (Polit & Beck, 2012). It is the reasoning of conformability that enables confident assumptions to be made about the generalizability of the data in other settings or groups. Dependability is equally important to consider. The concept of dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under a variety of conditions (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012).

Monitoring daily activities and justifying any modifications relevant to the research will establish dependability and conformability (Hadi & Closs, 2015). The researcher incorporated a reflexivity statement in the data analysis section of the study, which provides further support for the validity of the study, data, and results (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Member Checking
The use of member checking can be an effective strategy for preventing researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The practice of member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is used to evaluate the accuracy of results (Birt et al., 2016). After the research participants answered each question, the response was validated by summarizing and repeating the answer back to the participant to ensure accuracy in understanding. Doing this allowed for the participants to elaborate on any statements they made that were unclear. Member

checking allowed for the participants to provided fullness to their method of telling their stories and sharing their experiences and add to the statements if they felt it was necessary.

Research Reflexivity

Considering reflexivity and positionality is extremely important as they address biases that can invalidate research findings and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It is imperative to recognize the importance of sharing social and cultural background, individual traits, and group membership. I, Aliesha Clark, identify as a part of the population under study, which may affect the perspective of the research. It is also important that beliefs, judgments, and experiences are presented. Further, I identify as a Christian, African American woman who has spent at least half her life living in a low-income community with scarce resources and many barriers to care. I have also experienced and witnessed racism in various ways. I am a first-generation college student and have obtained multiple collegiate degrees. My father is a felon and has been in and out of the prison system since he was 14 years of age, and this researcher's mother did not receive education beyond the 9th grade. I was born in Pennsylvania and raised intergenerationally by parents, a grandmother, and great-grandparents and lived in a rural setting before transferring to a lower-class neighborhood.

Coming into the helping profession has resulted in the exposure to many vulnerable populations. This researcher's views and experiences have broadened considerably, offsetting the narrowness of perspective. As a result, this researcher remained vigilant in practicing reflexivity.

Practicing Reflexivity

Practicing reflexivity has been a constant practice throughout the duration of the entire research process. Discussions with peers, note-taking, and the supervision of the dissertation chair were utilized by the researcher as needed to "reflect on and clarify expectations,

assumptions, and conscious and unconscious reactions" (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Olmos-Vega et al. (2022) recommends asking "How are we making methodological decisions and what are their implications?" It was important for this researcher to be intentional about methodological choices throughout the development of this study to prevent harm to the population being studied or to produce results that might result in harm. Thus, well-informed decisions were made, and best research practices were utilized.

Peer Debriefing & Support

Peer debriefing and support was utilized to gain insight during the research process. Peer debriefing and support allows for an outside peer reviewer to assess the transcripts, emerging, and final themes and categories and the findings (Padgett, 2017). This researcher utilized a peer that is also in the Doctor of Social Work program for this method. Transcripts and the code book were provided to the peer to review at two different points to give fresh perspectives and guard against bias.

Role of the Researcher

The role of this researcher is to design the research study, recruit participants, collect data by conducting interviews with the research participants, analyze the data, and finally synthesize and share the findings of the research. This researcher acknowledges that identifying as an African American parent who has endured racist experiences will necessitate the need to be punctilious in crafting interview questions that are not leading and foster clarity. During the interview process, if there are answers to questions that are vague or lacking in detail, the researcher will summarize the participant's response to ensure the response is understood accurately by this researcher.

Researcher Assumptions and Limitations

Studying racism and how it influences a person's parenting style and content could pose psychological risks to its participants. Since the nature of the research was discuss racial experiences, this could have elicited a triggering response such as stress, PTSD symptoms, or anxiety. No legal, physical, economic, or loss of confidentiality risks can be identified, given the protective protocol delineated above.

This study benefits the African American community directly and identify and challenge the norms and assumptions of the dominant group. Many African American parents struggle with feeling that their voice is not being heard or have been silenced against speaking about the challenges they face in their parenting role. This research study benefits the field of social work. Social justice is the main tenet of social work and calls for social workers to be agents of social change, challenge social injustices, and empower oppressed populations.

Participants in this research study were afforded the opportunity to tell their stories by answering a series of questions during an interview conducted by the researcher. Ultimately, this gave the participants a voice as the study results are shared and will potentially improve participants' sense of self-efficacy and perhaps contribute toward the development of a more positive self-regard. It may be that they experience validation because parenting practices taken out of the context of racism are constructed as "harsh," while *in* the context of racism, they could be viewed as protective. The researcher acknowledges that due to the sensitivity of the subject at hand, some participants were reluctant to share information out of fear that exposure or openness may lead to judgment of their parenting methods (e.g., corporal punishment).

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations to the study due to being a part of one geographical location and only having access to participants in the mentioned locations. This limited the length of the study and sample size.

Conclusion

This research is a small step in recognizing the dearth of the literature surrounding parenting practices and is the beginning of understanding the cultural richness and realities of Black parenting. The interviews serve as a megaphone for Black mothers who have not had the opportunity to share their experiences as Black people and mothers safely and comfortably in a society where their demographic has been subjugated. It is anticipated that the results of this research study will benefit social work education, inform social work practice, educate non-minority community members, and begin eradicating negative assumptions toward the culture and content of Black parenting practices.

Chapter Four: Findings and Presentation of Themes

This chapter presents the research findings of data collected from individual semi-structured interviews. Results of the analysis will be presented and discussed in this chapter, including demographics and qualitative analysis of the individual interviews. These data provide insights into the factors that influence the content and style of Black parenting practices. Three fundamental areas of research emerged from the interviews, and they will be explored and organized as follows:

1. Experiences of Racism

2. Factors that shape the content of Black parenting

3. Factors that shape the culture of Black parenting

This study explores factors that contribute to the content and style of Black parenting, with a specific focus on mothers. Very little research exists surrounding this topic, and no research was found at all directly involving the population of study. Considering the theoretical framework, matricentric feminism has emerged as the beacon of the study providing space to acknowledge the cultural experience and contributions of Black mothers and the motherwork they perform in rearing their children. Fourteen participants were recruited for the interview process, with expedited attrition. Six women participated in the semi-structured qualitative interview process. Four prospective participants did not respond to telephonic outreach to schedule their interview and four prospective participants responded after the window for scheduling and participating in the interview process. Through the data analysis process, themes emerged from the participants' responses. A thorough review of the questions and the common

themes will be presented and discussed throughout this chapter by summarizing the findings and

incorporating cultural richness by sharing direct quotes from the research participants.

Setting

All interviews were conducted via Zoom, audio-recorded only, the transcription feature

enabled, with a sound machine to ensure privacy. Research participants were recruited from a

church in southeastern Pennsylvania, snowballing in that same area, as well as by convenience

and snowball sampling in central Pennsylvania as articulated in Chapter 3.

Table 1
Geographic Location

Region	Total Number of Participants
Southeast	3
Central	3
Total	6

Participant Demographics

Six interviews were conducted during the early Winter of 2022. To protect the

confidentiality of the participants, each was assigned a participant ID number. The length of the

interviews ranged from 27 to 43 minutes, with the median interview time of 31 minutes. All the

interview participants (*n*=6) identify as Black or African American and are mothers who have

been parenting for at least one year. Ages of the mothers range from 32 to 62 years of age, with a

mean age of 43 years.

Table 2

Participant Ages

Age	Total Number of Participants
31-40	3
41-50	1
51-60	1
61-70	1
Total	6

The mean age of children of the participants is 18 years old. The participants were a combination of mothers who parent both male and female children. One (17%) of the mothers were single, one (17%) was unmarried mothers, and four (66%) were married or in a long-term, domesticated, co-parenting relationship.

Table 3

Participants' Family Demographics

Participant	Marital Status	Number of Children	Male (Age)	Female (Age)
P1	Married	2	2 (36,36)	
P2	Divorced	1		1 (28)
P3	Married	4	1 (19)	3 (15,16,18)
P4	Married	2	1 (8)	1 (12)
P5	Single	1		1 (12)
P6	Partnered	5	4 (9,9,12,16)	1 (17)

Summary of Qualitative Findings

All six (100%) interview participants were open to sharing their experiences of racism and their perspective of the culture of Black parenting but were a bit apprehensive to share the parenting practices they engage in with their children. Though a few were apprehensive, each

participant contributed to every area of the research interview process. The most frequent words used in the interview responses were children and parenting. NVIVO 12 Qualitative Analysis Software was utilized to generate a word cloud. Next to those words were: different, cultures, and families, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1

Overall Interview Word Cloud

Racism

"We live in a racist world."

Each interview began with asking the participant to talk about any experiences of racism they have encountered. "We have a very tumultuous past and present." Five (83%) of the participants reported having experienced of racism or an interaction/situation that has made them feel different than their peers because of the color of their skin. One (17%) mother reported not

being able to recall any encounters of racism due to ignoring the actions of others in public places. Three (50%) of the participants reported professionals in society, such as school principals and staff in professional settings showed subtle forms of racism or cultural ignorance such as assuming they were single mothers, struggling to pay their bills or tuition, or the spouse of a low-level worker. "They assumed my husband worked in baggage claim and laughed when I said he was the pilot until his picture came up, and then they became silent."

The prevalence and magnitude of the racist experiences varied. One mother stated, "I have had multiple experiences of racism and where I was made to feel different than my peers." Five (83%) of the research participants spoke of direct experiences of racism their children have had to work through. One mother stated, "She already has these experiences in the school setting. She is treated differently because of her type of hair and the way she wears her hair." Mothers have also discussed indirect and vicarious experiences of racism and acknowledge the disparate treatment. "I get afraid of what I see happening, like Tyree Nichols, and realize that the Black experience is different from everyone else's."

The mothers spoke about racism their children have experienced and how they navigated those experiences with and for their children. The mothers focused on "empowering" their children by preparing them for life in a "racist society." A mother shared "I like to prepare my child for life's best and worst. I don't want her to live oblivious to what could happen to her just because she is a Black woman. In society, she would fall low on the totem pole." The Black mothers in this sample appear to have settled into the negative experiences they have had in society and seek to protect and teach their children to navigate what is a seemingly inevitable battle against disparities, racism, and discrimination. "Not only do I have to help her get through things, but from her perspective, I also have to help her understand that people are who they are

and will do what they do." With the children of the interview participants varying in age, evidence showed that their children seek out guidance throughout their lives. " Now that she has her experiences as a Black woman and adult, she seeks me out for wisdom.."

  Racism in Education. "Most of my racist experiences were in the educational setting." During the interviews, five (83%) of the mothers talked about their experiences of racism within the education system. Mothers who attended higher education experienced racism at colleges and universities. Those mothers who have children in grade school described the racist experiences their children experienced during elementary school years, as well as intermediate and even high school levels. One mother reported "His White teacher stated he would never be able to do it." Another mother reported, " She already has these experiences in the school setting. She is treated differently because of her type of hair and the way she wears her hair." Mothers discussed needing to protect their children even when they go outside of the home. "I never want my daughter to feel like she is being tormented in school because mommy cannot be there to protect her. I tell her always to come and let me know so that I can send an email or call the school."

  Despite these negative experiences, collectively, 6 (100%) of the participants have instilled in their children that school is of utmost importance. Mothers shared that education was not optional in their homes; their children must go to college. They explain to their children, "education is important for your future." Mothers reported that educational systems were rife with racism and that their children would attend regardless because of its importance. Their shared strategy was to prepare their children to navigate these experiences and learn to thrive within a society saturated with racism because "…there's white supremacy."

Racism in Places of Employment. Mothers shared stories of experiences they have endured in their current or previous workplace. Three (50%) of the participants reported having experienced racism at their jobs. One mother stated:

> "I have experienced discrimination and disparate treatment at work. There was a time when I was getting written up for things that my white counterparts did not get written up for. They were performing the same way I was at work, and yet, they were getting grace and mercy, but I was not. I was constantly being written up."

Another mother discussed being ignored or disregarded when feeling distress related to the brutal murders of Black men by the police force. Mothers shared their awareness that they were expected to continue working optimally, even when they had additional stressors affecting them in comparison to their White counterparts.

Racism in the Media. In the context of "experienced racism," mothers consistently shared the significant impact of seeing and hearing about the murders of Black men as displayed on the news and various other social media platforms.

> "I heard about the officer not being charged with the killing of George Floyd. I was so distraught, and it broke me down. Everybody else was just going on about their day like nothing had happened."

Six (100%) of the participants expressed experiencing vicarious trauma from seeing police brutality and the display of Black murders on news channels. They noted that, firsthand footage of these instances is also often displayed on social media as well, compounding the experience. Two (34%) of the participants reported attempts to teach their children strategies to

avoid police encounters like the ones of Tamir Rice and Tyree Nichols saying, " I teach my boys to make sure your face is visible in public, no hoods up, listen to the police no matter what." Another mother stated, "I recently was watching a TikTok about Tyree Nichols" and became emotional during the interview while expressing that the occurrence was still difficult to talk about, even though she did not know Tyree Nichols personally.

When discussing the effect that seeing these videos and having discussions surrounding these events have on the mothers, six (100%) of participants expressed concern that the Black population is at risk. One mother stated, "Our Black men are in danger, they are killing them." This mother further explained, "We experience severe trauma seeing these things. Someone pointed out to me that we really experience PTSD and vicarious trauma from seeing that stuff."

Racism in the Police System. Another sub-theme that arose during the interview process was the pollution of racism within the police system. When speaking about communicating imperative messages to children, a mother of multiple sons expressed. "This is especially important when dealing with the police" when teaching her children how to conduct themselves outside the doors of their home. Though none of the mothers expressed direct encounters with the police, they have seen police brutality against Black men displayed on television networks, in social media, and from family members. With knowledge of these indirect experiences, five (83%) of the participants expressed needing to have conversations surrounding these instances with their children and stressed the importance of their children thoroughly understanding these messages, and obeying police directives.

> "The most important conversation with my children is to listen to the police, don't run. Don't talk back to the police; just do what they say, and when walking down the street, make sure your face is visible."

Another mother spoke about a conversation she was having with her daughter and her daughter's White supervisor about racial profiling:

> "I was talking to my daughter and her supervisor about a time I was pulled over a few months ago and my daughter was just pulled over last week, and we were talking about how often this happens. My daughter's supervisor was so surprised and said that she had only been pulled over twice in the past 20 years and asked if we thought it was happening to us because we are Black."

This emphasizes the notion that children of all ages need to be cognizant of the potential situations they can encounter when interacting with the police force.

Coping with Racism. Another sub-theme that arose during the portion of the interview surrounding racism was coping with racism. While three (50%) of the participants settled into the thought it is what it is, the other three (50%) were still greatly troubled by the idea that they must raise children within a racist society. One mother expressed, "We can be mad that our Black men are being killed, and they (Whites) can also just have the privilege of watching them be killed and not be affected by it." This mother fluctuated in her emotional responses when discussing this issue. When discussing specific events of police brutality, she was troubled, her voice cracked, and at times she would pause stating these things are still affecting her. Once she was able to gather herself, she would then continue with the notion that this is the world we live in and stated, "I have learned to settle into my Black experience and be calm about the things happening around me."

Another mother also expressed that though the Black experience can be daunting, the Black experience is also beautiful. This shift in perspective showed the strength and resiliency Black mothers tap into to be able to survive while coping with the reality that Black people are perceived as "different" and are treated differently.

"Black people can get so caught up in trying to assimilate and fit in that we miss that we are beautiful in our own way. My mother taught me to get to the place where I said I am beautiful."

Need for Change. The mothers discussed their direct, indirect, and vicarious experiences of racism, racism they have observed their children experiencing, and coping strategies for racism that are pervasive. However, the discussion of racism did not stop there. Instead, two (34%) of the participants spoke of ways they believed society could improve by decreasing or eradicating racism.

> "Cultural sensitivity is critical no matter what race you are. This country was built on Black slavery, most sports players are Black or African American in some of the biggest sports industries, but America still sees Black people as slaves. I believe that once society has more cultural sensitivity toward African Americans, they will also be more sensitive to African American children."

Cultural sensitivity became a point of discussion with the idea that if all members of society were more culturally sensitive, the disparate treatment of Black people would lessen over time. Two (34%) of participants made comments around educating White people on cultural sensitivity, derogatory terms, and cultural competence.

Figure 2

Experiences of Racism Word Cloud

Parenting Practices & Styles

"As parents, we transition from brute authoritarian figures to coaches."

Authoritarian parenting is a parenting style that enforces demanding strict obedience from children (Silveira, Shafer, Dufur, & Roberson, 2021). One mother made the below statement when asked questions surrounding the parenting practices she utilizes within her home and summarizes the impact this sample of mothers are seeking to have on their children with strict parenting techniques:

"We set them up to be productive, independent adults who can stand independently to see and make decisions without insecurity. I was always protective of my children. We have very heavy-handed parenting."

Six (100%) of the participants reported using authoritarian parenting techniques and choose this method of parenting to shape their children into "respectful and put-together" adults. One mother verbalized, "It is all about having structure and boundaries. That is what is shaping

her into the young lady that she is." Another mother shared, "I can come off as strict with my child, but I am also lenient in some ways."

Participants further discussed the intended outcomes associated with their method of parenting. One mother described how "harsh" language was used in her home to prepare her for the harshness of the larger world. She stated, "I come from a home where things were said harshly so when I hear these things at work and in the world it doesn't affect me that much."

Motherwork

"We don't raise our children not to thrive."

Motherwork is the labor mothers engage into nurture, love, or to fulfill mothering duties and includes visible and invisible actions and responsibilities including physical, mental, and emotional responsibilities within her home (Collins, 1994; O'Reilly, 2021b; Gemelli, 2016). When asking questions surrounding parenting practices within the home and the mother's role within the home, six (100%) of the participants shared duties beyond birthing their children. One mother stated, "Their father was the provider of the home, but I did all the other work of raising our child. I ran the home, he owned it." Another mother stated, "I am the helper in my home, I help my husband, and I give life to our children. I cook, clean, nurse, confidant, encourager, and supporter."

Motherwork was emphasized all throughout the participant interviews. While five (83%) homes also had a father or father-figure in the home, an undeniable theme arose surrounding motherwork. Those homes with both parental figures emphasized the father's role as provider for the home and family while the mother's role was to support the father, bare children, and teach them to survive and thrive while making sure the home still runs smoothly.

The one (17%) participant who did not have fathers in the home also discussed the fathers' role in raising their child, but still emphasized that, as mothers, they fill in the gaps. As previously discussed in this chapter, mothers teach their children how to cope with racism in society and acquiesce to authority. They empower their children to be confident in their Blackness.

Critical Messages to Children

This researcher asked the mothers if there were any important messages they felt were imperative to communicate and instill in their children. Six (100%) mothers discussed imparting messages surrounding their children knowing it is important to respect themselves as well as others. One mother (17%) discussed teaching her children that their physical appearance also reflects them representing how they were raised:

"The reason is because of what society thinks about Black men. I taught my sons they must speak properly to others, wear clothes that fit properly and show that they respect themselves because they represent this home. They must speak a certain way."

One participant (17%) also discussed sharing the history of how the Black population has been treated in America, stating, "We talk to our children about the realities of life and history." While all participants shared critical messages they teach their children, there were two (34%) participants who also discussed modeling specific behaviors in their home in hopes that their children would adopt the same behaviors in their futures. One mother verbalized:

"My role as a mother starts with my role as a wife. When my children see that my husband and I love each other and that I respect his authority, it will be easier for them to understand, love, and respect authority.

When further exploring techniques dealing with racism, another mother shared, "I model things, do scenario-based learning, and have discussions with her to prepare and teach her how to handle those issues." Another method of empowering children was more of an indirect approach of showing children that Black excellence exists even in a world where Black people are oppressed. A mother stated, "My children only have Black and African American providers, so they can see Black excellence around them" and coupled that with, "I teach my children about love and loving themselves for who they are and what they look like."

Lastly, five (83%) of the mothers specifically stated, "What happens in this home, stays in this home." Another mother stated, "Black parenting, to me, is closed in. In most Black homes, all your business stays within the home." As the discussions continued in the interviews, participants shared this stance was taken as a protective measure for their children. Those outside of the home and outside of their Black communities have historically adopted a negative view of Black parenting, as discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, mothers feel that privacy within their home is of utmost importance as they raise their children so they can avoid unnecessary and culturally incompetent consequences to result from their parenting practices. One mother shared she tell her children, " In most Black homes, all your business stays within the home. What happens in this home, must stay in this home."

Figure 3

Parenting Practices Word Cloud

Parental Influences

Regarding contributing factors that shape parenting practices, participants spoke about people in their lives who shaped the content they wanted to employ in their parenting techniques, as well as techniques they wanted to avoid when parenting their own children. Six (100%) participants expressed that their own parents shaped their parenting practices in one way or another. One mother stated, "I glean my parenting practices from both of my parents. I could pull what I did and didn't want to do as a parent from them and the community." Another mother stated, "My mom was an example of the type of mother I didn't want to be. I always felt like I couldn't talk to my mom about anything."

Participants also learned about parenting from their social environments, including friendships, communities, and churches. One mother noted, "I share my parenting styles with the

group of women I have been connected to, and I modeled after them." Another mother shared, " I had older women who cared for me and taught me about motherhood alongside my mother."

Religion and Parenting. Three (50%) interview participants expressed being religious or spiritual and described how they pulled parenting practices from their religious or spiritual beliefs. Those mothers identify as Christian women who believe in biblical truths with direction on how to parent their children, including supporting spanking. One mother summarized by stating:

> "My children also need to know my voice and authority are sufficient, and they must obey God and me. I teach them to love God and obey Him. I raise my children with standard moral ethics along with a Christ-centered approach. I teach my children to have a strong sense of who they are as African Americans and what it means to be Black. I am a Christian, and I believe in what the Bible says. The Bible says to spare not the rod. I raise my children to know God, Jesus, and prayer. I also taught them that when I do not see them, God does."

One (17%) participant stated they were not religious or spiritual in any way and two (34%) shared that they believe in a higher power but do not directly identify with any religion or specific spiritual beliefs. One of these mothers commented:

> "I believe there is a higher power, but I don't choose to identify with a specific religion" but also stated, "I tell my daughter to trust God with it all and pray about things she cannot control." So, while she does not directly identify with any type of spirituality, she teaches her daughter to trust in God to ease her stress and worries living in a racist society.

Mothers who identify as religious or spiritual also emphasized allowing members of their church community to teach their children as well, stating, "People in the community and the local church were permitted to correct their children, help raise their children, and speak life into their children. Our survival was based on it."

Figure 4

Parental Influences Word cloud

Unique Culture of Black Parenting

""Discipline is very much different between cultures. Black families have had to endure and survive."

The last major theme that emerged from interview data is that Black parenting is distinct and unique. Six (100%) of mothers spoke about the additional contributing factors that shape Black parenting that they have not observed among White parenting counterparts. One mother stated:

"Black parenting is different from other parenting because it comes with a heaviness that requires us to be who we are in this society and be aware of how we are viewed. Black parenting is also exhausting because of the history of what Black people have been through. White families might think about internal struggles while Black families have to consider systems of oppression that makes parenting harder. Black parenting can often feel like we are fighting the world. We can't afford to play around. Black parenting must contend with racism."

While the mothers expressed heaviness and ongoing burden of parenting Black children and having to try especially hard to protect them as best they can due to the color of their skin, they were also able to highlight the strengths of Black families and Black parenting practices. A mother stated, "Black parenting is beautiful. Black families are miracles. Black parenting is diverse, complicated, and joyous."

Mothers also discussed the communal strength of Black families and the role that the Black community plays in rallying together to raise strong Black children. A mother shared, "We see our community as a family. We are all raising our children together. Parenting is communal." Another mother added, "Black parenting is different from other cultures because we have to teach our children that they will have to do double or triple the work of their White counterparts." These women share in their understanding that racism creates conditions that will require children to work harder than their White peers to survive and succeed in society.

Figure 5

Culture of Black Parenting Word Cloud

Summary

This chapter presents participant demographics and summarizes data-driven themes that are supported by respondents' comments and contributions. A total of six (*n*=6) participants were interviewed about the factors that shape the content and culture of their parenting practices and the culture of Black parenting. Major themes were included in the findings. Notably, five (83%) of the participants expressed enduring some type of racism in their lives, which shapes some of the crucial messages they teach their children. While all mothers were not able to identify specific instances of racism at the time of the interview, all six mothers (100%) shared that they teach their children how to contend with racism in society. A total of six participants (100%) claimed to have utilized authoritarian parenting techniques intentionally to raise respectful and well-mannered children. Five (83%) of the mothers talked about experiences of racism within the education system but six (100%) of the participants have instilled in their children that school is

of utmost importance. Three (50%) of the participants reported having some experience of racism within the workplace. There were six (100%) participants who expressed experiencing vicarious trauma after watching news reports about police brutality and murders. Despite three (50%) of the participants accepting the fact that racism is what it is, the other three (50%) were still deeply concerned about raising children in such an environment. There were six (100%) participants who had responsibilities beyond birthing their children as discussed from the matricentric feminism lens. A total of six (100%) participants said that their own parents influenced their parenting practices in some way. Three (50%) of the interview participants expressed pulling parenting practices from their religious or spiritual beliefs. Six (100%) mothers spoke about the additional contributing factors that shape Black parenting that they have not observed in parenting of White culture. The findings from this study will be discussed in the following chapter, along with recommendations for social worker practice, strengths and limitations, and probable future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Discussion

This ethnographic study utilized semi-structured interviews guided by matricentric feminism to explore the factors that contribute to the content and culture of Black parenting, with a specific focus on motherhood. An ethnographic study is exploratory in nature and seeks to understand dominant discourses or ways of thinking that allow for a deeper understanding of a group's shared culture. The results of this study point to the importance of including the population being studied (Black mothers) in the studies regarding their parenting practices to ensure accuracy and negate largely pejorative assumptions. By creating a safe space and providing the opportunity to share stories, these mothers were provided a megaphone to talk about their Black experience parenting their children. They were able to contribute to literature that speaks to their strengths and provides an insight into the beauty of Black culture and parenting practices. The results also accentuate the beauty and strengths of Black parenting and enhances cultural awareness surrounding Black parenting practices.

The key findings of this critical ethnographical study are that the direct, indirect, and vicarious experiences of racism, religion, and upbringing, shape the content and culture of Black parenting. Mothers also emphasized the distinctness of the culture of Black parenting. Though Black parenting can be seen as harmful or as having challenges, these findings confirm the myriad strengths that also characterize parenting practices.

The applicability of these findings has multilevel relevance in social work (specifically the micro, mezzo, and macro levels) and are deeply insightful. Thus, speaking to the strength of

this research study. The results will not only inform direct practice with families, but will also impact communities, as well as larger organizations and policies on larger scales.

Participant Research and Social Justice

Research in social psychology has highlighted the demands of academia and the needs of vulnerable participants as active participants in activism research (Aldridge, 2012). Participating in this research study was validating for the mothers. They expressed their feelings of excitement and appreciation that this researcher was willing to hear first-hand of their experiences with racism and parenting. They were honored to share their perspective and excited that findings would be disseminated in an academic setting. The involvement of participants in research responds to the "study down" tendency found in social science and balances biases that emerge from that hierarchical perspective. Further, the topic under investigation represents this researcher's commitment to identifying and addressing social problems, such as racism and oppression, particularly as they manifest in the study of practices such as parenting.

Balancing the Scales

As noted in Chapter 2, historical and contemporary literature portrays Black parenting practices as abusive and harsh; typically, studies do not bring light to the strength and resilience Black mothers embody as they attempt to raise their children in a society that threatens the quality of life and livelihood of them and their children. One mother discussed imparting the message to her children that, to be successful, they must always work hard and not to succumb to negative messages or assumptions from society. She further discussed explaining to her children that when someone tells them they are not able to do something, prove them wrong by overachieving the original expectation. Another mother shared she only allows her children to have Black providers, not only for cultural reasons, but for her children to see Black excellence

displayed in society. Thus, communicating that they can also be excellent though they may have negative experiences out in society. The reality of such events lends credence to the expediency of the parenting techniques employed by Black mothers, with the expectation that positive results will follow.

Human Relationships

This research emphasizes the importance of human relationships (NASW, 2022) as a vehicle for change. Mothers who participated in this study discussed the importance of building community and having close, positive relationships with people. These communal relationships allow friends, community members and family members to pour into them and teach them effective parenting practices. This research does not focus on parenting mistakes, but instead, the beauty and strength in Black parenting practices. Therefore, Black parenting practices are a form of resistance in a racist society by raising children who are bold, confident, and firmly grounded in hope, strength, and resilience. Such research may contribute to changing the discourse and connecting women to each other and their communities.

Dignity, Worth, and Integrity

The ethical principles of dignity and worth of the person and integrity (NASW, 2022) were both profoundly evident in this research as well. Mothers were given the space to speak freely and confidently in an environment where they would not be judged or criticized for their motherwork. The researcher's identity as a Black mother made the participants feel more comfortable sharing their experiences. Participating in this study allowed the mothers to provide qualitative interview data that would highlight the need for change in disposition toward Black parenting, thus addressing this need in social work practice, education, and in society.

Mothers discussed having a strong sense of the existence of racism, but still showed hope and resilience in eradicating and fighting against the prevalence and effect of racism. Some mothers discussed the importance of educating their children on how to respond to racism. They also discussed their ability to teach their peers what is acceptable terminology and behavior versus what is not, with the hopes that, over time, the act of racism would lessen as time goes on.

Limitations

Limitations in this research study included having a population sample within one geographical state, Pennsylvania. Findings cannot, of course, be generalized to other states. This study recruited participants through a women's group at a local church in conjunction with convenience and snowball sampling to explore perspectives outside of the Christian church. This method limited the specific communities local to the church and surrounding areas. The literature revealed a perception that Black parenting is harsh and can be harmful to children mentally and emotionally, and that was confirmed by some of the mothers who participated in the study as this was their experience growing up in homes with their parents. This shows an adverse effect of strict parenting methods in the culture of Black parenting but provides insight on the various outcomes of Black parenting methods.

Despite the challenges that were displayed in Black parenting, this research maintains its goal in providing a megaphone for mothers to share why they parent the way that they do and speaks to the treacherous experiences that shape their decisions. Moreover, the results of this research are also beautiful and valuable in the fields of social work, motherhood studies, and Black parenting practices. In addition, some of the mothers involved in this study have also interacted with different social work institutions and entities, which provides insight into the perspectives of social workers on their parenting.

Implications

Themes identified in these research findings have implications for social work practice, theory, education, and leadership. First, this research validates the cry for ongoing attention to justify anti-racist laws and policies. One hundred percent of mothers discussed some type of encounter with racism, whether direct, indirect, or vicarious. This shows a grave need to address societal structure. Policies that combat white supremacy would aid in strengthening society and becoming more inclusive for people of color.

There are also implications surrounding social work practice. Because of the assumptions of Black parenting practices to be abusive or unnecessarily harsh, as noted in Chapter 2, there is still work to be done. Social work practitioners working with children need to have an increased awareness of cultural differences in parenting practices, as well as what influences Black parenting practices. Understanding the lessons of this work, developing and disseminating updated cultural competency training in child welfare programs would be tremendously beneficial for the social work practitioners working directly with children and families. These trainings would allow for social workers to have a heightened cultural awareness of parenting practices and would be able to better serve Black families. Although all women were not Christian, all the mothers spoke about religion or spirituality to some capacity, thus when social workers are conducting assessments(such as a bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment) it is important to include the spiritual facet to fully encompass a person's functioning.

Social work practitioners and educators need to advocate for the Black community. Social workers would be adhering to their ethical principles by challenging social injustices (NASW, 2022). People from oppressed groups, including those from the Black community, are

explicitly targeted by this principle. It is imperative that advocates, social workers, and their organizations continually promote sensitivity to, and knowledge of, oppression and cultural diversity (NASW, 2020).

Social workers must advocate for anti-racist policies encouraging social change and equality. The concept of anti-racism goes beyond mere non-engagement with racism. Racism must be opposed, but racial acceptance must also be practiced. To become increasingly competent in serving Black families and communities, social workers must continuously examine themselves and those around them as well as engage in education and professional training (NASW, 2022). Social work organizations and practitioners may consider designing programs and parenting strategies that reflect the awareness of racism. There is a need for more Afrocentric parenting programs and positive acknowledgment of Black parenting practices. Developing professional expertise directly coincides with the ethical principle of competence.

Lastly, a potential theoretical implication exists that Black parenting is largely influenced by the need to survive. This survival is not only a need to survive for themselves, but also to pass down wisdom from their own experiences to teach their children how to be successful while also combating systems of oppression and racism in society. Mothers have shared the importance of imparting empowering messages into their children so they can hold onto these messages as motivation to break barriers and combat false assumptions made about them based on the color of their skin.

Recommendations Future Research

As a result of this research study, Black families can be liberated and the issue of racism and its effect on Black families can be addressed. In the future, social work research should focus

on improving the quality of services within organizations and reducing oppressive practices. It is recommended for researchers to continue to reveal racist roots within organizations and systems so that they can be purged and rebuilt to be anti-racist.

The dearth of literature revealed that cross-cultural comparative research surrounding parenting practices would be beneficial to social work practice. Attitudes toward physical punishment are very dated in the existing body of research. While assumptions exist relating to Black parenting, assumptions also exist about White parenting based off brief interactions they have had with White children or brief statements made by White adults. Exploring the strengths of both types of parenting and what makes them positive will be imperative to maintain a strengths-based perspective and cultural richness in social work research. Research that explores physical punishment within the family structure and how it is different across cultures would also be beneficial.

This study only looked at the contributing factors that shaped the content and culture of Black parenting but did not explore the coping mechanisms that Black parents use to deal with their experiences of racism whether those experiences be direct, indirect, or vicarious. This research shows that some mothers have settled into the idea that racism will always be but did not explore how they deal with that perspective. A study of current coping mechanisms used by this population would be beneficial, as well as identifying the most effective methods. By identifying adaptive and maladaptive skills, social workers could then develop culturally appropriate, strengths-based intervention strategies to increase healthy coping skills.

Lastly, a deeper analysis of the social work profession appears to be necessary for future research. A further study of social workers' perceptions of the Black population, the cultural competence of the social work system, and additional ways social workers can be involved in

anti-racism would be necessary since the social work profession consists of white social workers.

Conclusions

The cultural richness of the information shared front he mothers in this research study surrounding the content and culture of a distinctive way of Black parenting has encapsulates the dire need to address the gaps in the literature surrounding Black parenting. Furthermore, Black people are burdened with the responsibility of teaching their children how to survive and thrive in a world saturated with racism in addition to being victims of white supremacy, disparities, and racism themselves.

Matricentric feminism served as a major part of the research framework in exploring the roles and work that mothers are responsible for inside their homes aside from bearing and nurturing their children. This research has shown that Black mothers must also serve as a support of the partners, if there is one in the home, teach the children how to survive in a racist society while also reaching their fullest potential, and that there is a distinctive way of Black parenting that is unique to and shaped by the historical and current treatment of the Black population. Additionally, Critical Race Theory enabled the counter-storytelling method to determine how racism shapes Black parenting experiences. This lens was used to explore the personal narratives of Black mothers by way of semi-structured interviews. Finally, Social Learning Theory analyzed how parents interact with their children at home and what their children learn from that, with a special focus on racial socialization. These frameworks can be used to explore the cultural richness and strengths of parenting techniques further.

The findings of this research support that Black parenting practices have their challenges, but when looked at from a cultural lens, displays resilience in a society that has been built on racism. Racism has shaped Black parenting and caused mothers to take an authoritarian approach with the hopes of ensuring the safety of their children outside of the safety of their home. The culture of Black parenting is also shaped by religion as well as the intergenerational impact of what mothers have learned from those who played a part in raising them as well. The finding of this study will benefit social work practice, research, academia, and leadership.

This research is only the starting point of understanding the Black culture from a strengths-based perspective and exploring the uniqueness of Black parenting and mothering. Black mothers provided insight into the factors that shape their parenting practices and also shared sensitive experiences that disempowered them at different moments in their lives, simply for being Black.

The design of this study excluded mothers who do not identify as Black/African American and excluded mothers who are from other countries, however, social workers and researchers can still utilize the information provided and are encouraged to build upon this research base. Just as the work of Carol Stack (1974) reframed the notion of female headed households, research like this. can redefine what it means to be a Black parent.

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Publications.

APPENDIX A

Millersville University
SPONSORED PROGRAMS &
RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

January 17, 2022

RE: IRB Protocol no. 1031673339, "A Megaphone for Black Mothers Parenting Their Black Children"

Aliesha,

IRB Protocol no. 1031673339, "A Megaphone for Black Mothers Parenting Their Black Children"
was reviewed by two members of the MU IRB Committee and determined to be **exempt** under
Category 2 of 45 CFR 46 as amended. Specifically:

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude,
achievement), *survey procedures, interview procedures* or observation of public behavior
provided that information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot
be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

The proposed project was determined to be minimal-risk. Please advise the IRB of any changes in
project scope or methodology should they occur. Your research will not require continuing review,
but please do inform the IRB when you have completed data collection.

Thank you,

Rene Muñoz, Ph.D
Director, Sponsored Programs and Research Administration

Millersville University of Pennsylvania

APPENDIX B

Consent to be Part of a Research Study

Title of the Project: A Megaphone for Black Mothers Parenting Their Black Children

Principal Investigator: Aliesha Y. Clark, LSW
 Doctoral student
 Millersville University
Faculty Advisor: Heather Girvin
 Millersville University
 1 S. George Street
 Millersville, PA 17551
 717-917-6110

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must have mothered a child for at least a year, identify as Black/African American, be a heterosexual woman, attend a church, and mothering a child who is Black/African American. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Important Information about the Research Study

Things you should know:

- The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of your experience as an African American mother and what has contributed to your method of parenting. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a recorded Zoom interview. This will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

- Risks or discomforts from this research include the potential for a breach of confidentially. To reduce the risk of that happening, we will protect the confidentiality of the information you provide by giving you a unique study ID that will be kept separate from any identifying information. You will be asked questions about private, personal matters and information related to your experiences as an African American. You may feel uncomfortable answering these questions or discussing your parenting practices.

- The study will pose no known psychological or physical risks.

- Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You don't have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to obtain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of parenting among Black mothers who are given opportunities to describe how they parent in their own word, offering Black mothers the opportunity to tell their own stories.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to You will be asked to consent to this study. You will also be asked to participate in a one-time Zoom interview. The questions will be related to the content and style of your parenting and what you believe has influenced your decisions as a mother. Your responses will be entered into a secure website, and the researcher will ask you to answer the questions in an audio-only format. · If you agree to participate, your Zoom interview will be recorded (audio) so that the researcher can listen to your interview responses after the interview. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. Your personal information, such as your name, will be kept confidential and removed from audio recordings and any other records created from the Zoom interview. We expect this one interview to take about 20-30 minutes.

The information you provide will not be used for anything other than this current research study.

How could you benefit from this study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because the study proposed here aims to balance literature and share stories that add fullness and accuracy to the topic of parenting.

What risks might result from being in this study?

There are some risks you might experience from being in this study. They are no known risk to subjects that would not occur in daily life. Potential minimal psychological risks are present due to the nature of the interview questions asking the participants to describe any experiences of racism they may have endured.

How will we protect your information?

I plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, I will not include any information that could directly identify you. I will protect the confidentiality of your research records by being stored in a way that does not identify you by name. You will be identified by a unique Study ID, and the information linking these subject codes with your identity will be kept separate from your research study records. Data stored on computers or web-based tools will be kept password protected.

It is possible that other people may need to see the information we collect about you. These people work for the University of Michigan and government offices that are responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly. If your

research data is shared with other researchers who are interested in this specific research study, your identity will not be revealed to those researchers. You will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the research results unless you sign a separate consent form giving your permission for us to do so.

What will happen to the information we collect about you after the study is over?

I will not keep your research data to use for future research. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from the research data collected as part of the project.

I will not share your research data with other investigators.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, the researcher will continue to use any information already collected up to when you withdraw from the study. The researcher may withdraw you from participation if necessary for other reasons such as you provide information during the interview that disqualifies you as a participant.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact.

Principal Investigator: **Aliesha Y. Clark, LSW**
ayrobins@millersvill.edu
(717) 543-3246

Faculty Advisor: **Heather Girvin**
Heather.Girvin@millersville.edu
717-917-6110

This study has been approved by the Millersville University of Pennsylvania Institutional

Review Board. Dr. René Muñoz, Director of Sponsored Projects and Research Administration, can be contacted with any questions at either 717.871.4146, or at rene.munoz@millersville.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Millersville University

PO Box 1002
Millersville, PA 17551

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

Dr. René Muñoz
717.871.4457 mu-
irb@millersville.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. I will give you a copy of this document for your records. I will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature   Date

Consent to be Audio Recorded
I agree to be audio recorded.

     *YES*_____   *NO* _____

Signature:_____Date:_____

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Script

Hello,

My name is Aliesha Clark. I am conducting a research study as a student at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. I am contacting you because you expressed interest in being interviewed for my research study exploring the content and culture of Black parenting practices.

This study involves a one-time 20–30-minute interview about your experience in society as an African American woman as well as what shapes your parenting practices. The purpose of this research will be to gain a better understanding of your experience as a Black individual in society as well as a mother to her children.

· The risk associated with this research is the potential for a breach of confidentiality. Although every reasonable effort has been made, confidentiality during internet communication activities cannot be guaranteed, and it is possible that additional information beyond that collected for research purposes may be captured and used by others not associated with this study.

· Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop the discussion at any time. If you agree to participate, you will be known by a study ID only, not by your name or any other personally identifying information.

Would you be willing to speak with me about your experience?

Yes: If so, I can review the written consent form with you to be signed. Once you have done so, we can set up a day/time that is convenient for you.

No: I appreciate your time. Thank you for your consideration.

If you have any questions related to this, you can contact:

> Heather Girvin
> Millersville
> University 1 S.
> George Street
> Millersville, PA 17551
> 717-917-6110

APPENDIX D

<div align="center">

Qualitative Research Questions

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Hello, my name is Aliesha, and I am a student at Millersville University conducting research on the content and style of African American parenting practices. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop this discussion at any time. If so, your information will be removed from the final analysis.

The purpose of this research will be to gain a better understanding of your experiences as an African American mother parenting African American a(n) child(ren).

Now I will provide you with some information about the interview that I will be conducting with you today. The interview should take 20-30 minutes of your time and will be audio-recorded so we can recall exactly what was discussed during our call. Once the interview is completed, it will be transcribed, or typed out, word for word. Please note that any personally identifiable information (i.e., locations, names) will be removed from the transcript.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do you agree to allow the researcher to record this interview?

1. Cultural Questions: *Maybe just ask: "tell me about any experiences of racism you have encountered" and ask others if they do not arise during the initial question.*
    a. Have you had any experiences with school, work, or any other system that made you feel different than your peers?
        i. If so, please provide an example or two.
    b. How do your day-to-day experiences influence how you parent your children?

2. Parenting Questions:

    a. Describe your role in your home.
    b. What are some of the influences of your parenting practices?
    c. How would you describe Black parenting?
    d. Would you consider Black parenting to be different than that of other cultures?

        i. If so, how?

    e. What are some cultural challenges you face with parenting?
    f. What types of conversations do you consider imperative with your children as minorities?

3. Religious questions:

    a. How do your religious beliefs influence the way you choose to parent?

    b. Describe some discussions about parenting with other members of your church.

        i. Do you find that your parenting practices align with those of your peers?

            1. If so, which ones?

            2. Which ones do not align?

                a. Why do you think that is?

Those are all the questions I have for you today! Would you like to add anything else?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Have a great day!

APPENDIX E

Sign Up Sheet

No.	Name	Email	Phone Number
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